



The Be Fit Minute

By Joan Keh, Dietetic Intern (edited by Emily Gelsomin, RD, LDN)



Eating Out Without Selling Out on Health

Thousands of calories and multiple days' worth of saturated fat and sodium could be lurking in your entrée.

To keep your health in check, it is best to avoid eating out as much as you can. However, with our fast-paced lives, dining out is often inevitable.

To help maintain your weight and heart, invest in healthier options whenever possible. Many restaurants list the nutrition information online or on their menus. However, if you do not have access to this information, here are some general tips to follow when eating Ethnic-American cuisine.

(The better choices are highlighted in green.)

CHINESE

Americanized Chinese food is typically loaded with calories due to its heavy **use of oil, noodles, and deep-fried batters**. **Salt content is usually high** because many entrees are drenched in soy sauce and other heavily seasoned liquids.

TIPS

- Soups—while often high in sodium—can be a good option if you are trying to watch your calorie intake.
- **Look for dishes that feature vegetables, not meat or noodles.**
- **Order your chicken, tofu, or seafood lightly stir-fried** versus breaded, battered, or deep-fried.
- Watch your salt. A tablespoon of hoisin has 250 mg and a tablespoon of soy sauce has 1000 mg.
- **Adding a side of rice will add at least 200 calories** to your meal.

| Item | Calories | Sat. Fat | Sodium |
|---|------------|------------|----------------|
| Egg Roll (1) | 200 | 2 g | 400 mg |
| Spring Roll (1) | 100 | 1 g | 300 mg |
| Veggie Dumplings (6 steamed) | 400 | 3 g | 1100 mg |
| Pork Dumplings (6 steamed) – add 10 calories per dumpling if you get them pan-fried | 500 | 6 g | 900 mg |
| Egg Drop Soup | 100 | 0 g | 900 mg |
| Hot and Sour Soup | 100 | 1 g | 1100 mg |
| Eggplant in Garlic Sauce | 1000 | 13 g | 2000 mg |
| Szechuan String Beans | 600 | 6 g | 2700 mg |
| Stir-Fried Mixed Vegetables (Buddha's Delight) | 500 | 2 g | 2200 mg |
| Deep-Fried Tofu and Mixed Vegetables | 900 | 9 g | 2200 mg |
| Shrimp with Garlic Sauce | 700 | 4 g | 3000 mg |
| Kung Pao Chicken | 1400 | 13 g | 2600 mg |
| Chicken with Black Bean Sauce | 700 | 5 g | 3800 mg |
| Beef with Broccoli | 900 | 9 g | 3200 mg |
| Sweet and Sour Pork | 1300 | 13 g | 800 mg |
| Combination (House) Fried Rice | 1500 | 10 g | 2700 mg |
| Combination (House) Chow Mein or Lo Mein | 1200 | 9 g | 3600 mg |

MEXICAN

Mexican food often contains calorie-dense ingredients such as **tortillas, rice, and chips**. In addition, **large amounts of saturated fat** are not only in steak and pork entrees, but also in cheese and sour cream toppings. (Entrees do not include sides e.g. rice, beans, etc.)

TIPS

- If you must have an appetizer, guacamole is a heart-healthy choice, but beware of the amount of tortilla chips you eat with it.
- **Skip the cheese and sour cream.** If you want more flavor, **add extra salsa.**
- **Order grilled chicken or fish** for your burritos, tacos, and enchiladas to reduce saturated fat.
- **Get a side of salad greens or vegetables (without cheese) instead of white rice.**
- **Limit the number of tortillas** you eat since **each will add 150 to 300 calories**, depending on the size. To increase your fiber intake, select whole wheat, if available.
- **Leave the rice out of your burrito** to decrease its calorie content.

| Item | Calories | Sat. Fat | Sodium |
|---|------------|------------|----------------|
| Chips (1 basket) and Salsa | 500 | 4 g | 230 mg |
| Guacamole (without Chips) | 520 | 5 g | 1170 mg |
| Cheese Quesadilla | 1600 | 53 g | 2720 mg |
| Nachos with Grilled Chicken | 1890 | 49 g | 3790 mg |
| Grilled Vegetable Fajitas with Flour Tortillas (3) | 750 | 7 g | 3240 mg |
| Grilled Chicken Fajitas with Flour Tortillas (3) | 800 | 7 g | 2770 mg |
| Grilled Steak Fajitas with Flour Tortillas (3) | 980 | 16 g | 3020 mg |
| Sautéed Shrimp Fajitas with Flour Tortillas (3) | 1100 | 22 g | 3400 mg |
| Chicken Tacos (3) – for beef versions, add 100 calories and 3 g sat. fat per taco | 720 | 15 g | 1860 mg |
| Grilled Fish Tacos (2) | 800 | 7 g | 2480 mg |
| Chicken Enchiladas (3) | 1040 | 19 g | 2030 mg |
| Beef Burrito | 930 | 22 g | 1790 mg |
| Pork Tamales | 810 | 15 g | 1850 mg |
| Tostada Salad – no dressing | 1550 | 37 g | 2480 mg |

ITALIAN

Italian dishes such as **spaghetti, pizza, and lasagna** have become staples in the American diet, but portions of these foods are often super-sized in restaurants.

TIPS

- **Pasta** is not the enemy but we are often served too much of it: **split an entrée, take home half, or order a lunch-size portion.**
- For soup, minestrone typically tends to be lower in saturated fat and calories.
- Order dishes built around vegetables, seafood, or grilled chicken.
- **Make your side dish vegetables** rather than pasta or potatoes.
- **Beware of the bread basket:** each slice will add **50 to 150 calories.**

| Item | Calories | Sat. Fat | Sodium |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| Linguine with Marinara | 790 | 2 g | 1040 mg |
| Spaghetti and Meatballs | 1430 | 41 g | 4540 mg |
| Lasagna | 1060 | 28 g | 2240 mg |
| Fettuccine Alfredo | 1200 | 53 g | 1200 mg |
| Cheese Ravioli (8) | 810 | 17 g | 1580 mg |
| Shrimp Primavera | 690 | 2 g | n/a |
| Fried Calamari | 1210 | 13 g | 4170 mg |
| Fried Mozzarella | 880 | 18 g | 1770 mg |
| Artichoke Dip | 980 | 24 g | 3350 mg |
| Grilled Chicken with Veggies | 330 | 1 g | 770 mg |
| Grilled Salmon with Veggies | 590 | 6 g | 1390 mg |
| Eggplant or Veal Parmesan | 1250 | 40 g | 2600 mg |
| Chicken Marsala with Pasta | 1090 | 23 g | 2060 mg |

Nutrition facts taken from *Nutrition Action Healthletter*.