



Tips for Dining Out

By: Melissa Haug, Assistant Director of Fitness

So you're all geared up for a delicious restaurant meal with family and friends for one occasion or another. You reach for the menu and begin wondering what to order. Your mind then wonders, "Is everyone eating light and healthy?" If you're trying to make a healthy choice to impress your confidants, narrow your options down by utilizing some new techniques. The choice is yours.

Did you Know:

- **There are 935,000 restaurant locations in the United States.**
- **The U.S. restaurant industry revenue is projected to reach \$537 billion in 2007.**
- **Americans eat foods prepared away-from-home an average of four to five times per week.**
- **Forty-seven cents of every U.S. food dollar is spent away from home.**

Restaurant meals tend to be larger than meals eaten at home because "America" demands more grub for their hard earned buck. These meals are most often higher in calories, fat, saturated fat and sodium. Without the "nutrition labels", like food items on grocery store shelves, it's not always easy to identify the healthier choices.

In March 2007, a website was launched to take the guesswork out of restaurant dining for health-, weight-, and nutrition-conscious consumers. The website is the innovation of California-based HEALTHY DINING, a 17-year-old small business comprised of dietitians and health educators dedicated to facilitating the development, promotion and selection of healthful menu items at the nation's restaurants.

This wonderful website, provides nutrition information (calories, total fat, saturated fat, sodium, protein, carbohydrates, sugar, fiber and fruit/vegetable servings) for healthier menu items available at nearly 50,000 U.S. restaurant locations (and growing).

Simply "search" for restaurants by specifying your geographic location, preferred price range, and other optional criteria such as take-out, delivery and catering. In the future, a search by cuisine type - Chinese, Italian, Mexican, etc. - will be added.

After submitting your desired selection criteria, a list of matched restaurants appears. Finally, clicking on restaurant's logo brings up a full page of information about that restaurant, most notably the nutrition information for 4-10 of the restaurant's healthier menu items.

To be included on the site, a restaurant must offer at least four dishes that meet HEALTHY DINING's nutrition criteria:

Entrées (or full meals) must include at least one of the following:

- Lean proteins (skinless chicken/turkey, fish/seafood or vegetable protein)
- Fruits and/or vegetables
- 100% whole grains

Additionally, entrées or full meals must contain:

- 750 calories or less
- 25 grams of fat or less
- 8 grams of saturated fat or less

HEALTHY DINING works with participating restaurants to select a combination of menu items that represent the restaurant well, are popular, and are likely to meet the nutrition criteria described above.

If restaurants already have the nutrition analysis for their dishes, HEALTHY DINING verifies the accuracy of their data. If they do not have analysis, HEALTHY DINING has the ability to conduct the computerized nutrition analysis.

It's time you join the masses of Americans who are getting the message about nutrition like never before. For more information on this new and useful resource, visit HealthyDiningFinder.com