



Today's Special - By Amanda Tust

Ordering healthy food at restaurants

Smart eating starts with smart ordering.

With plates groaning under the weight of half-pound burgers, mounds of pasta, and bushels of french fries, it's easy to see that restaurant meals contain more food than the average diner needs in one meal. What's not so obvious is what's in the food on your plate. A study in the American Journal of Public Health found that the fat and calorie content of restaurant fare is typically twice what consumers expect. And it isn't just ordinary hungry folks like us who are being fooled. Dietitians underestimate the nutritional content of common restaurant dishes by up to 50 percent, according to a study by Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., author of The Portion Teller Plan. "The catch is that nobody really knows how the food is prepared, so you have to be cautious," she says.

From the menu of a typical neighborhood restaurant, we've highlighted some key words and items you should be aware of, in addition to offering some strategies that'll have you walking, rather than waddling, out.



Cream of chicken soup

Cream + fat = bad, right? Well, not so fast. Ordering a cup of this or some other semifatty soup (such as cream of mushroom) as an appetizer can reduce the total number of calories consumed during a meal by 20 percent, according to a study at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Researchers think fat's swift absorption into the small intestine helps you feel full faster.

Spicy

A study in the International Journal of Obesity

found that people who ate an appetizer rich in capsaicin (the ingredient that gives red pepper its kick) consumed up to 16 percent fewer calories during meals and felt satisfied quicker. If you go heavy on the hot sauce, there's also a chance you may be incinerating fat. The Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry reports that adding capsaicin to fat cells caused them to collapse and kept them from accumulating.

Grilled salmon

This is one of the healthiest things you can eat at home, but in a restaurant it usually goes swimming in liquid margarine or butter before ending up on your plate. Avoid a transfat-laden meal by requesting that your fish be brushed with a small amount of olive oil instead.

Sautéed vegetables

Restaurants also tend to use a lot of oil when cooking vegetables (1 tablespoon oil = 100 calories). Ask for steamed veggies with olive oil and lemon on the side so you can season to taste.

Stuffed

If your meal comes stuffed (think burrito or casserole), it's probably packed with hundreds of extra calories, says thebestlife.com nutritionist Janis Jibrin. At a Mexican restaurant, order fajitas so you can control the mix. Use lots of salsa, a little sour cream, and don't scoop up the oil with the shrimp or steak. On Italian night, opt for pasta with chicken in marinara sauce instead of lasagna. Some chains, such as the Olive Garden, now offer whole-wheat noodles, which have five to six times more fiber.

Tofu

Tofu is a high-protein, low-fat energy source. But Chinese restaurants often fry it, adding lots of fat. Ask for sautéed tofu instead.

Drinks

If it's a special night out, develop an alcohol game plan so you don't overindulge. Before you even walk in the door, decide where to spend 100 to 150 "treat calories," says Janis

Jibrin, R.D., lead nutritionist for thebestlife.com. A glass of wine or a 12-ounce light beer will keep you in the range. But if you order a margarita (250 calories) or Long Island iced tea (275 calories), punt on dessert or shave one to two servings of carbohydrates from your meal (sub steamed broccoli for the potato).

Salad

A handful of fresh greens is just 25 calories, but after piling on cheese, olives, bacon, caramelized nuts, heavy dressing, or other toppings, it can carry more fat and calories than an entree. For example, the Carolina chicken salad at Ruby Tuesday has 1,022 calories and 72 grams of fat—a heavier choice than that establishment's classic burger. Unless a salad is your main dish, forget the cheese and ask for only fresh veggies as toppings. Requesting the dressing on the side will save another 200 calories.

Crusted

This description is often a sneaky way of saying the meat or veggies are fried. Ask before you order.

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Body mass index

The body mass index (BMI) is a measurable quantity that estimates a person's body build.

This index is calculated based on a person's waist and body mass. It assesses the risk of developing health problems associated with being overweight or underweight and determines the number of kilos a person needs to lose (or gain) to achieve optimal health.



