



# Food Bites

March 2016



## Fruit of the Month

### Pineapples

Pineapples are thought to have originated in Brazil and Paraguay in South America. They were first discovered by Europeans in 1493 on the Caribbean Island now known as Guadeloupe. Pineapples arrived in the Caribbean after centuries of Indian migration and commerce. When Christopher Columbus and other discoverers brought pineapples back to Europe, attempts were made to cultivate the sweet, prized fruit until it was realized that the fruit's need for a tropical climate inhibited its ability to flourish outside of the tropics. By the end of the 16th century, Portuguese and Spanish explorers introduced pineapples into many of their Asian, African and South Pacific colonies – countries in which pineapples are still grown today.

Pineapple is a great source of Vitamin C, which helps maintain healthy skin and bones. It contains an enzyme called Bromelain, which is excellent for digestion and has been found to help suppress coughs and loosen mucus. Bromelain is also good for meat tenderizing in cooking due to its ability to break down protein particles. Pineapples are high in fiber, low in calories, sodium and saturated fats and is excellent for weight loss.



wiseGEEK

## Vegetable of the Month

### Lettuce

Lettuce originated in the Mediterranean area and was first grown as a weed. Lettuce spread throughout Europe. On his second journey to the Americas, Columbus brought lettuce seeds to plant. Lettuce cultivation began in the United States in the 1600's when John Winthrop Jr. brought lettuce seeds to America from England.

Lettuce leaves are one of the very low calorie green-vegetables. Vitamins in lettuce are plentiful. Its fresh leaves are an excellent source of several Vitamin A and beta carotenes. Fresh leaves contain good amounts folates and vitamin C. It also contains good amounts of minerals like iron, calcium, magnesium, and potassium, which are very essential for body metabolism. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps controlling heart rate and blood pressure. Manganese is used by the body as a co-factor for the antioxidant enzyme, *superoxide dismutase*. Copper is required in the production of red blood cells. Iron is essential for red blood cell formation. It is rich in B-complex group of vitamins like thiamin, vitamin B-6 (pyridoxine), riboflavins. Regular inclusion of lettuce in salads is known to prevent osteoporosis, iron-deficiency anemia, and believed to protect from cardiovascular diseases, ARMD, Alzheimer's disease and cancers.



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# Eating Right When Money's Tight

Using *coupons* and looking for the best price are great ways to save money at the grocery store. Knowing how to find them is the first step to cutting costs on food.



- **Find deals**

Look for coupons with your receipt, as peeloffs on items, and on signs along aisle shelves.

- **Search for coupons**

Many stores still send ads and coupons for promotion, so don't overlook that so-called "junk mail." You can also do the Web search for "coupons."

- **Look for savings in the newspaper**

Brand name coupons are found as inserts in the paper every Sunday. Some stores will double the value of brand name coupons on certain days.

- **Join your store's loyalty program**

Signup is usually free and you can receive savings.

- **Buy when foods are on sale**

Maximize your savings by using coupons on sale items.

- **Find a coupon buddy**

Swap coupons you won't use with a friend.

- **Compare brands**

Store brand can be less expensive than some of the name brand foods. Compare the items to find better prices.

- **Stick to the list**

Make a shopping list for all the items you need. Keep a running list on your phone, on the refrigerator, or in a wallet. When you're in the store, do your best to buy only the items on your list.

# Get the Most for Your Food Budget

- **Plan, plan, plan!**

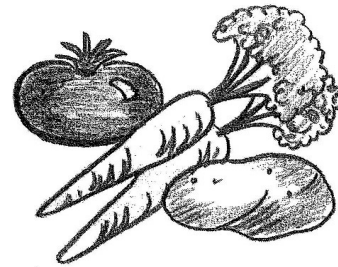
Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Include meals like stews, casseroles, or stir-fries, which “stretch” expensive items into more portions. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you need to buy.

- **Buy in bulk**

It is almost always cheaper to buy foods in bulk. Smart choices are family packs of chicken, steak, or fish and larger bags of potatoes and frozen vegetables.

- **Buy in season**

Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower the cost and add to the freshness!



