

FirstLine Therapy®
Dining Guide
Your guide to making healthy
dining choices... anywhere!



FirstLine Therapy Dining Guide

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This guidebook is not intended as medical advice. Its intent is solely informational and educational. Please consult a medical or health professional for any questions or concerns of a medical nature.

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Introduction

Dining out should be a pleasant and relaxing experience. But when you're making dietary changes, dining out, especially in the company of others, can seem challenging. This is because meals prepared away from home, such as take-out or in a restaurant, are generally higher in calories, sodium, and fat, making them less healthy than what you might prepare in your kitchen.

Luckily, your FirstLine Therapy menu plan doesn't require social isolation or avoiding restaurants. While social eating may make program compliance a little more challenging, you can (and should still) dine out and enjoy social events involving food. You simply need to do a little research, be aware of potential pitfalls, and be mindful when ordering and eating your meal.

A few tips and tricks are all you need to become a pro at navigating menus and evaluating your options. Before long, developing a mental dining plan will become second nature. These skills will not only help you finish the program and meet your goals, but also enable a lifetime of healthful choices no matter where you are eating. So, don't avoid eating out. Practice doing it the FirstLine Therapy way!

Prepare: Your Pre-Dining Action Plan

Begin with the End in Mind

Always envision how you want to feel as you end your meal—confident and in control. Imagine the physical sensation of being only moderately full—about 80%. Keep this vision in your head as you plan each part of your pre-dining action plan. If you'll be dining with others, think about your objectives for the gathering. Most likely, you'll connect and chat with others at the table, and eating will be only part of the agenda.

Restaurant Selection

If possible, get involved in selecting the restaurant. Ideally, choose an establishment with a wide range of menu items. Unsure of the best options around you? Search the Internet for "healthy restaurants (insert your city name)" to find places to suggest. If needed, narrow the search to the top 20 restaurants. And although you may not plan to eat a vegetarian meal, searching for "vegetarian restaurants" or "vegetarian-friendly restaurants" can be another way to find a restaurant that likely caters to health-conscious diners. Initially, you may want to avoid buffets where the temptation to overeat is greater.

Pre-Select Your Meal

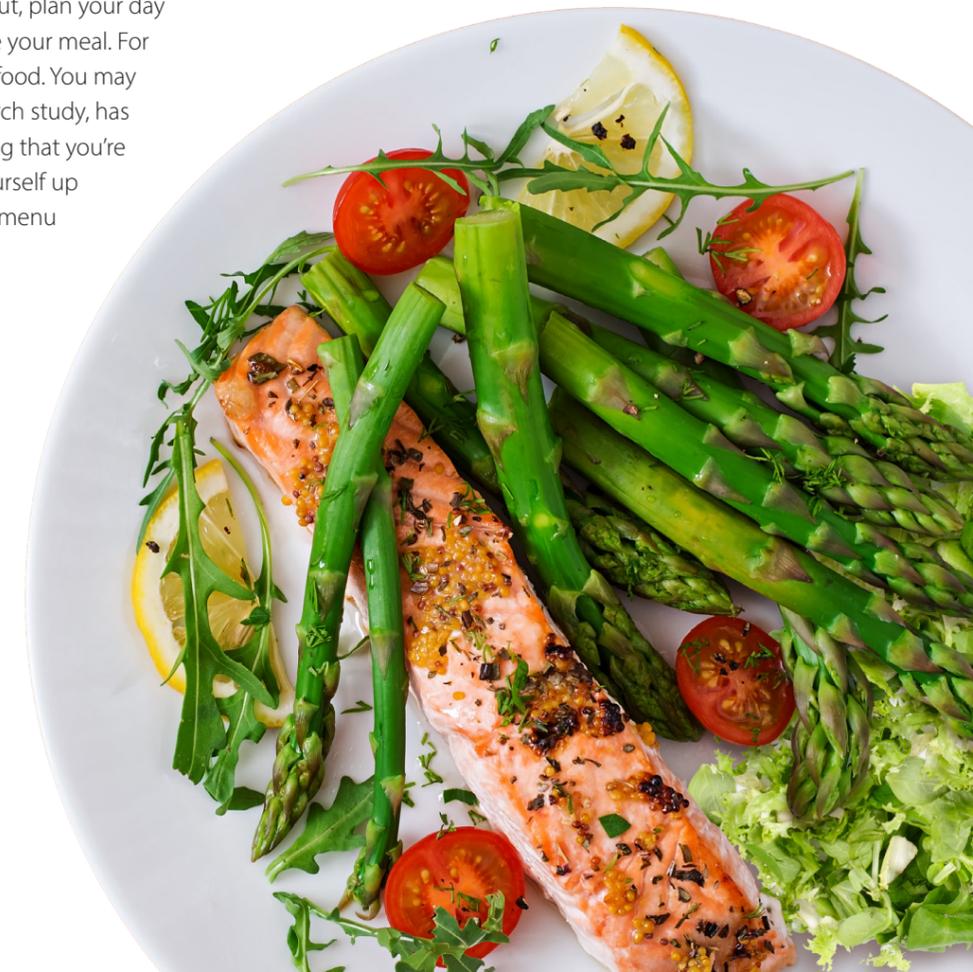
Evaluating your options and selecting your dish may be much easier if done in advance. In contrast, if you wait until you get to the restaurant, you're more likely to make unhealthy choices when you are socially distracted or feel rushed to make a decision. You can find most restaurant menus online. Use the "Restaurant Terms" chart to help you determine a potential restaurant's FirstLine Therapy friendliness factor.

