

MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 26

Dining out

If you are trying to build healthy habits that include eating nutritious food more often, dining out can be a challenge to staying on track. However, with a little extra thought and planning, you and your family can make healthy choices and enjoy dining out.

Scope out the menu

Thanks to the internet, it is often easy to look up restaurant menus online to make sure that nutritious options are included. You can choose your meal before you go, or keep a few different options in mind and decide later.



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Did you know?

Family meal time can happen anywhere! Dining out as a family provides parents a chance to show their kids that making healthy choices can be done when eating out.



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Explore substitutions

When at a restaurant, ask the server about possible substitutions for traditional sides such as fries and onion rings. Look for opportunities to get more veggies included in your meal, either as a side salad or cooked as part of the main dish.

A key part of making healthy choices is being aware of how something is cooked. Words such as *fried*, *creamed*, *battered*, *baked* and *grilled* all describe different ways that food can be prepared. For example, if you are trying to avoid eating too much saturated fat, avoid dishes that are creamed or buttered.

Share your meal

Most restaurants in the U.S. serve meals that have enough food for two people. Consider sharing one meal with a friend or family member, or asking for a to-go box and enjoying the rest later.

Enjoy!

Use these tips to help guide your choices. Part of making healthy choices is understanding when some choices aren't the most nutritious and allowing yourself to fit them into your lifestyle. When eating out, enjoy the food on your plate, the restaurant environment and the people around the table.

WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

Lentils of the Southwest (serves 6)

1. In a small pot, add **½ cup dry lentils** (green or brown) and **1¼ cups water**. Bring to a boil over high heat. Then reduce heat to low. Cook uncovered until tender, about 30 minutes.
2. In medium skillet, heat **1 teaspoon olive oil**. Add **2 tablespoons diced onions** and **1 teaspoon minced garlic**. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in **½ teaspoon chili powder** and **1 teaspoon each of cumin** and **red chili pepper**. Reduce heat to low. Cook 2 minutes.

3. Add onion mixture to cooked lentils. Add **¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons water**. Stir in **½ cup diced tomatoes** and **½ teaspoon salt**. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce to low and simmer uncovered for 20 minutes.
4. Before serving, sprinkle with a little fresh **cilantro**. Enjoy!

Recipe adapted from United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2012, October). *Recipes for healthy kids: Cookbook for homes*, p. 61. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/lentilssw-homes.pdf>

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MSU Extension's children and youth programs address needs and issues from birth through age 19, providing parents with educational resources related to your child's development and giving youth the opportunity through 4-H programs to build leadership and teach practical life skills.

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