

For back issues visit the Family Matters Web site At www.ext.colostate.edu/Pubs/fammatrs/fmmenu.html

For more information contact the CSU Extension office nearest you, or visit our Web site at: www.ext.colostate.edu

Articles in Family Matters are copyrighted, but may be reproduced in full without modification if credit is given to Family Matters, Family and Consumer Sciences, Colorado State University Extension

For all other requests contact the author.

Thank you to Colorado State University Extension of Denver County for support of the Spanish translation of Family Matters.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.



Making Healthy Choices When Eating Out

By Sheila Gains, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

For most families, meals made at home are usually healthier (lower in added fats, salts and sugars) than eating out. But eating homemade meals may not always be possible or practical for busy families. The good news is that parents can make healthier choices when eating out, from which restaurant they choose to which menu items they offer as options to their children.

It may be impossible to avoid all high fat and high sugar items on the menu, especially if children are used to ordering anything they want. If this is the case, start small by setting some limits for children. If your family is trying to reduce the amount of sugar they eat consider a rule that they may order water, low fat milk or unsweetened tea as a beverage; if they choose regular soda pop or sweetened tea, they will not order dessert. If sugary drinks are not an issue in your family, maybe limiting the amount or frequency of fried foods is something you want to improve. If this is the case, start by limiting the portion size, by only ordering one small serving of fries for several to share instead of each one having their own.

Below are some additional tips for families when trying to select healthier options when eating out.

Do a little background work:

- Before you choose a restaurant go out to their web site, many have information on the nutrition of the foods they serve. As part of healthcare reform, large restaurant chains will soon be required to list nutritional information on menu items.

Choose non-fried foods:

- Non-fried foods are often described on the menu as, baked, grilled, broiled, roasted, poached or steamed

Choose more fruits, vegetables and whole grains:

- Ask for a side salad, steamed vegetables or fruit cup as a substitute for fries, chips or white rice
- Add lettuce, tomato and other vegetables to sandwiches
- Request whole wheat bread, toast, buns, pizza crust etc.
- Choose corn bread over white dinner rolls

Hold the fat:

- Choose mustard instead of mayonnaise on sandwiches. Salsa and low-fat mayonnaise are good choices. Salsa is a great alternative to ranch dressing for kids to dip their veggies in.
- Ask for food without added butter, salad dressings, gravy or sauces, or ask that they be served on the side so you can control the amount.
- Go easy on coleslaw, pasta, and potato salads. They are often high in fat and carbohydrates.



Rethink the drink:

- Avoid the empty calories from soda and sweetened teas.
- Choose water, low-fat milk, unsweetened tea, or 100 % fruit juice.
- If choosing juice, order a small cup and then switch to water if still thirsty.

Choose the right size:

- Avoid super sizing.
- Plan ahead to split large sized portions.
- If you're served more than you should eat, take the rest home for another meal.
- To reduce the portion size for adults, ask about ordering a child or senior meal.

Look for the Smart Meal™ logo:

- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has developed the Smart Meal™ for Kids program to help parents quickly identify healthy meal choices for children on the menus of participating restaurants. www.smartmealcolorado.com

Let's Talk:

Kids will want to know “What’s going on, why can’t I order a hamburger, fries and a shake for dinner, I always did before?” It will be easier to talk to children about any new rules about what they can or can’t order before you are at their favorite restaurant and before they are “starving”. Try setting the stage by talking about wanting to get healthier as a family. Explain that by making some small changes in the foods you eat and being more active as a family everyone can be healthier. Be a good role model and make changes yourself!

Recipe for Health:

Instead of ordering a slice of apple pie or a hot fudge sundae at the restaurant, wait and have dessert when you get home. Try one of these healthy dessert ideas:

- Make a smoothie by blending low fat milk, yogurt or soy milk with a banana or strawberries and some ice.
- Cut up a chilled watermelon.
- Core a few apples and stuff with a marshmallow and sprinkle with cinnamon before cooking in the microwave.
- Offer a small bowl of strawberries, sweet cherries or grapes.

