

healthy living

Submitted by **Sara Peternell**, MNT, Owner of Family Nutrition Services & West Highland Resident

How is it possible to maintain good health and meet your nutrition goals while eating out? The good news: in Denver's restaurants you have plenty of options! Here are a few tips on how to make the most of your dining-out experience and still care about what is on your plate. After all, you are what you eat.

Dining Out & Nutrition Tips

1 Drink spring water, sparkling water with a lemon wedge, a fresh juice “mocktail” or herbal tea instead of soda or alcoholic beverages. This will save a lot of calories at a restaurant meal, not to mention you will avoid other unhealthy ingredients present in many beverages (artificial sweeteners, high fructose corn syrup, artificial colors, flavors, additives, etc.)

2 Don't be afraid to ask for assistance with dietary needs and allergy avoidance requests. Always let your server know if you have a special need or are sensitive to particular ingredients. In Denver, many restaurants have gluten-free, vegan, nut-free and dairy-free items indicated on the menu, or may even have a separate menu for those with sensitivities.

3 Choose entrees with fruits and vegetables as key ingredients. Enjoy the flavors they offer. Fruits and vegetables are a good source of dietary fiber, as well as of many vitamins and minerals. Plus, plant-based foods are the basis of every health -- supportive eating plan.

4 Enjoy foods that are flavored with fresh herbs. Herbs add a unique flavor to any dish! And, many herbs have health-giving properties. Did you know, basil is naturally good for the digestive system?

5 When ordering grilled fish or meat, have a green vegetable side dish which is loaded with antioxidants to offset any of the charring which may have occurred in cooking the protein.

6 When ordering pasta dishes, did you know you can often get a gluten-free pasta substitute? Many restaurants even have “zoodles” which are spiralized zucchini or sweet potato, and are packed full of nutrients! Also, with pasta dishes, look for tomato -- based or olive oil rich sauces rather than cream-based sauces. Tomato-based sauces are rich in lycopene a serious nutrient for eye health, and olive oil is a wonderful monounsaturated fat which helps keep your heart healthy.

7 If you are craving dessert, opt for something fresh and whole, like fresh berries. Or, feel free to indulge occasionally in 70% or greater dark chocolate – which is an excellent source of antioxidants!

8 Stop eating when you are full — listen to the cues your body gives you. It takes at least ten minutes for the signals from your body to reach your brain letting you know you have had enough to eat, so chew slowly, put down your fork after every few bites, and enjoy your meal.

9 Take half of your meal home. The second half can serve as a second meal! (Two meals for the price of one: What a deal!)

10 Remember not to deprive yourself of the foods you love. All foods can fit into a well-balanced diet. Living by the 80/20 rule is a sure way to find balance – 80% of foods aim for health, 20% aim for fun and flavor!

Sara Peternell, MNT, is one of the preeminent board-certified nutrition practitioners in the Denver area, focusing on family nutrition, fertility, pregnancy, and post-partum. She thoroughly enjoys helping people to jump start their healthy eating goals and make lasting changes. Sara has been offering personalized nutrition services to individuals, children, families, non-profits and corporations through her business Family Nutrition Services since 2005. Sara is a Colorado native, a Highlands resident, and an avid *Highland Way of Life* contributor.

