

# Eating Clean while Dining Out

*It is my personal mission to provide support and empowerment for those who want to live their most conscious lifestyle, yet. Eating out is a common culprit in falling off the clean eating, conscious living bandwagon so here is a compilation of my favorite dining out tips. Be adventurous and try something new!*

## Be Prepared.

Eat before you go. If I know I am eating at a restaurant that is not of my choosing, I will eat a snack or small dinner, prior to the meal.

Call the restaurant and check with the chef. I have some non-negotiables with the food I consume, like; non-GMO, no refined vegetable oils, free range organic meat and gluten-free, so I always call ahead to ask questions about their menu. Being able to ask questions first allows me to be creative with what I have to work with. For instance, if they use vegetable oil on their vegetables I can have them steam them instead.

Have a list of your go-to restaurant options. There are a handful of restaurants where I know it is safe to eat and I often try to be the one to pick the eating spot. It is very helpful to have these go-to's! You can create your list by viewing online menus and reviews. Some of my favorite ones in Fort Worth are: Righteous Foods, HG Supply, Juice Junkies, Brewed & Chipotle.

## Be Assertive.

Skip the breads and other treats that are often left on the table, to avoid preservatives, gluten and possible genetically modification. Snacking before can be helpful as can ordering healthier appetizer options.

Ask about preparation of the meals. There can be lurking chemicals in spices and oils used to cook with. I often ask if the meat comes seasoned and if the answer is yes, I assume it has MSG in it somewhere.

Ask for what you want; including modifications, and substitutions, to the menu. Think of asking for grilled instead of fried, and maybe hold the oil if all they use are vegetable oils. Combine meals, too! Aim for eating a variety of color, mostly fresh ingredients. Ordering a bunch of side veggies can turn into a wonderful vegetarian spread.

## Be Discerning.

Assume there are marketing schemes in restaurants, just like there are on food boxes. Ask questions about the menu, like what ingredients are in the sauces, the quality of the meat, etc.

My rule of thumb, if I feel that the server cannot answer my questions I assume the answer and make choices accordingly, like maybe ordering a bunch of side vegetables instead of an entree.

## Be Grateful (Mindful).

Thanking your food before eating activates the healing potential of gratitude. (Insert link here) It also brings you into the present moment which translates into more mindful eating and awareness of the connection to your food.

Take more chews. Chewing your food more increases digestion and it slows down the entire process, which can be helpful since it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you are no longer hungry.

Restaurants often oversize meal portions so ask for lighter sizes or take half of it home for seconds.

Connecting with your food through preparing it is an experience that cannot be replaced and is a deeply healing process. I like to follow the 80/20 rule with dining out, too, which is eating at home 80% of the time and dine out 20% (or less).