

When and what to eat.
by Mike DeCinti

It's 10:00 am Friday as I sit in front of my computer to write this article. But it really doesn't matter what day of the week it is, because besides typing I'm doing the same thing on this day that I do everyday at this time, I'm eating my second of five meals I'll have today. I've already had my breakfast (4 egg whites, bowl of cereal w/ blueberries, several glasses of water and 2 cups of coffee) this morning at 7:00, and I'll be eating my lunch at 1:00. That leaves dinner around 6:00, which puts my last meal around 9 o'clock tonight. That's right 5. Sometimes on a good day, I'll get six.

For some of you, this is not news. I've talked about eating smaller meals throughout the day in previous articles. I've talked "grazing" all day as opposed to "pigging out" 2 or 3 times a day. I've preached about portion control and making sure each meal consists of a muscle-building protein, energy-boosting carbohydrate and some healthy vegetables. And if you do it long enough, it just becomes routine.

However, many of you have much more complicated professional and personal schedules, which make it a little harder to get into that routine. So here are a few tips that might help. Including what to eat for lunch when you have to eat out.

Make the time to eat breakfast. No matter what time you have to be at work in the morning, make time for breakfast. Just set your alarm clock 20 minutes earlier and start your day off with a healthy meal. Start off with 2-3 glasses of water and have some egg whites (or egg substitutes) some whole-wheat toast or fruit and a cup of coffee. And don't forget about adding a multi-vitamin to your morning routine as well.

Have dinner with the family at home. At the end of day make sure you gather the entire family around the dinner table, not the TV, and enjoy a healthy meal. Dinner probably gives you the greatest number of choices and you can really have some fun trying new healthy recipes. Just make sure you eat the proper sized portion, and don't forget the water. Not only will this family time be good for your physical health but your mental health as well.

Don't forget about your "between meals" meals. Confusing right? Well I'm talking about those meals that fall in and around breakfast, lunch and dinner. These are some of my favorite times of the day to eat. Try and eat every 3 to 4 hours. I like to snack on a bunch of different things. String cheese, yogurt, almonds, cottage cheese, vegetables, fruit and peanut butter to name a few. Just make sure you eat the right-sized portion and choose healthy foods. This will help curb your appetite so you don't over-eat later.

There are healthy choices when eating out for lunch. Most of us find ourselves eating out for lunch, and using the excuse that there are not healthy alternatives, but you would be surprised where you can go, and what you can have. Here are a few examples of some popular local "fast food" places and the healthy selections you can make.

- Chinese buffet: Portion control is key here. You may not get your “moneys worth” but you can still enjoy the food. Make sure you choose the meat that is not “coated” with a batter. Instead get the chicken or beef with the vegetables like peppers or broccoli, and easy on the sauces. Pick a spring roll instead of an egg roll, and make sure you don’t over do it with the rice.
- Mexican: I know the chips and dip are free, but you don’t have to eat them. But if you have to, just eat a few. Your best choice is probably the fajitas. Make yourself two loaded fajitas, don’t forget the vegetables, and put the rest in a doggy bag for your afternoon snack or dinner that night.
- The “typical” burger shop: Most of these burger shops are selling grilled chicken sandwiches now, so order it up and ask for extra veggies and no mayo. Plus, skip the fries.

The key to eating out is simple. First portion control. Second, choose foods that are grilled or broiled, not fried. Third, easy on the sauces like mayo or sour cream. Fourth, remember to have one protein, one carbohydrate, and one vegetable with your meals, and if you’re still hungry have more vegetables. Fifth, drink lots of water. In fact, before you eat, drink one full glass of cold water.