

# Chef Becker's Tips for Ordering at Restaurants

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*For adults with type 2 diabetes and high LDL cholesterol, there are some important things to keep in mind when you're looking at a restaurant menu and wondering how to choose what food is right for you. In this section you will find tips on what to choose and what to avoid on menus from four popular types of restaurants.*

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**ITALIAN:** *Italian restaurants have many choices. Here are some guidelines for what's healthy and what's not:*

## **What to Choose:**

- If you're ordering pizza, choose thin crust with just a little cheese, and vegetable toppings instead of fatty meats.
- For pastas, try pasta fagioli, primavera, tortellini in broth, anything in light tomato or wine sauces like marsala, and ravioli, tortellini and agnolotti with vegetable or lean-meat fillings.
- For other entrees, choose veal cacciatore or grilled seafood, and ask for roasted or grilled vegetables as a side dish.

## **What to Avoid:**

- Pepperoni, ham, sausage, or bacon on your pizza. Skip the extra cheese too.
- For appetizers, avoid bruschetta, garlic bread, antipastos that are marinated in oil, deep fried calamari, stuffed clams or mushrooms, and stuffed artichokes.
- For pastas, avoid dishes topped with alfredo, pesto, carbonara or cream sauces, as well as risotto and lasagna.
- For other main dishes and meats, watch out for cheesy parmigianas, veal piccata, or fatty steaks and chops.

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**MEXICAN:** *Mexican restaurants can be more challenging. Many items on these menus have large portions and unhealthy amounts of cheese and sour cream. But if you know what to order, you can still enjoy the occasional meal at your favorite local restaurant.*

**What to Choose:**

- Gazpacho or black bean soup for a starter. As a vegetable soup, gazpacho is very healthy and low in calories. And bean soup is high in soluble fiber.
- For main courses, order grilled fajitas with beef, chicken, seafood.
- Enchiladas, burritos, soft tacos can be chosen, but definitely opt for half portions.
- Rice, salsa and tortillas are fine to have on the side.

**What to Avoid:**

- Anything covered in cheese or sour cream – don't be afraid to ask for your meal without it, or on the side.
- Deep-fried tacos, nachos and chimichangas.
- Creamy corn chowder or chili con carne.
- Side dishes of refried beans.
- Desserts like fried ice cream.

**ASIAN:** *Chinese and Japanese restaurants are popular choices when dining with friends and family because of the ability to order food “family style,” as in dishes that were made to share. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.*

**What to Choose (Japanese restaurant):**

- Miso soup, salad, and edamame for starters.
- Teriyaki dishes, sushi and sashimi, nakemono, yakimono, stir-fried meats, tofu, and steamed rice and vegetables.

**What to Avoid (Japanese restaurant):**

- Stay away from anything that's been in a deep-fryer.
- Tempura and chicken or beef katsu, which are breaded cutlets full of fat.

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**What to Choose (Chinese restaurant):**

- Wonton and hot-and-sour soup or steamed dim sum dumplings for starters.
- Rice dishes with stir-fried beef, chicken or prawns.
- Chow mein, chop suey, tofu dishes, egg foo yung, and any vegetable-based main course.

**What to Avoid (Chinese restaurant):**

- Deep-fried or battered appetizers like spring rolls and pot stickers.
- Dishes with sweet-and-sour or peanut sauces.

**AMERICAN:** *This can cover a lot of different kinds of restaurants, from a simple chain restaurant at the mall to a fine dining restaurant. Here are a few things to consider while ordering.*

**What to Choose:**

- Get something with vegetables to start. Order a salad with little dressing, or vegetable soup. Try an extra vegetable as a side dish, too.
- Fish is a great choice – poached, seared, or grilled, not fried or battered.
- Burgers are very popular at American restaurants – order yours plain with tomato, mustard, and lettuce. You can also try a turkey or veggie burger.
- Grilled chicken entrees are always a good choice. Make sure there's no skin on your chicken, and pair it with a baked potato or brown rice.
- If you're at a sandwich place, a six inch sub (no mayonnaise) on whole wheat bread with turkey, beef or seafood is a great meal.

**What to Avoid:**

- Anything with mayonnaise.
- Burgers with cheese, special sauces, or bacon.
- Chicken nuggets or deep-fried chicken of any kind.
- Club sandwiches.
- Ribs and fatty cuts of beef.
- Combo dinners that come with fries.
- Anything with gravy.
- And finally, caesar salad – it may be called salad, but it's covered in cheese, croutons, and fatty dressing.