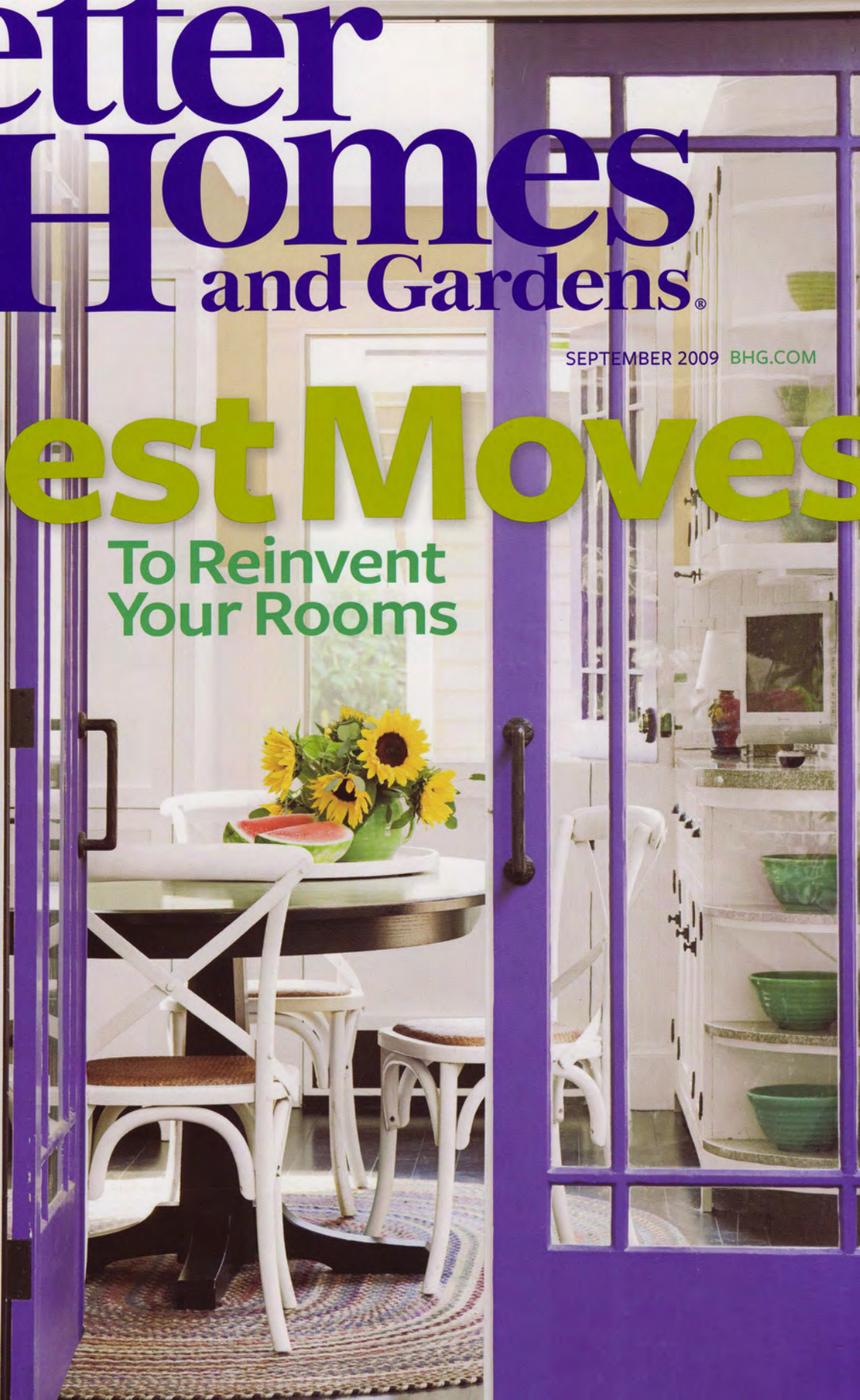


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# The Restaurant Survival Guide

by GALE MALESKEY, R.D.

Dining out today? Here's to a healthful meal.



**AMERICANS EAT OUT, ON AVERAGE, FIVE TIMES A WEEK**, a historical high that remains steady even in these belt-tightening times. And when people eat out, they generally consume 30-50 percent more calories than they would eating essentially the same meal at home. That's why so many weight-loss experts encourage healthy home cooking. The problem with that advice is that it's unrealistic for most people. They lack the time and energy to prepare all meals at home. And the truth is, they don't have to. They just have to eat out smartly.



#### LOSE WEIGHT, GAIN HEALTH

**NEXT MONTH: IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS.** You don't have to face this daunting task alone. Losing weight is so much easier and more pleasurable when done with friends and family.

## drinks

Drinks may just be the biggest diet saboteurs. In studies, people always underestimate the calories they drink — usually by about 30 percent.

