

## How to Dine Out Mindfully and In Style

It's interesting how certain phrases have the ability to simultaneously strike fear and bring joy to listeners as their right brains and left brains duke it out. "Twins! We have tickets to the opera. It's the police. And...We're going out to dinner." if dining out is your nutritional Achilles' heel, read on. Like Q arming James Bond with a secret arsenal, allow me to equip you with my top ten strategies for dining out in style while maintaining your waistline.

- 1) **Don't be boorish when ordering.** Be specific about your needs; just ask nicely, and be cool about it. Restaurants are in business to please us by meeting our culinary requirements. Repeat customers are what they need to survive; they want us to come back!
- 2) **Don't eat "off the rack."** When you buy clothes, do they fit perfectly without alteration? When you moved into your house, did you keep the carpet, paint, and curtains? So, why eat what someone else has determined is appropriate for you? Customize your eating to suit *your* taste and needs. Be creative. Have two appetizers instead of a dinner plate; ask for brown rice instead of mashed potatoes. Ask for steamed or grilled veggies instead of French fries. Be especially careful about the portion sizes on the dinner plate, the sides, as well as the entrée. Understand that restaurants may receive and execute your requests differently at upscale eateries verses mass-market chains.
- 3) **Be a regular.** Making special requests and having it *your* way will take some finesse by the waitstaff and the kitchen. Being a regular will go a long way to accommodating your special needs, especially during Friday and Saturday nights. If you will be dining at a new restaurant, review the menu online so you will be familiar with its offerings.
- 4) **Fib a Little.** If you do not want cream sauce, pasta, etc., just say you are allergic to them. No waiter wants to see uncontrollable sneezing or barfing at his table. If you just can't bring yourself to say that, then, "I'm doing a triathlon, and my trainer will kill me," should do the trick. Your

dining partners will be duly impressed.

- 5) **Be assertive but polite.** “On the side, please,” when it comes to dressing, sauce, etc.
- 6) **Avoid the fattening five adjectives.** Fried, in a cream sauce, sinful, butter, and rich. Look for words such as baked, broiled, grilled, and lite.
- 7) **Choose wisely.** A good way to stay in control when dining is to always choose a healthy entree, and then consider the alcoholic beverage, appetizer, and dessert as three options. If you are satisfied with your nutrition and exercise that day, choose two. If you need to reduce your intake a little, choose one.
- 8) **Indulge in moderation.** Regarding deserts, strive to reduce the calories while still enjoying your dining experience. A gourmet coffee, espresso, after dinner drink, or fresh fruit makes a nice dénouement. While not devoid of calories, each has far fewer than pies, cakes, ice cream, or crème brûlée.
- 9) **Use “doggie bags.”** once you have some experience under your now-smaller belt, you may attempt the daring “second plate” maneuver. When the waitstaff delivers your main course, say, “Wow, this looks great! May I have another plate please? I’ll take this home in a doggie bag, and it will be wonderful for tomorrow’s dinner.” By removing what you plan on taking home at the *start* of the meal, you will be exercising portion control and prevent incremental nibbling on what was to be placed in a doggie bag at the *end* of the meal.
- 10) **Ask yourself, “What would James Bond tip?”** Remember, you will be asking for special treatment, so be a generous tipper. Your kindness will be remembered the next time you ask for something out of the ordinary.