The BMI test is appropriate for people over 18 years of age. This index does not apply to pregnant or lactating women, people who are seriously ill, or very muscular individuals. For people over 65 years of age, the values can be slightly higher than the values indicated below.

It is important to keep in mind that the BMI is only an indicator, and does not generate an absolute fact. It is an incomplete tool because it does not take into account a person's musculature,

frame or fat distribution. A healthcare specialist (physician, nutritionist or other) can help you to better judge this value.

Some calculations

Formula for calculating the BMI:

$$BMI = \frac{\text{weight}}{\text{height}^2}$$

N.B.: weight in kg and height in m

E.g.: A person who weighs 95kg and measures 1.81m in height has a BMI of:

$$BMI = \frac{95 \text{ kg}}{1.81 \text{ m} \times 1.81 \text{ m}} \approx 29.0 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$$

Weight classification (Canadian guidelines for classifying weight in adults)

Category	BMI	Risk of illness
Severely underweight	less than 16	High
Underweight	less than 18.5	Increased
Normal weight	18.5 to 24.9	Low
Overweight	25.0 to 29.9	Increased
Obese, Class 1	30.0 to 34.9	High
Obese, Class 2	35.0 to 39.9	Very high
Obese, Class 3	40 or above	Extremely high

Waist circumference

Waist circumference measurement assesses the specific risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. This measurement is more accurate than the BMI.

To measure the waist circumference, place a measuring tape directly below the lower rib, at the end of a normal expiration, and without

placing pressure on the skin.

Classification of waist circumference measurements

Classification of the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure	Men		Women	
	cm	inches	cm	inches
Low	- than 94	- than 37	- than 80	- than 31.5
Increased	+ than 94	+ than 37	+ than 80	+ than 31.5
Significantly increased	+ than 102	+ than 40	+ than 88	+ than 35



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Working hard but getting nowhere? Here's how to adjust the most popular gym moves so you can see real results—fast!

Tradition, routine, ritual. They're all good in their place—but that place isn't the gym. If you're still doing the same moves you learned from your football coach or sixth-grade physical teacher, you're blowing an opportunity to kick your workout up a notch—with increased weight loss and endurance as welcome results.

To get you started on a new, more targeted tack, we took a close look at five of the most popular exercises in the gym and improved them—either by tweaking them a little or replacing them with more effective alternatives.

With these new and improved moves, you'll work more muscle mass, reduce the strain on your joints, and see real results. Big ones. And that's a ritual worth keeping.

The Move

Leg extensions

The Tweak

Replace with lunges

The Reason

Uses more muscle mass and promotes better knee stability

Without question, leg extensions are one of the most overrated exercises in the gym. What's with the popularity of a move that isolates the quadriceps in a way that you'd never use them in the real world? You're much better off, from both a functional and injury-prevention standpoint, substituting lunges instead.

We perform lunging type motions almost every day (tying our shoes, doing yard work, reaching out to grab a runaway baby). And not only is it a practical move, but in the long run it's going to save your knees because a lunge requires the simultaneous contraction of the quadriceps (thigh muscles), hamstrings (leg muscles), and glutes (butt), which takes the load off the most used and abused joint in your body. "Because it's what's known as an open-chain movement—in which the foot isn't in contact with any type of surface as the leg is in motion and has nothing to brace against—the leg extension places a great deal of shearing force on the knees," says Rob Zschau, a trainer at Plano Super Sport 24 Hour Fitness in Texas. "The lunge is a safer alternative because it's a closed-chain movement that doesn't take the same toll on the knees."

To lunge, grasp a pair of light dumbbells and stand with your feet about shoulder-width

apart. Draw in your navel, and step forward with your left foot, making sure, as your knee bends, that it remains over your ankle. Bend until your thigh is about parallel to the floor, then return to the starting position.