- **Drink a glass of ice water and lemon first.** You'll be less likely to want a calorie-laden drink.
- **Use the 10/20 rule.** Thin liquids like soft drinks, punch, juice, and milk are about 10 calories per ounce. Thick drinks—smoothies, shakes, malts—are at least 20 calories per ounce, and often 30.
- **Stick with wine.** When the occasion calls for an adult beverage, order a glass of vino. A standard serving (5 oz.) has about 125 calories. Reduce that even more by ordering a white wine and seltzer spritzer.
- **Sip green tea.** Start and finish each meal with a pot of green tea. Three to five cups of it every day increases your metabolism slightly, plus it's packed with nutrients.
- **You could have a V-8.** Research shows that drinking a glass of fiber-rich vegetable or tomato juice as your first course may cause you to eat about 135 fewer calories over the rest of the meal.

## starters

- **Follow the two-fer rule.** Besides your entrée, order only two other items. If you want a starter, choose a broth-based soup or a salad. Both can reduce your total intake for the meal by about 100 calories. Other good starters: raw veggies with low-calorie dip, spring rolls, shrimp cocktail, steamed clams or mussels (hold the butter), crab, or sushi.
- **Ration the bread.** Have one serving as part of your two-fer. Then, move it out of reach.



## salads

- **Make it your meal.** Every third restaurant visit, order a meal-size salad. A low-cal, high-volume salad will leave you both full and slim. Choose salads that load up on lettuce, veggies, and good proteins such as chicken, salmon, eggs, or nuts.
- **Dress on the side.** This way, you control how much is added. Olive oil- and vinegar-based are best. Avoid creamy dressings.
- **Go easy on extras.** Grated cheese, croutons, and fried noodles can add hundreds of calories and lots of saturated fat to an otherwise perfectly good salad.

## entrées

- Most restaurant entrées are double the recommended serving size. The worst culprits tend to be American and Mexican restaurants, which can easily go beyond double portions.
- **Learn the code.** Look for entrées that are grilled, broiled, au jus, or from lean cuts such as loin or flank. Avoid items described as crispy, batter-dipped, creamy, au gratin, buttered, pan-fried, deep-fried, or tempura. Ask for fish and vegetables to be grilled dry, or lightly in olive oil (use lemon juice to zest them up).

**MEET OUR EXPERTS** These are the people whose expertise we drew upon for this story: Brian Wansink, Ph.D., author of *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think* and director of Cornell University's Food and Brand Lab; Kathleen Zelman, R.D., director of nutrition for WebMD Health; Nikki and David Goldbeck, co-authors of *Healthy Highways: The Traveler's Guide to Healthy Eating* ([healthyhighways.com](http://healthyhighways.com)).

## today's special: advice

**AVOID BUFFETS** Variety leads to excess. If you must eat at a buffet, scout it out first. Decide what you'll have before you start loading up. Fill half your plate with vegetables.

**BE FIRST TO ORDER** You'll be less influenced by others' choices. (In fact, you will influence their choices, so you might get the whole table eating healthier.)

**SIT NEXT TO AN ANGEL** Just being in close proximity to someone who's equally concerned about calories and healthy eating will help you eat better.

- **Modify everything.** Request sauces, butter, gravy, and sour cream on the side. Instead of French fries, ask for a baked potato with salsa, or a small salad instead of coleslaw. Ask the server or the cook for suggestions on how to make a particular dish healthier. They hear good ideas from other customers all the time.
- **Go vegetarian.** There are exceptions (can anyone say eggplant Parmesan?) but vegetarian entrées are usually a healthier choice. Try to order one at least once a week.
- **Bring some home.** Doggie bags are so commonly used now that some people bring their own containers to cut down on wasted packaging. If you really want to try an entrée that you know will be oversized, have the server pack half in the doggie bag before it leaves the kitchen.

## desserts

- All things in moderation, especially dessert. Just a little bit can be very satisfying.
- **Share alike.** It's routine these days to split a dessert with the table. Ask for plates and forks for everyone.
  - **Order fruit.** If it's not on the menu, ask whether the cook might put together a bowl of berries, pineapple cubes, or a slice of melon with a dab of whipped cream.
  - **End the meal sweetly.** Have a mint or some sugar-free gum, or brush your teeth right after eating to signal to your body that the meal is over.

## Tools for Tummies

It's easier than ever to get the info you need to make healthy eating-out choices.

**CALORIEKING.COM**  
Find nutritional information for over 50,000 foods, including more than 260 fast-food chains. Includes calories, fat, fiber, and protein content. Free.

**CALORIELAB.COM**  
Search for about 70,000 foods and 500 restaurant menus, or browse a food and restaurant directory for calories and nutrition information. Free.

**HEALTHYDINING FINDER.COM**  
Enter a zip code and price range and find nearby healthful restaurant items. Includes menus and nutritional analysis. Free.

**HEALTHY HIGHWAYS: THE TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING**  
by Nikki and David Goldbeck. State maps and local directions guide you to 2,800 healthy eateries and natural food stores throughout the U.S.

**RESTAURANT NUTRITION**  
A downloadable application (or app) for the iPod touch or iPhone. It lists the nutritional contents for each menu item at most chain restaurants. Free, see more at [apple.com/itunes](http://apple.com/itunes).