- **Convenience costs... go back to the basics**

Convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut vegetables, and instant rice, oatmeal, or grits will cost you more than if you were to make them from scratch.

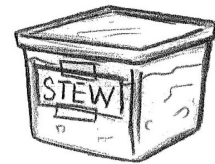
- **Easy on your wallet**

Certain foods are typically low-cost options all year round. Try beans for a less expensive protein food. For vegetables, buy carrots, greens, or potatoes. As for fruits, apples and bananas are good choices.

- **Cook once... eat all week!**

Prepare a large batch of favorite recipes on your day off (double or triple the recipe).

Freeze in individual containers. Use them throughout the week and you won't have to spend money on take-out meals.



- **Get your creative juices flowing**

Spice up your leftovers - use them in new ways. For example, try leftover chicken in a stir-fry or over a garden salad, or to make a chicken chili. Throwing away food is throwing away your money!

- **Eating out**

Restaurants can be expensive. Save money by getting the early bird special, going out for lunch instead of dinner, or looking for “2 for 1” deals. Order water instead of other beverages, which add to the bill.



## Chicken Enchiladas

- 1 lb. chicken breast tenders, rinsed & patted dry
- 1 can red or green enchilada sauce
- 8 flour tortillas
- 1 1/4 cup shredded Colby-Jack cheese, divided



1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Coat a medium nonstick skillet with cooking spray and cook chicken tenders over medium heat 6-8 minutes, or until no longer pink inside. Remove to a cutting board and shred apart with fork and knife.
2. Place chicken back in skillet, add enchilada sauce and heat on low for 5 minutes.
3. Evenly divide chicken mixture down center of each tortilla. Evenly sprinkle each with cheese and scallions. Roll tightly and arrange in prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.
4. Bake about 15 minutes, or until cheese is melted.

## Mexican Chicken Casserole

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can tomatoes
- 1 whole chicken, cooked, boned, and chopped
- 1 package flour tortillas
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese



1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, stir together cream of chicken soup, Cheddar cheese soup, cream of mushroom soup, and tomatoes. Stir in the chicken.
3. In a greased 9 x 13 inch pan, layer the tortillas and the chicken mixture, beginning and ending with tortillas. Sprinkle the cheese over the casserole and bake uncovered for 30 minutes.

## Tortellini Chicken Soup

- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 1/2 cup onions, chopped
- 1/2 cu; celery, sliced
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast, cubed
- 1 can chicken broth
- 1 cup cheese-filled tortellini, uncooked
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme leaves
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 Tbsp. parsley, snipped



1. Slice carrots. Chop onion. Slice celery.
2. Lightly spray with oil a 4 quart Casserole dish.
3. Cook chicken over medium heat 5 to 7 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink. Add remaining ingredients except parsley.
4. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Cover; reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until pasta is tender.
5. Just before serving, remove bay leaf and stir in parsley.

## Slow-Cooker Lemon Garlic Chicken

- 8 boneless skinless chicken thighs
- Juice and grated peel from 1 large lemon
- 3 tsp. garlic, minced
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 3 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- Fresh parsley, chopped, if desired



1. Spray 3- to 4-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. Place chicken thighs in slow cooker; sprinkle with grated lemon peel, garlic, 1/4 teaspoon of the salt and the pepper. Pour chicken stock over chicken.
2. Cover; cook on Low heat setting 4 to 5 hours.
3. Remove chicken from slow cooker; place on plate, and cover to keep warm. In small bowl, mix remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, the cornstarch, lemon juice and cream until well blended. Stir into liquid in cooker. Cover; cook on High heat setting 15 to 20 minutes or until thickened. Serve chicken with sauce. Garnish with chopped parsley.