The Move

Cable Rows

The Tweak

Change your torso and hand position

The Reason

Promotes better upper-back activation and less back strain



This exercise is often done improperly, which minimizes its value. Make this your mantra: I am not trying to row a boat. "Rocking your torso to and fro lets you use momentum to get the weight moving. Not only is that ineffective, but it also places too much emphasis on the lumbar spine [your lower back, where most back pain starts]," says Zschau. To keep the effort focused on your upper back, align your shoulders directly above your hips, and sit up nice and tall. From there, it's simply a matter of pinching your shoulder blades together to initiate the pull and then finishing it off with your arms—a far cry from the usual "lean back and jerk" approach so many people favor.

Now that you're sitting still, let's address your grip. Typically, the cable row is performed using a triangular-shaped handle, with the palms facing each other (also known as a semisupinated, or neutral grip) and elbows tucked in close to the body. The problem is this position mainly targets the lats, or latissimus dorsi, a group of large muscles of the midback that, when overused, can contribute to the act of pulling your shoulders forward—not an attractive look. Because it disturbs the natural alignment of the joint, it can also set you up for a host of shoulder injuries.

Instead, switch to a bar that allows for a slightly wider grip with your palms facing the floor (pronated grip). Keep your elbows out slightly away from your body, so that your upper arm forms about a 45-degree angle to

your torso. This will focus your effort on the shoulder-supporting postural muscles of the upper back and result in a great V shape, making you appear more tapered at the waist, while strengthening your upper back.

The Move

Seated shoulder press

The Tweak

Do it standing instead

The Reason

Provides greater core involvement and less strain on the lower back

This one looks easy enough: simply press the weights up over your head. But your position is of critical importance. If you do this move sitting down, you may be able to handle more weight, but you're also creating more compression in your lower back if you have poor form. You need to establish a firm base with your lower body and core, and optimal flexibility in your midback. "As long as you're not hyperextending your back to move more weight than you can handle, your lower body can help offset the compression substantially," says Zschau. It's also a more practical move: It works your muscles the same way you do when you're lifting something over your head, like your carry-on luggage or the toolbox you store on the top shelf.

The Move

Lying leg curl

The Tweak

Switch to a Swiss-ball leg curl

The Reason

Allows for more complete hamstring development

Think of this as the ugly stepsister of the leg extension. There are far better ways to work your hamstrings, the thigh muscles that help control your knee and hip joints, than curling your legs toward your butt. That move works only on the part of your hamstrings that flexes your knee joint. Your hamstrings also help extend your hips, so leg curls essentially work the muscle to half its potential. A much better alternative: a movement that combines hip extension and knee flexion.

Enter the Swiss-ball leg curl. This inclusive exercise works pretty much everything on the back of your body from your calves to the base of your shoulder blades. It also earns points from Zschau because, he says, "it gets the glutes involved, and it really activates your core muscles, as well."

To do it: lie supine on a mat with your feet and

lower calves positioned on top of a Swiss ball. With your arms on the floor and out to your sides to help you balance, begin by keeping your legs straight and pressing the ball into the floor with the backs of your heels. Keeping your abdominals braced tight, continue lifting your hips until only your upper back, head, and arms are in contact with the floor. Keeping your hips as high as possible, bend your knees and curl the ball in toward your butt with your feet. Pause for a second, then return the ball back out by straightening your legs, and lower your hips to the floor.

The Move

Barbell bench press

The Tweak

Use dumbbells instead

The Reason

Helps correct strength imbalances and reduces unnecessary shoulder strain

Long considered the king of all upper-body lifts, the traditional barbell bench press is not without its flaws. For starters, says Zschau, it's too easy for your weaker side to be a slacker. "When you press with a barbell, your stronger side is always going to be working harder than your weaker side, but you won't necessarily know it," he says. "Dumbbells essentially enable you to separate the two sides of the body and correct this problem by working each side independently." Once you've identified your lazy side, give it some extra work to catch up. Zschau recommends performing either more reps or sets until both sides are equally strong.

