

HEALTHY HABITS: HOW-TOS

Eat out for Less

Enjoy a restaurant meal -- without breaking the bank or packing on pounds.



Eating out is one of life's great pleasures. After a long, stressful day, what a relief it is to stroll into a restaurant, place your order and chow down. Unfortunately, there are two major drawbacks to restaurant dining: the shrinking effect on your wallet and the expanding effect on your waistline. But you don't need to confine yourself to your own cooking (and cleanup). Here's how to eat out with a clear conscience, keeping your bill and figure trim.

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The last time I fit into my skinny jeans was:

- A. Before the holidays
- B. Before I hit adulthood
- C. Never. My own genes get

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Diversify: Try Two Appetizers

The entree, the centerpiece of every meal, can often be expensive and overwhelming. Why not diversify for lower costs and a lighter feeling? An added bonus is that two appetizers offer an array of tastes, making your meal a bit more adventurous than usual.

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Order the House Wine

Yes, you adored *Sideways* and have accumulated many cultivated opinions on wine over the years. But consider momentarily silencing the sommelier within and choosing the house wine. It's cheaper but with just as many phytochemicals, so you'll be able to get a buzz *and* stick to your budget.

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Win With Water

Between creamers and sugar in coffee and high fructose corn syrup in soda, your favorite meal-accompanying liquids are adding tons of calories to your meals. Plus, sodas, juices, coffees and teas can tamper with the taste of your food. Get some water instead; refills are free!

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Halve It for Home

Are you the type who has to clean your plate down to the last basil leaf, even if you felt full 15 minutes before? If so, you might want to try asking for only half your order to be served and the other half to be packaged to go. This way your meal -- and your wallet -- will stretch.

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Walk on the Veggie Side

You don't have to be concerned about the animals or committed to your health to enjoy a vegetarian meal. Gone are the days of mystery soy meat substitutes; in contemporary America, vegetarianism is mainstream. Next time, instead of ignoring the leafier options, give them a chance. You'll pay less and get your daily vegetable intake.

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Linger Over Coffee -- Not Dessert

The meal is nearing the end, but you'd love to keep the good times rolling. The dessert menu beckons with tantalizing delights. There is a better path than succumbing to its sugary temptations. Coffee or tea -- with a teaspoon of sugar or honey, respectively -- is a worthy substitute that will not only allow you to continue your dinner conversation, but also get that burst of sweetness you crave, without dooming your diet.

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About the Author

Maya Rock is a freelance writer/editor and a young adult novelist based in New York City. She is also a frequent contributor to [Completely You](#), and she blogs regularly at [Maya-Rock.com](#) about her adventures in the city.

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