## 30 Minute Skillet Chicken Stew

- 1 Tbsp. canola oil
- 2 chicken breast, diced
- 1 tsp. seasoning salt
- 4 medium potatoes, sliced
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp. corn starch
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 3 cups frozen vegetables of your choice
- Salt and pepper to taste



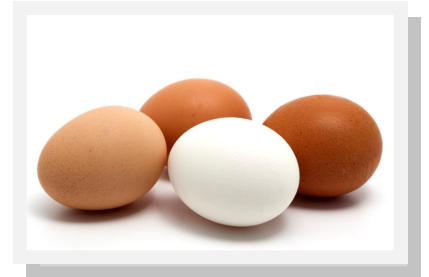
1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Add chicken and sprinkle with seasoning salt. Cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned.
2. Add potatoes and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add chicken broth and bring to a boil over medium high heat. Cover and reduce to medium low heat and simmer for 8-10 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
4. Combine corn starch and water and stir into skillet. Add vegetables, cover and simmer over low heat until vegetables are warmed through, 3-5 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste.
5. Serve with some bread or rolls for dipping!

# How to Cook an Egg

Everyone has an opinion on how to cook an egg. Wonder no more, egg lovers: here's the right way to prepare this powerhouse protein. Filled with easy step-by-step instructions, use this guide to learn how to cook eggs with tips for making omelets, hard-cooked, poached, scrambled and over-easy eggs.

## Types of Eggs

- **Grade AA and A:** Grade AA eggs have firm whites and high, round yolks. Grade A eggs are usually what you'll find in stores. Their whites are considered "reasonably" firm.
- **Cage-Free:** These eggs come from hens that live in open structures such as barns, not cages.
- **Fortified or Enriched:** The hens that lay these eggs are fed a diet supplemented with health-boosting nutrients like DHA, vitamin E, folate and flaxseed.
- **Free-Range:** Eggs from hens that either live outdoors or are given a certain amount of access to the outdoors.
- **Organic:** To earn this sought-after label, farmers must adhere to the USDA's National Organic Program guidelines. That means their hens only eat certified organic feed and are not given antibiotics, vaccines or synthetic hormones.
- **Pastured:** Hens are raised on pasture and allowed to feed on grasses and insects. Check your local farmers market.



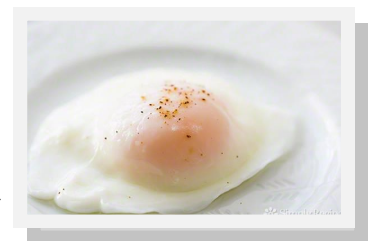
## How to Hard Cook Eggs

1. To prevent cracking, remove eggs from fridge 30 minutes before cooking.
2. Place eggs in a single layer in a large saucepan; add enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Bring eggs to a boil over high heat.
3. Immediately remove pan from heat and cover. The residual heat in the water cooks the eggs (15 minutes for extra-large eggs, 12 for large, 9 for medium).
4. Drain; shake the pan gently to crack the eggshells all over.
5. Immediately submerge eggs in ice water; set aside to cool.
6. Peel eggs from the large, rounded end under cool running water.
7. Seeing green? If an egg cooks longer than necessary, a green ring forms around the yolk. This one is cooked perfectly.
8. Unpeeled, hard-cooked eggs will keep in the fridge for up to 1 week. If peeled, store covered in cool water in the fridge for 3 to 4 days.



## How to Poach Eggs

1. Add 2 to 3 inches of water to a large saucepan or deep skillet and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to the point where water barely bubbles.
2. Break eggs, one at a time, into small coffee cups.
3. Holding a cup close to the surface, slide egg into the water.
4. Cook the eggs until whites are completely set and yolks are still soft, 3 to 5 minutes. Take care not to stir.
5. With a slotted spoon, gently lift the eggs from the water and let drain.
6. When making poached eggs to top toasted bread, lift the eggs from the water with a slotted spoon and place on paper towels to drain.





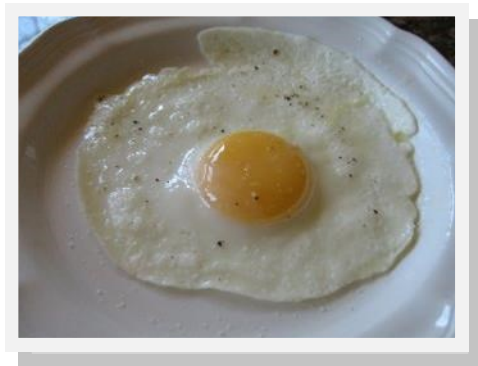
## How to Scramble Eggs

1. Crack eggs into a bowl. Whisk or beat together 1 tablespoon of milk per egg with a pinch of salt and pepper.
2. In a large nonstick skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Pour in egg mixture.
3. As the eggs start to set, gently pull them across the pan with an inverted spatula or wooden spoon, forming large soft curds. Continue lifting and folding the eggs until the mixture has thickened and no visible liquid remains.
4. Let the eggs cook for about 30 seconds or until the bottom starts to set before you stir.
5. For creamiest results, fight the urge to stir constantly.



