

## *How to eat healthier meals during the busy Festive season*

You're out Christmas shopping, and you stop in at a small cafe for dinner.

You're meeting work colleagues in the city center for lunch.

You're grabbing a quick bite with some friends before you head on to meet family.

The situation may change.

But the question stays the same: What are you going to eat?

### **Yes, you CAN eat well this Festive season!**

A few simple techniques can keep you on track and help you in making the right food decisions when you're not in the comfort of your kitchen.

### **Three "confident and in control" strategies for dining out.**

#### **If you can, pick a healthy restaurant.**

Make your life easy and try to avoid the worst-case scenario: Fast food chains and petrol stations are only for emergencies.

With some creativity, though, you can do well almost anywhere.

Look for restaurants that use fresh, local, or organic ingredients.

If you don't have much to choose from, try finding a place with a salad bar and wait service.

If you're ordering from behind a counter

instead of at a table, it's probably not the best choice, though there are exceptions.

#### **Look for the "Magic 3".**

Once you're sitting down with your menu, look for the "magic 3" choices:

- Vegetables and fruits
- Lean protein
- High-fiber, slow-digesting carbs such as beans or whole grains

These are your "Festive season" friendly options.

Avoid anything that has the words "fried", "cheesy", "crispy", "glazed", or "secret blend". These words make food more delicious

Choose this . . .

. . . not this.

Add extra veggies to round out your meal. One simple phrase to use:

*"Can I get some extra vegetables with that? I'm willing to pay a little more if need be."*

This is rarely a problem, though it may cost you an extra couple of pennies. Look at it as your "flat stomach tax."

### **Know what you're ordering. (In other words, ask.)**

You can't always trust

the menu. So, ask the server what exactly you're ordering.

Consider these simple questions to ask:

- How are vegetables cooked? Is it possible that I could get them steamed?
- Could you serve the dressings/sauces on the side?
- Could you tell me if the chicken is breaded or grilled?

These simple questions can save you from eating hundreds of unwanted calories, and stuff like added sugar or sodium.

Remember to ask politely, with a smile and no food-fascist overtones.

## **How to stick to your guns**

Well-meaning friends, family members, co-workers, or clients might try to bump you off track.

- Most of the time, they're not even aware they're doing it:

*"Just try some of this sticky toffee pudding! You'll love it."*

*"Here, take the rest of this pepperoni pizza. I don't want it to go to waste."*

- Other times, they're right up in your face about it:

*"Why are you avoiding Food X? That's crazy."*

*"Are you on some kind of silly diet?"*

*"It's Christmas"*

- Whatever the case, don't let them get to you. Respond with.

*"No thanks, I'm enjoying my meal. But thanks for the offer."*

*"Those chips look tasty, but I'll pass this time around. "*

Whatever method you choose, remember that **the only person's actions you can control are your own.**

You can't control what a dining companion thinks, does, or says. You can only control what *you* think, do, or say.

Remember: **YOU are in charge of what's important to YOU.**

## Take away

1. **Plan before going out to eat.**

**If you're picking the restaurant, then ensure it will guarantee a nourishing, well-prepared meal. Search online for menus before you go out and avoid places like fast-food restaurants.**

2. **Look for the "Magic 3".**

**The best choices at restaurants are:**

- Vegetables and fruits
- Lean protein
- High-fiber, slow-digesting carbs such as beans or whole grains