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ACTION SHEET: CHOOSING A RESTAURANT

Dining Out

Learning to dine out in a healthy way can require patience and creativity when you're new to the whole food, plant-based (WFPB) lifestyle. While it's best for your health to eat food you prepare for yourself, sometimes you may want to take a break from cooking at home, or to go out with friends and family. At first glance, a menu may not seem to offer any WFPB options. However, it's almost always possible to adapt an entrée or create a meal from the appetizers and side dishes once you become familiar with what's available. Let's help get you started!

Please note that it can be a challenge when dining out to find food prepared with low or no oil, salt, and sugar, so keep that in mind if you are choosing to consume fewer calories from fat and minimizing sodium intake. If that's the case, it's best to minimize how much you dine out (1-2 nights per week) and choose your meals carefully when you do.

Consider the restaurant options.

- When choosing a restaurant (and when ordering), refer to Info Sheet: Dining at International and American Style Restaurants and Info Sheet: Dining at Restaurants and Fast Food Chains for guidance on the WFPB options that might be offered.
- Choose to dine out primarily at vegetarian and/or vegan restaurants if any exist in your community. After reviewing their menus, see which dishes are WFPB or could be made healthier. Consider calling in advance if you wish to request oil-free, etc.

Research the possible meal options (ideally before you go to the restaurant).

- Many restaurants provide electronic versions of their menus, or you could stop by and ask to see the menu.
- When going to a non-veg restaurant, check to see if they have a section on their regular menu (or a separate menu) for vegetarian and/or vegan dishes.
- Call in advance to speak with senior management (the restaurant manager, chef, or maitre d) about your dietary needs and to see if it's possible to address them. If you didn't see anything on the menu, ask if they would prepare an off-the-menu WFPB dish, giving them ideas if asked. Be sure to provide an explanation of what that means, especially if it's important that it be oil-free and low in sodium and/or sugar. Refer to Info Sheet: WFPB Diet Explained for Restaurant Owners/Managers. Many chefs enjoy the opportunity to be creative!



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The dining experience.

- Be considerate of the timing of your request: if you did not request the dish by calling in advance, recognize that it may take longer to prepare a special dish or it may not be possible to meet your request if the restaurant is extremely busy.
- Review the menu for entrées and side dishes to identify those from which meat, cheese, dairy, and eggs might easily be removed. Find out which items can be prepared with minimal oil, and, if possible, choose whole grain options such as whole-wheat pasta or brown rice. Refer to Template: Tips for Designing a Meal.
- Ask the server if there are any veg options not listed on the menu.



We welcome you to send suggestions and ideas to info@plantpurecommunities.org. This material may not be used out of context. Please refer to PPC's terms and conditions for more information. Updated December 2017.