Another drawback of the barbell bench press: the strain on the shoulder joint. If you do the exercise as it's usually done, with the elbows held out from the body, the bones of the upper arms and shoulder blades veer dangerously close together. If your shoulder stability is

already a little shaky (swimmers, pitchers, tennis players, and quarterbacks, listen up), you increase the risk that your tendons and ligaments will get "pinched" between these two bones. Known as an impingement, it's a common and very painful condition that can often lead to even more severe shoulder injuries down the road. The solution here is also to do your bench presses with dumbbells instead of a bar. By keeping your elbows closer to your body and using a neutral grip (palms facing each other), you can dramatically reduce the amount of strain on your shoulders while still getting a good chest workout. Plus, dumbbells offer the added benefit of more accurately mimicking the motion of the chest: They allow you to bring your hands together at the top of the movement, thus producing a more forceful chest contraction than you can get with a bar.

Source: U24. Used with permission.

Heavier People Have Heart Attacks Earlier - By Ed Edelson, HealthDay Reporter

12 years sooner for the most obese, new research finds

The fatter you are, the more likely you are to have a heart attack earlier in life, a new study shows.

"Basically, it is showing that as people got progressively more obese, the rate at which they had heart attacks early went up dramatically," said Dr. Eric D. Peterson, a professor of medicine at Duke University Medical Center's Division of Cardiology and a member of the group reporting the findings.

Cardiologists at several institutions studied data on more than 111,000 people who had heart attacks, looking specifically at body mass index (BMI), a measure of obesity. Someone with a BMI of 30 or above is regarded as obese; a person 5 feet, 7 inches tall who weighs 192 pounds has a BMI of 30.

The average age of a first heart attack for people with a BMI of 18.5 or under was 74.6 years. For people with a BMI of 40 or over, it was 58.7 years. The age at which a first heart attack occurred went up steadily with increasing BMI; 3.5 years earlier for a BMI of 25 to 30, 6.8 years earlier for a BMI 30 to 35, 9.4 years for a BMI of 35 to 40, and 12 years earlier for a BMI 40 or higher.

"That is a pretty profound difference," Peterson said.

One reason for the difference is that obese people are more likely to have other risk factors for heart disease, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. "But even after adjusting for those factors, just being heavy added considerable risk," Peterson said.

The findings are published in the Sept. 16 issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

Another study in the same issue of the journal provided evidence for a mechanism by which obesity increases cardiac risk. Researchers at Leiden University in the Netherlands had obese people with diabetes practice "prolonged calorie restriction," or dieting in layman's terms.

BMI went down. But sophisticated tests such as magnetic resonance imaging and biochemical studies also showed that their bodies were better able to manage blood sugar levels and that there were beneficial effects on heart muscle cells.

"The news here is that heart muscle in obese diabetic individuals can be mobilized by eating less," said Dr. Heinrich Taegtmeyer, professor of medicine in cardiology at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston and co-author of an accompanying editorial comment.

To be sure, the mechanism by which dieting helps heart cells "is only vaguely understood," Taegtmeyer said. "It gets very biochemical and very molecular." A simple explanation is that caloric restriction activates an enzyme that prevents fat from being deposited in heart cells, he said.

Whatever the mechanism, the new research provides "one more reason not to be fat," Peterson said. Some obese people have taken comfort from studies indicating that they're more likely to survive a heart attack than thinner people, he noted. The new study indicates that the reason for that better survival is the heart attack in fat people occurs earlier in life, when people are otherwise sturdier, he said.

"If you had your choice, you would choose not to have a heart attack in the first place," Peterson said.

Both Peterson and Taegtmeyer cited animal studies showing that strict caloric restriction lengthens life.

"It has been shown in virtually every organism, from yeast to flies to worms to mammals, that caloric restriction heightens life expectancy," Taegtmeyer said. "The heart functions better with caloric restriction."