

EATING OUT AND TAKE-AWAYS

It's a fact of life these days that many people, including busy athletes, eat away from home more often. Often traveling to competitions leaves athletes with little choice but to eat out at a restaurant, since many accommodation venues have no self-catering options. Making suitable choices when eating out can be crucial to performance during competition. Not only that, but some athletes eat out frequently enough that it has now become a major component of their weekly intake rather than being the "special occasion" it has been in the past, and needs to be treated the same way as if you were eating at home.

There is a wide range of options available when eating out. Not only that, a lot of eating establishments have a good range of choices suitable for an athlete. A few simple rules of thumb will help guide you in making suitable choices:

- Make sure the meal you choose has a good carbohydrate base to it (pasta, rice, potato, bread / roll, tortillas)
- By the same token, ensure the meal includes some form of protein (lean meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes or nuts)
- Avoid using "all you can eat" restaurants as an excuse to do just that – try to stick with similar amounts to what you'd eat at home
- When you eat at a smorgasbord / buffet, try to choose ONE dish to eat, rather than a bit of everything—this will save overeating and boredom, especially if you're staying at the same place for a number of days
- Choose dishes which include some form of salad or vegetables
- If you choose to drink alcohol with the meal, match this with some water as well
- Avoid eating from "street sellers", especially when you travel overseas. Unless the food is cooked up in front of your eyes, and you can guarantee the ingredients have been kept cold prior to cooking. Bugs grow quickly if food is kept at the wrong temperature – it should be piping hot or very cold.

In general - if you are not sure of the ingredients ASK! In many situations you could ask for the ingredients to be modified or left out, or for a sauce or dressing to be 'on the side' so that you can control the amount used.

- Sizzler restaurants - go for the soup/salad/pasta choices with or without a grilled meat/chicken/fish meal (avoid/limit potato skins and the cheese bread) - go for fruit and soft serve as dessert
- Doner kebabs, chicken kebabs, felafels in Lebanese bread with salads and sauces. Go for tomato, BBQ or chilli sauce (avoid extra cheese/sour cream)
- Subway – go the honey oat bread, ask for no butter / marg on the bread, ask for the non-battered / crumbed chicken fillets, make sure you get some salad items added.
- "Healthy" hamburgers/steakburgers/chicken burgers/vegieburgers ie. with lean meat, chicken breast, or vegetarian patty plus salads but without extra bacon/fried egg/cheese or high fat sauces
- Japanese – sushi is generally a good option IF it's been kept cold enough. Check the storage

conditions and if your sushi doesn't feel cold, avoid eating it. Watch tempuras as they are battered and fried.

- A la carte restaurants/cafes – try soup, fresh seafood or a salad for entrée then choose meals with vegetables / salad. Avoid those that are deep fried, in pastry or in creamy sauces, anything "au beurre". Look for fruit-based desserts with sorbet/icecream.
- Counter meal such as grilled steak, kebabs, grilled fish or seafood (not crumbed/battered and then deep fried) - go for potatoes in their jackets, large wedges or bread with the salad/vegies rather than thin chips
- Italian – Soup like minestrone is good. Fresh seafood and salads may be available as entrées. Pasta with Napolitana, Vegetarian, Bolognese, Marinara, Matriciana, ricotta cheese type sauces plus salad /vegies. Lasagne only if it isn't too cheesy/creamy. Carbonara and Alfredo are not the best choice. Risotto occasionally. Fresh seafood, grilled or lightly panfried fish, chicken or veal with vegies or salad. Avoid garlic bread. Gelati and ice cream are good desserts.
- Asian - any steamed or stir-fried dishes that don't have crumbs and batters or very rich oily sauces, and that have some vegetables in the dish e.g. chow mein, some curries (avoid too much coconut milk/cream in Thai food), lean meat/chicken/seafood and vegetables, chop suey, pad thai, Chinese omelettes. Get extra stir-fried or steamed vegies and lots of steamed or boiled rice/noodles. Avoid fried rice if it looks too greasy or alternatively have it as a meal on its own.
- Mexican - soft tortillas such as burritos and enchiladas are best - with beef, chicken, seafood, beans and salad and rice. Fajitas and chilli con carne can be good. Avoid extra cheese or sour cream, and nachos. Salsa is good as is bean dip or refried beans.
- Indian/Pakistani etc - Tandoori dishes are very good with rice or naan bread and salad or vegetables. Some curry is okay if not too oily, especially dry curries with yoghurt (check with the waiter) or a tomato base (e.g. jaipuri) - avoid those with lots of butter/coconut cream. Order a vegetable dish as well or an Indian salad. Raita and pickles are good.
- Other middle eastern restaurants – e.g. Turkish, Lebanese - look for lean meats etc or vegetarian alternatives, always include breads/rice/other grains such as couscous and vegetables - look out for too much oil etc in the ingredients. Some dips with bread, olives and vegetables can be a good start.
- Greek - watch out for excess oil content and pastries. Choose the grilled meats/poultry/seafoods etc. Ensure you include plenty of vegetables or salad with the meal and a source of carbohydrate (a little fetta cheese is okay)
- Pizza – go for low fat meat toppings preferably with some vegetables. Try asking for ½ the normal cheese on top. Avoid meatlovers and the cheesy crust pizzas.
- BBQ Chicken – remove the skin, avoid the deep fried chicken pieces, nuggets, etc. Add some potato, thick wedges or a bread roll with salad.

