

“When in Rome, do as the Romans.”



Just this past weekend I had the opportunity to experience a piece of the great American Northwest's culture. My destination was The City of Roses, Portland, where I witnessed my niece graduate from Portland State University in the largest graduation in Oregon's history. There were over 6,000 grads!

The three-day weekend included many meals and for these I *planned ahead* so that I could embrace 'Rome' without losing site of my focus on healthy life-styling.

Since I left early to get to the airport, I packed some oranges, bananas, apples and a couple slices of hearty walnut-cranberry bread. Also threw in a small sack of nuts and dried fruit mix. The following are other carry along ideas that I've included at other times.

- applesauce or fruit cups
- carrots, bell peppers, sliced cucumbers
- rice cakes, rye crackers
- bean dips, hummus
- Luna Bars, low-fat granola bars, trail mix, or muesli
- small soy milk, almond milk, or juice cartons (liquid options not allowed on air travel)



These items would hold me until I reached my destination.

After settling into my rental car, I set my first destination point to a natural foods store. I was headed to a friend's house, yet wanted to arrive with something under my belt and a gift of a fresh pineapple. Many supermarkets now-a-days have 'natural fast food counters' aka salad bars. I've been experimenting with composing salads that are so flavorful that I often opt out on needing a dressing (or perhaps just a splash of balsamic vinegar). I was able to get a salad and some fresh vegetable soup. Yummers! (If I am staying at a hotel, this is the time for me to replenish my munchies and purchase options for other meals that I will be eating over the next day or two. (A hotel room usually has a mini fridge and if I am really lucky a microwave, which are great helps.)

Note: Before I left home, I'd Googled 'natural food stores in Portland, OR' and jotted down addresses. I also Googled 'happy cow Portland, OR' this game me the names, addresses, and hours of vegan and vegetarian restaurants in the area. There were numerous listings!



Besides plant-based restaurants, often times the next best bets are ethnic restaurants, as international establishments often have healthy vegan menu items. My Portland hosts took me to Le Bistro Montage, an excellent restaurant featuring New Orleans cuisine.

The following are some healthy eating tips to remember when eating out.

Menus are really just a list of suggestions. Order like a Queen/King and ask for what you want! Most chefs are able and willing to serve any combination of items that you see listed. Since I tend towards plant-based meals, I asked for the vegetables (that were listed with the Gator Bites) to go along with the red beans and rice (that were listed with the Crawfish Etouffe) ...and a slice of New Orleans cornbread, please! Surprisingly enough, there are more and more people with dietary considerations, so making a specific request is not out of the ordinary.

Generally speaking, cheap, calorie-laden ingredients are restaurant universals. Even a fancy restaurant might serve items full of empty calories (items containing white flour, white sugar) or high energy-dense foods (saturated fats, trans fats, oils) along with an upscale entrée.

- When ordering a salad, always ask for the dressing on the side. This way you control the amount of oil you eat, or don't eat.
- Fried foods are synonymous with 'trans fats/plastic fats.' Look for steamed or broiled options.
- All animal foods contain saturated fats. If you are a meat eater, you might consider a menu item in which the meat component is reduced, being but one of the ingredients, a condiment for flavoring.
- Opt for a tomato or marinara sauce over the 'creamy' sauces (another source of saturated fats).
- If you are lured by the baskets of bread or chips brought to the table by your waiter from the get go, you might think next time to eat an apple and/or two carrots before you get to the restaurant!!!

Order colorful food. If your plate is full of colors (and I'm not speaking of artificially colored items), you are most likely eating a **variety** of foods that are in season, nutrient-rich, and health enhancing. Remember this concept when ordering any meal: breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack, or dessert.

When in Israel, do as the Israelis!

My sister living in Israel says, "They eat salad for breakfast here! I love my morning greens."



"Foods prepared away from home, including fast food eaten at home and store-prepared food eaten away from home, are fueling the increase in total energy intake (eating too many calories). Broad-based environmental changes are needed to improve the diets of Americans."

J Am Diet Assoc. 2011 Aug.1156-64.

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