

Roots
Fitness Coaching

Eating out without breaking your diet



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Birthdays, Christmas, weekends. They all have one thing in common: Food! Reasons to go out to eat or drink which will mean breaking your diet: but do they have? Can you still eat out at restaurants whilst sticking to your diet? Should you avoid special occasions and social gatherings so that you don't break your diet? Absolutely not! This article discusses how you can implement foods (and maybe some alcohol!) that you wouldn't traditionally class as those which you may be able to eat whilst dieting, without feelings of guilt and anxiety, and will even show you how doing so can actually help your diet!

Enjoying eating and drinking is a fundamental part of socialising and living an enjoyable life. This can also be true when dieting, as long as a few simple steps are followed, and preparations made.

So how does this work? Surely when eating out or drinking alcohol your diet goes out of the window, excess calories will be consumed, and you will be taking a step back after all your hard work maintaining your diet. No, not at all. It is in fact possible to make eating at restaurants a part of your diet, rather than something which will derail your efforts.

Drinking alcohol can also be made to fit into your diet on occasion, however I would NOT recommend making a habit of it, alcohol is a poison after all, and as such should rarely if ever be consumed in excess. That said, most people, myself included enjoy a drink from time to time.

Decide how big an impact it will have

The first thing to consider when eating out or drinking is working out how off track doing so will actually alter your diet: eating at a Chinese buffet is not the same as going out for a light lunch. For example, if you are going out for a sandwich at lunch, chances are you can not go too far over your caloric intake for the day, so long as you don't eat 2 pieces of cake and have a milkshake on the side. In this instance it would be wise to simply enjoy your food, whilst being mindful of which choices you are making. Try ordering something with a portion (palm-sized) of protein inside it, choose a low fat or low sugar dressing, make sure to have some salad on the side, don't order crisps, chips or dessert, drink water or low-calorie drinks such as coffee or tea. This sort of meal is very easy to account for, and can be easily enjoyed on a diet, so long as it is no more than once or twice per week.

What about higher calorie meals, or a night out drinking? How can we make exceptions for these occasions?

Larger meals & takeaways

First we will discuss higher calorie meals and how to make sure they don't set you back on your diet. If you are going out for an evening meal, or you fancy a Saturday night takeaway, chances are you will be consuming an excess of fat and carbohydrates.

Assuming you have already judged how big the impact of eating this meal will be, we must look at how to prepare for it to ensure minimal impact on weight gain. Overleaf are a few tips on how to make sure your meal doesn't ruin your diet.

1. Where possible, look at the menu online

If you can see what the restaurant to takeaway offers before you eat it, you can plan accordingly. This will usually mean either skipping a meal, or eating smaller meals during the day to account for the higher calorie meal later.

2. Save as many calories across the day as possible

Your meal will more than likely contain a lot more calories than usual: the chef cares about how good the food tastes, not about your diet and daily caloric intake! As such you should try and save extra calories for it, skip more calorie-dense foods and drinks, dressings etc.

3. Eat more protein for your other meals

Chances are (especially if you choose to skip a meal) you will not get as much protein as you usually do. Protein is essential for preserving muscle mass whilst dieting, therefore it would be a good idea to base your other meals around a larger portion of protein. This will ensure you get plenty, even if your evening meal has less than usual.

4. Eat vegetables and fruit

Ordering some vegetables and/or fruit with your meal would be useful here, however if this isn't a possibility, you should ensure a minimum of 2 portions of vegetables and 1 portion of fruit with your other meals during the day. This ensures you are getting some vitamins and minerals.

5. Where possible, look at the menu online

If you can see what the restaurant to takeaway offers before you eat it, you can plan accordingly. This will usually mean either skipping a meal, or eating smaller meals during the day to account for the higher calorie meal later.

6. Do extra cardio

Do an extra 30 mins of cardio to account for the excess calories. Cardio should not be thought of as a punishment for straying from your diet: this can lead to disordered eating. If you are the sort of person who may be susceptible to disordered eating, this step should be ignored.

7. Be mindful when ordering

Don't go over the top when ordering; don't order two sides instead of one, don't indulge in ten slices of bread from the bread basket, share a dessert, order low calorie drinks or water, ask for dressings on the side so you can limit how much you use. Just use some common sense!

Drinking alcohol and dieting

As mentioned earlier, it is possible to fit alcohol into a diet. That's not to say you should, nor would I recommend it, in fact I would discourage it.

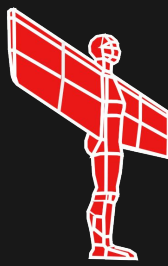
Drinking is part of our culture and just because I recommend you shouldn't drink doesn't stop you drinking, so at least I can offer advice on how to fit it around your otherwise healthy diet.

Many people seem to think that spirits don't contain calories, but beer contains a lot of calories, this is simply not true. Both beer and spirits contain a huge amount of calories, and as such should be limited during a dieting (or even a non-dieting) phase.

Alcohol has around 7 calories (kcal) per gram, because alcohol is a liquid it is usually measured in millilitres, which with most liquids transfers directly to grams (g) therefore 1ml=1g. 1g alcohol = 7kcal. Now for the bad bit: most spirits are around 40% alcohol, with a single measuring being 25ml/g. This means that 1 single measure of a clear spirit such as vodka contains around 70kcal.

This might not sound too bad, but it easily adds up. The calculations above also do not account for darker spirits, which contain more calories, nor do they include mixers, which can really pile the calories on. Beers, ales and wine also contain extra carbs on top of their alcohol content, meaning even more calories. What this means essentially is that if you wish to consume more than one or two drinks, you will be consuming a whole load of extra calories, thus throwing you off course with your diet. Some ways to prevent going too far off track are similar to when you are eating too many calories as listed above. To further curb the damage to your diet (and liver):

- Stick to single measures of clear spirits
- Use slimline tonic or diet soda as mixers
- If you tend to want food after drinking, leave something healthy prepared in your house for when you get home, this may also help with curbing a potential hangover, a cooked meat wrap or sandwich is a personal favourite!



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Hi I'm Andy. I'm head coach and co-founder of Roots Fitness.

My goal is to create a private and personal training facility which is accessible and affordable to as many people as possible. A place where small groups of like minded people will receive high quality personal training sessions at a fraction of the price.

I aim to teach you how to not only achieve your fitness goals but also give you the tools required to keep them long-term.

If you are interested in learning more about a sustainable, fitter and healthier lifestyle be sure to check out our offerings at www.roots-fitness.co.uk. Or simply get in touch on Instagram or Facebook (links below).

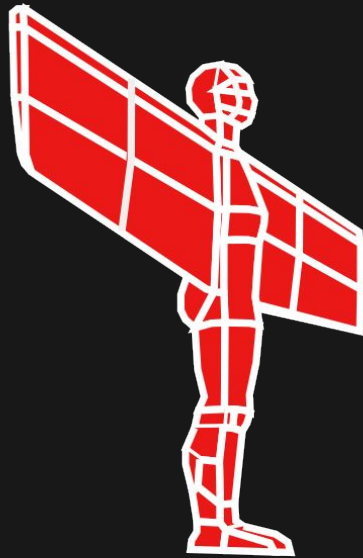


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