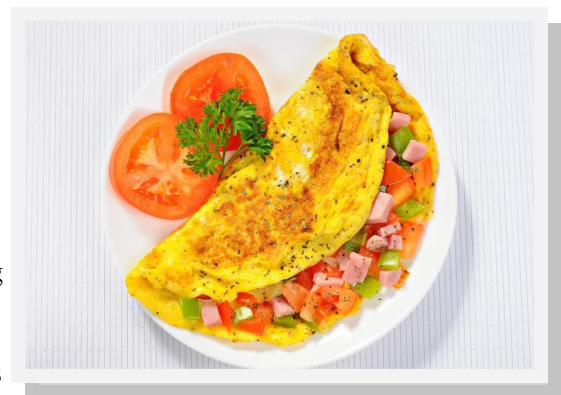
## How to Cook Over-Easy Eggs

1. Heat butter in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until it's hot and foamy.
2. Break eggs and gently slide into pan, one at a time. Reduce heat to low immediately.
3. Cook slowly until whites are completely firm and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard.
4. Carefully slide a spatula under each egg and flip. Cook until desired doneness.
5. Gentle heat ensures even cooking and prevents eggs from becoming tough and rubbery.



## How to Make an Omelet

1. Omelets cook quickly, so it's a good idea to precook raw filling ingredients before you start your eggs. Plan on 1/3 to 1/2 cup filling per 2-egg omelet.
2. Crack eggs into a bowl. Whisk or beat together 1 tablespoon of water per egg with a pinch of salt and pepper.
3. Melt butter in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot and foamy. Tilt pan to ensure entire bottom is coated with butter.
4. Add egg mixture to skillet (mixture should set immediately at the edges). As eggs start to set, push the cooked edges toward the center, letting the uncooked portion flow underneath. Repeat until eggs are set and there's no visible liquid.
5. Spoon your filling on top of one side; fold the other side over filling and cook to desired doneness. Slide the omelet onto a plate.
6. An 8- or 10-inch nonstick slope-sided skillet with a slippery-smooth surface and slightly thick base that distributes heat evenly is what we reach for when making omelets in the test kitchen. We're not omelet-biased here: They also make short work of grilled cheese sandwiches and quesadillas.



## Meaty Stuffed Peppers

- 5 green or red bell peppers
- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can Italian-style tomato sauce
- 1 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese



1. Cut tops off bell peppers, and reserve tops; remove and discard seeds and membranes. Cook peppers in boiling salted water 4 minutes or until crisp-tender; drain.
2. Coarsely chop reserved pepper tops. Cook chopped pepper, beef, and onion in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until meat crumbles and is no longer pink; drain.
3. Return meat mixture to skillet; stir in tomato sauce and next 3 ingredients; cook over medium-high heat 3 minutes or until mixture thickens.
4. Carefully spoon meat mixture into peppers. Sprinkle with cheese.

## Beef Lover's Chili

- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 can mild diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 1/2 cup water
- Cilantro, chopped
- Jalapeno pepper, sliced



1. Coat a large skillet with cooking spray. Cook onion and peppers 5 minutes until tender, stirring occasionally. Remove and set aside.
2. In same skillet, cook ground beef over medium heat until browned, stirring occasionally; drain.
3. Return onion and peppers to skillet. Stir in remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer 20 to 25 minutes, or until heated through. Garnish with chopped cilantro and sliced jalapeno peppers.



