



Eating Out For Gut Health



It's easier to stay on track when you eat at home every mealtime. You're responsible for the ingredients going into meals, giving you the advantage of knowing exactly what you're eating, and this is an excellent way to adhere to your nutrition and health goals.

It's the perfect solution to avoid/limit added sugars, excessive salt, ingredients and food triggers that can lead to reactions, sensitivities, gastric symptoms, weight gain or health issues.

Cooking at home indisputably gives you complete control over your diet, yet, it's realistic to acknowledge that we all yearn for the occasional change in scenery, social interactions, and the sheer joy shared meals at restaurants or family/friends' homes can bring.



Not to mention a night “off cooking”!

Eating out is sometimes necessary and should be enjoyed. In fact, it should be your opportunity to reconnect with loved ones, engage in “catch-up” conversations, and soak in the ambience of social gatherings. All of this is good for your overall physical and emotional health.

However, dining out can often lead to digestive issues such as gas, bloating, and reflux due to the uncertainty of restaurant ingredients. But the fear of symptoms attacking during social gatherings can be managed.

Here are 10 steps to help you enjoy dining out without compromising your gut health...



- **Don't Arrive Starving Hungry:**

Consider having a light, nutritious snack at home before heading out to your lunch or dinner gathering. This approach not only curbs your hunger but also makes it less likely for you to overindulge in dishes that could leave you feeling unwell or “too full” afterwards.

- **Check Out The Restaurant Menu Online Beforehand:**

It's extremely helpful to familiarise yourself with the restaurant's menu before you arrive. This not only mitigates potential stress and anxiety- a factor that could negatively impact digestion, but also sets the stage for a pleasant start to your meal.

With access to the online menu beforehand, you can have your appetiser/starter and main course pre-selected to help speed things up when ordering your food.

However, keep a Plan B in mind—restaurants can occasionally run out of specific dishes, and having an alternate choice at the ready can help avoid disappointment, or you having to rush to choose another dish that won't help you keep on track with your health and nutrition goals.

Furthermore, don't hesitate to ring the restaurant in advance with queries about specific ingredients.

- **Personalize Your Food Order:**

Feel free to inquire about ingredients and request changes to your order if necessary. Most restaurants and servers understand customers' dietary needs. For example: You can ask for your dish to be prepared without certain ingredients or request sauces and dressings to be served separately/on the side.

- **Keep An Eye On Portion Sizes:**

Restaurants are notorious for serving larger portions, which can often lead to overeating, feeling “too full” and ending up with digestion problems like reflux or bloating. If you're hungry when you arrive, you're more likely to overindulge (take note of step 1).

A good workaround can be sharing a main dish with a friend or asking the restaurant to set aside half of your meal for takeout before you start eating. If appetizers are more to your liking, consider ordering two small ones to enjoy as your main meal and add a salad with dressing on the side.



- **Take Time To Chew & Savour Your Food:**



Nowadays, we all seem to rush to finish everything, especially our food. Slow down...and remember to chew your food properly. Take your time during meals. Eating too quickly often leads to overeating, indigestion, bloating, gas, and sometimes the uncomfortable 'dumping syndrome'.

Thorough chewing is a crucial step in the digestive process. This will help you digest food better and reduce the uncomfortable symptoms mentioned above. It also allows you to slow down and better appreciate flavours. Put your knife and fork down frequently to remind yourself that mealtimes are for savouring, not a race against the clock.



- **Discover Deep Breathing for Better Digestion Before Your Meal Arrives:**

This one may seem awkward initially, but before your meal arrives, take a few moments to practice deep breathing. You can absolutely do this without making it obvious to others. Deep breathing decreases stress and anxiety levels, optimises digestion, and helps you become more in tune with your hunger and fullness signals. Have you ever heard the phrase “rest & digest”? This is exactly what you’re doing here. You’re making it easier for yourself to digest your food.

This is a simple yet effective way to help promote mindful eating, leading you to a more pleasurable dining experience, better portion control, and improved digestion.

So, just before your meal arrives, discreetly take a few slow, deep breaths. This simple practice can significantly help to reduce digestive symptoms.

- **Remember Your Enzymes:**

For those with food intolerances, such as lactose intolerance, dining out can sometimes be a source of anxiety. However, it's essential to remember that your food intolerance doesn't have to limit your enjoyment of social occasions.

An essential step in managing your intolerance while eating out involves bringing and using your necessary enzyme supplements.

Enzyme supplements, like lactase for those with lactose intolerance, can play a significant role in helping your body digest food that it otherwise struggles with. Taking these just as your food arrives can help you enjoy your meal more comfortably and confidently, preventing the often unpleasant symptoms.

- **Consider Your Alcohol Intake:**

Remember that when you drink alcohol, your body prioritizes its digestion, which can interfere with the digestion of your food. This often leads to digestive discomfort and makes any existing gut issues worse.

To help limit symptoms, consider your alcohol intake and, when possible, choose alcohol-free alternatives.

Stay hydrated by switching between your alcoholic drinks and a glass of water. Social events and eating out should not sacrifice your gut health if you remember that moderation is key to balance.



- **Eating at a Family or Friends Home:**



Tell your host (family or friend) about your dietary needs ahead of time. Sharing this information early can prevent awkward questions and moments of turning down dishes at the dinner table.

Furthermore, it can also be a good idea to offer to bring a dish or two that suits your diet and can be shared with the group.

Ask about other dishes being served and make your contribution complementary to them. Consider options like gluten-free, dairy-free, and sugar-free, which will likely suit other guests.



Remember, life is a beautiful journey filled with spontaneous moments, so don't let your dietary choices or limitations control you.

You can confidently navigate any dining situation with a better understanding and thoughtful planning, and you will no longer feel anxious about your meal choices or need to decline social invitations.

Instead, you'll be confident and fully equipped to enjoy the food, the company, and the experience without compromising your health goals.