

Smart and Successful Socializing

Objectives

- Identify tips to stay on track with a healthy eating plan while socializing.
- Learn healthy preparation steps for cooking foods.
- Identify ways to cut fat and sugar from recipes.

Discussion

- Holiday gatherings and pot lucks: If you're faced with a pot luck situation where you will be bringing your own dish or if you're hosting this year's holiday gathering and cooking the food yourself, be sure to choose healthy preparation steps.
- Baking usually refers to cakes, pies, cookies and other treats, but it's a great way to prepare chicken and fish. Most baking is done in a preheated oven between 325 and 425 degrees.
- Roasting is a simple and delicious way to prepare vegetables. Lightly coat cut-up carrots, potatoes, and bell peppers – or any vegetable you like – with a small amount of olive oil or canola oil spray. Spread them on a non-stick cookie sheet and roast for 30 to 40 minutes in a preheated 400 degree oven.
- Boiling is another option. It means immersing food completely in a generous amount of rapidly boiling liquid. It works well with eggs, potatoes, and pastas.
- Blanching means cooking food briefly in hot water. This helps fresh vegetables retain their crunch and bright colors.
- Steaming also relies on liquid for cooking, but the liquid never touches the food. Instead you boil water or seasoned broth in a closed pot while the food sits in a steamer basket or rack over the liquid, cooking the food in a steam bath. It's a particularly healthy way to cook because it requires no added fat. Sprinkle steamed vegetables lightly with lemon juice or balsamic vinegar and fresh herbs.
- Broiling and grilling require cooking your food near a high-heat source. In broiling, the heat comes from above the food, while in grilling, the heat comes from below.
- Sautéing uses a small amount of oil to rapidly cook food in a preheated pan. Use olive or canola oil, and cut your chicken, fish or vegetables into small, evenly sized pieces to ensure quick and even cooking.
- Microwaving is an excellent way to keep vegetables crisp and brightly colored when cooking them. To preserve their nutrients and cancer-fighting phytochemicals, use only a spoonful or two of water, cover with a damp paper towel, and microwave for 1 to 2 minutes. Make sure your microwaved foods are cut into similar shapes and thicknesses so they'll cook evenly.

- When possible, try to remember to use whole grain products, which are higher in fiber. Also use a variety of fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables and fruits. When cooking vegetables, leave the peel on when possible to get the most nutrition. Be sure to wash and scrub those vegetables under running water first to help avoid foodborne illness.
- Making-over your favorite recipes is also another way that you can enjoy the foods that you love, and everyone can benefit. There are many smart substitutions for reducing fat, sodium, and sugar in recipes.
- Try to reduce the fat in your favorite recipes by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$. Try using unsweetened applesauce, low-fat yogurt, or prune puree in place of the fat in your favorite recipe.
- You can also experiment by reducing the sugar by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ in your favorite baked products. Keep the sweetness by using non-nutritive sweeteners, adding cinnamon and vanilla, or pureed fruit to the recipe.
- Cut the sodium in recipes by experimenting with herbs, spices, or even citrus zest to your food. Roasting also helps to bring out the full flavor of your favorite vegetables. Adding vinegar or citrus zest is a great way to add flavor without adding salt, as is adding fresh hot peppers to your dish.
- Although we aren't always in control of the foods prepared during the holidays or when we're eating at our favorite restaurants, we can control much more than we realize.
- Eat smaller, lower-calorie meals during the day so you can enjoy a special treat later.
- You can also eat a healthy snack before leaving the house – a hungry stomach can sabotage even the strongest willpower.
- When arriving at a party, don't rush to the food or appetizer table where many, many calories await you. Also, avoid the appetizers, the bread basket, and the chips and salsa at your favorite restaurant, which can add many calories before your meal even arrives.
- Make only one trip to a buffet line, and be selective in the foods that you choose. Choose only the foods you really want to eat. Keep your portions small. Try using the salad plate rather than a big dinner plate in a buffet situation. When eating out, ask for a to-go box immediately, and put half of your meal in the box. You've saved yourself the misery of overeating, and you've also provided another meal for yourself! Better yet, save money and split an entrée with a friend or loved one.
- Don't hang out around the food table. Grazing can get you in trouble fast.
- Don't forget the importance of exercise. Indulging in a dessert may cost you a few more laps around the track. You can even enjoy socializing with friends and family with a post-meal walk together. Just think of how much better you'll all feel.
- Have fun, and don't get frustrated if you slip up. We should be able to enjoy ourselves and the foods that we eat. Keep your goals in perspective and get back on track – don't give up.

Sources: 1) Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's "The Healthy Kitchen – Healthy Holiday Foods" lesson provided by Dr. Susan Ballabina and Dana Tarter. 2) Step Up Scale Down, a 12-week weight loss program created by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



Watching the Waistline When Eating Out

Americans love to eat out. In fact, a large part of every food dollar is spent on food prepared by someone else. Unfortunately, eating out is a habit that may come at a cost to our nutritional health. While it may be easier to drive to the window of a fast food restaurant or have pizza delivered to our door, eating foods prepared away from home tend to be higher in calories and fat compared to what you could prepare in your own kitchen. This creates a challenge for people who are watching their weight. The following tips can help avoid waistline expansion when dining out.

Plan before you go. If you are watching your weight or trying to eat fewer calories, think about what you will eat before you enter the restaurant. Many restaurants post the nutrient analysis of their menu items on the internet and smart phone apps make the information available at the touch of a screen.

At the restaurant: Restaurants are also beginning to place calorie information next to menu items. This can help you order a meal that won't break your calorie budget.

Other ways to watch your calories when eating out

1. Free foods offered at restaurants are not really "free." A basket of bread sticks or fried corn chips can cost up to 1,000 calories. **The solution?** Ask for plain corn tortillas instead of fried chips or request that bread be served without added butter. Better yet, decline the "free" food altogether.



2. A baked potato is usually better than one that is fried unless butter, sour cream, bacon, and cheese are added. You may get a little more flavor with these toppings but with that comes extra fat and calories. **The solution?** If you must

top your potato with a little extra "something," get the toppings on the side and use them sparingly.

3. Bigger portions may be cheap but what value are you really getting? A small order of French fries has about 220 calories and 9 grams of fat. Upgrading to a larger size for a few cents can add as much as 170 additional calories and 6 extra grams of fat. Is that really a value? **The solution?** If you eat at a fast food restaurant, just say "NO" to value-sized portions. If restaurant portions are too large for your needs, ask for a child-sized portion or ask for another plate and split the entree with a friend.



4. Restaurants that advertise "all you can eat" may be easy on the wallet but not on the waistline. **The solution?** If you have a tendency to overeat when eating out, stay away from buffets and places that offer unlimited quantities of food.

5. Eating out with others may encourage some people to eat more even when they are not very hungry. **The solution?** Order an appetizer as your main course. With bread and side salad, that may be all you need to take away the hunger pains.

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Handout 10-2

**My Plan to the
 Challenge of Smart
 eating & socializing**

1. Try using the techniques learned to cut fat, sodium or sugar in your favorite recipes.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
√ Yes, I did it!							

2. Work toward incorporating physical activity into your daily routine for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Work up to 60 minutes per day if you can!

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
√ Yes, I did it!							

You may also want to consider one of the optional 5K training plans shown on the next page.

Remember that whatever you choose, substituting active pursuits for sedentary time will help you manage your weight better, and you will be rewarded with great health benefits!