## Meatball Cabbage Rolls

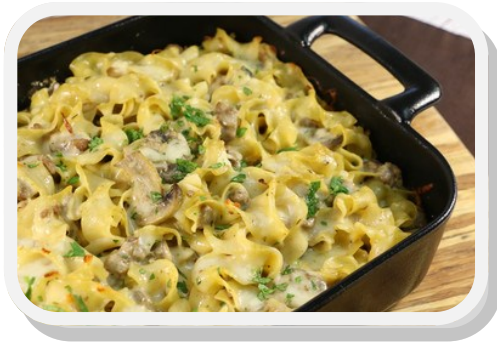
- 1 large head of cabbage
- 2 can tomato cause, divided
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup uncooked long grain rice
- 2 Tbsp. chili powder
- Salt and garlic powder to taste
- 1 lb. ground beef



1. In a Dutch oven, cook cabbage in boiling water just until leaves fall off head. Set aside 14-16 large leaves for rolls. (Refrigerate remaining cabbage for another use.) Cut out the thick vein from the bottom of each reserved leaf, making a V-shaped cut.
2. In a large bowl, combine 8 oz. of tomato sauce, onion, rice, chili powder, salt and garlic powder. Crumble beef over mixture; mix well. Shape into 2-in. balls. Place one meatball on each cabbage leaf; overlap cut ends of leaf. Fold in sides, beginning from the cut end. Roll up completely to enclose meatball. Secure with toothpicks.
3. Place in a 5-qt. slow cooker. Pour remaining tomato sauce over cabbage rolls. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until meat is no longer pink and cabbage is tender. Discard toothpicks.

## Easy Ground Beef Stroganoff Casserole

- 1 lb. wide egg noodles
- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
- 8 oz. button mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 8 oz. sour cream
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley



1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly spray a 9 x 13 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Place a large stockpot filled with at 4 quarts water and 1 Tablespoon salt over high heat. When it comes to a rolling boil, cook noodles for the time specified on the package. Drain.
3. While water heats and pasta cooks, place a 10 or 11 inch x 3 inch deep pot over medium high heat. Add the beef and cook until it is no longer pink, breaking up chunks with the back of a spoon.
4. Use a slotted spoon to remove meat, but leave any fat and juices in the pan. Over medium heat, cook the onions and thyme in the same pan about 2 minutes until onion is translucent. Add mushrooms and continue to cook on medium high heat, stirring until liquids have released from the mushrooms and then evaporated, about 5 minutes.
5. Return meat to the pan, add broth and tomato paste and stir over medium heat 2 minutes.
6. Off heat, stir in sour cream and salt and pepper. Add noodles to the pan and stir, then add meat and about half the mozzarella, stirring just to combine. Pour into prepared bake dish and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Cover with a piece of foil which has been sprayed with cooking spray and bake 25 minutes. Remove foil and continue to bake until lightly browned, about 10 more minutes.
7. Garnish with chopped parsley if desired.

# 13 Ways to Add Fruits and Vegetables to Your Diet

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is a cornerstone of good health. It helps control blood pressure and cholesterol, keeps arteries flexible, protects bones, and is good for the eyes, brain, digestive system, and just about every other part of the body. But many of us have trouble putting that knowledge into practice and getting five or more servings a day.

One big barrier to tapping into the power of produce is the perception that fruits and vegetables are expensive. That's not necessarily so. You can buy three servings of fruits and four servings of vegetables for well under \$3 a day, according to a survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's cheap insurance when you consider the high financial, physical, and emotional cost of a heart attack or stroke or a chronic disease like diabetes, osteoporosis, or vision loss.



Preparation time, unfamiliarity, and old habits are other barriers to eating more fruits and vegetables. Here are a baker's dozen of suggestions for tipping aside these barriers and enjoying delicious and nutritious foods.

1. **Know your needs.** For the mythical 2,000-calorie-a-day diet, the latest guidelines recommend a minimum of 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables a day. More is better.
2. **Set a goal.** If fruits and vegetables are minor items in your menu, start by eating one extra fruit or vegetable a day. When you're used to that, add another and keep going.
3. **Be sneaky.** Adding finely grated carrots or zucchini to pasta sauce, meat loaf, chili, or a stew is one way to get an extra serving of vegetables.
4. **Try something new.** It's easy to get tired of apples, bananas, and grapes. Try a kiwi, mango, fresh pineapple, or some of the more exotic choices now found in many grocery stores.
5. **Blend in.** A fruit smoothie is a delicious way to start the day or tide you over until dinner.
6. **Be a big dipper.** If the natural flavor of carrots, celery, broccoli, or other veggies isn't enough, try dipping them into hummus or another bean spread, some spiced yogurt, or even a bit of ranch dressing. Or slather peanut butter on a banana or slices of apple.
7. **Spread it on.** Try mashed avocado as a dip with diced tomatoes and onions, or as a sandwich spread, topped with spinach leaves, tomatoes, and a slice of cheese.
8. **Start off right.** Ditch your morning donut for an omelet with onions, peppers, and mushrooms. Top it with some salsa to wake up your palate. Or boost your morning cereal or oatmeal with a handful of strawberries, blueberries, or dried fruit.
9. **Drink up.** Having a 6-ounce glass of low-sodium vegetable juice instead of a soda gives you a full serving of vegetables and spares you 10 teaspoons or more of sugar.
10. **Give them the heat treatment.** Roasting vegetables is easy and brings out new flavors. Cut up onions, carrots, zucchini, asparagus, turnips and coat with olive oil, add a dash of balsamic vinegar, and roast at 350° until done. Grilling is another way to bring out the taste of vegetables. Use roasted or grilled veggies as a side dish, put them on sandwiches, or add them to salads.
11. **Let someone else do the work.** If peeling, cutting, and chopping aren't your thing, food companies and grocers offer an ever-expanding selection of prepared produce.
12. **Improve on nature.** Don't hesitate to jazz up vegetables with spices, chopped nuts, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, or a specialty oil like walnut or sesame oil.
13. **Get help from Willy Wonka.** Try dipping your fruit in chocolate. In addition to a delectable dessert, you get plenty of heart-healthy antioxidants, some fiber, and a host of vitamins, minerals, and other phytonutrients.

# Make Better Choices When Eating Out

How often do you eat out? Once a day? Once a week? Rarely? Almost every meal? People who eat out more often, particularly at fast food restaurants, are more likely to be overweight or obese. However, you can still manage your body weight when eating out by making better choices.

To eat out without blowing your calorie budget, there are three things to think about:

1. **What** you are eating and drinking.
2. **How much** you are eating and drinking, and
3. **How** your meal is prepared.



## **Get Started**

### **\* What** are you eating and drinking?

- Check posted calorie amounts, and choose lower calorie menu options. Many restaurants post calories on menus, in pamphlets, or on their websites. Compare food and beverage options and think about how they fit within your daily calorie limit. For example, if your daily calorie limit is 1600 calories, think twice before ordering a meal with 1300 calories. Also, don't forget about the calories from drinks, dressings, dips, appetizers, and desserts. They all count!
- Choose dishes, that include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods. Focusing on smart food choices from each of the 5 food groups can help you stay on track at restaurants.
- Think about what you drink. Ask for water or order fat-free or low-fat milk, unsweetened tea, or other drinks without added sugars. If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, select options with fewer calories. For example, a frozen pina colada or margarita can have over 400 calories!
- Watch out for desserts. Some restaurants are serving small portions of desserts, which can help decrease calorie intake. However, as a good rule, eat dessert less often.

### **\* How much** are you eating and drinking?

- Avoid oversized portions. A major challenge for many people when they eat out is being served large portions. Most people eat and drink more when served larger portions. To overcome this challenge, choose a smaller size option, share your meal, or take home half of your meal. For example, hamburgers can range from as few as 250 calories or 800 calories or more. Choose a smaller option with fewer calories.
- To help you eat less when eating out, order from the menu instead of heading for the all-you-can-eat buffet. Many people overeat at buffets. Getting a plate of food, instead of unlimited access to food, may help you eat less. Don't forget that you don't have to clean your plate!

### **\* How** is your meal prepared?

- Order steamed, grilled, or broiled dishes instead of those that are fried or sautéed. Avoid choosing foods with the following words: creamy, breaded, battered, or buttered. These words indicate that the food is higher in calories.
- Ask for dressings, sauces, and syrups "on the side" so you can add only as much as you want. These sides are often high in calories - so don't eat much of them.





**Food Bites**

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