Consider calling the restaurant to discuss the menu and any potential accommodations you might wish them to make. However, to have a productive conversation, these calls are best made before restaurants get busy, usually between 10:00 am-12:00 pm or 3:00-6:00 pm.

Using the chart as a guide, select a few menu options and be prepared to ask the server any pertinent questions.

Don't Arrive Hungry

If you know ahead of time that you'll be dining out, plan your day to include a light, nutritious snack an hour before your meal. For example, have a serving of fruit or a protein-rich food. You may also consider yogurt which, according to a research study, has been shown to help manage hunger.¹ By ensuring that you're not starving before you go out, you won't set yourself up for failure with the temptation to veer from your menu plan or overeat.



At the Restaurant: Your Action Plan Before the Meal

Hydrate with Water

Plan to drink sparkling or still water before and during the meal. Besides providing hydration, the water will fill you up and keep your hands busy. According to a 12-week study, people trying to lose weight who drank 500 ml (17 oz.) of water half an hour before eating consumed fewer calories and lost 44% more weight than those who didn't.² Ask your server to add a slice of lemon or lime to add color, flavor, and make it more refreshing.

Benefits of Drinking Water



AIDS IN
DIGESTION



HELPS REGULATE
BODY TEMPERATURE



LUBRICATES
JOINTS



FLUSHES WASTES
AND TOXINS



LUBRICATES
THE EYES



AIDS IN
WEIGHT LOSS



MAINTAINS BALANCE
OF BODY FLUIDS



RELIEVES FATIGUE
ENERGIZES MUSCLES



STRENGTHENS
BRAIN



Ordering Mindfully

The way food is cooked—the sauces, the sides, and even the garnishes—can significantly impact the calories in a dish. So, when reviewing the menu, keep the “Restaurant Terms” chart and these other tips in mind to help avoid going off your plan.



Ban the Basket: Often, the basket of bread arrives before you have the chance to decline it. So, check in with your dining companions early on to see if they are fine with skipping the bread basket. Then, let your server know you'd prefer no bread for the table. It's much easier to keep it off the table than to have it removed once everyone has it in their sight and under their nose. If you want something to munch on right away, request a plate of raw vegetables.



Start Smart: Order a broth-based soup or salad for a starter. Eating either option first will help you avoid overeating during the main course. In fact, studies show that eating soup before a meal can help reduce caloric intake by 20%.³



Be Balanced: Plan to include healthy selections from multiple food groups. Think “Healthy Plate” ratios. For example, an entrée salad or bowl with baked or grilled chicken, beans, or seafood provides protein along with fiber and other nutrients.



Be First: In social situations, it's human nature to let a fellow diner's choices influence your own (e.g., “I'll have what she's having”). By ordering first, you'll be taking charge of your health and will be the one influencing others. If questioned, simply let your dining companions know that you have made a commitment to your long-term health.



Be Crystal Clear: When ordering your meal, make sure you are very clear what will be arriving on your plate. Don't just read the menu or be afraid to play detective. Ask the server how the food will be prepared and served (such as, “Will it be served with a sauce, gravy, guacamole or toppings?”). Also get an estimate of the portion size so that you can confidently request appropriate substitutions, changes, or items on the side, as needed. You won't get what you need unless you ask for it—be assertive.



Salad Dressing: Always ask for it on the side so that you dip your fork in the dressing before each bite of salad, rather than pouring it over the salad. If the dish comes with a cream-based dressing, consider requesting cruetts of olive oil and vinegar instead.



Sauces: Always request sauces, gravies, guacamole, etc. on the side. Or, consider skipping them.



Super-Size the Vegetables: The non-starchy (category 1) vegetable portion of dishes is typically very sparse. Request a triple portion of non-starchy vegetables and offer to pay extra, if needed. And, if the main dish entrée or the grain or starchy vegetable (category 2) serving is larger than your plan allows simply request that it be reduced (or eliminated) and have extra vegetables added instead. In the case of deep-fried sides (onion rings, French fries), ask to make a full substitution with vegetables.



Down-Size Your Entrée: Often, restaurant portions far exceed FirstLine Therapy serving sizes. See if a dinner companion is willing to split your entrée, or have the server bring one-third or half your entrée in a box. That way, you can relax and not have to think about portion control.



Consider No Entrée: Sometimes, the best option is to order an appetizer in place of an entrée and add a soup or salad. Just make sure to follow your FirstLine Therapy guidelines with appetizers, as many are deep fried or larger portions meant for sharing.

Smart Salad Bar Strategies

Just because it's a salad bar doesn't mean anything goes. However, the salad bar can be a slam-dunk FirstLine Therapy friendly meal, if you plan it out the same way you would at home. It's still important to be discerning in your selections, as the salad bar comes with much less information about the food than a regular restaurant menu—build a smart salad.

- **Don't Guess: Bring Your Firstline Therapy Materials**

At first, it may be a challenge to make good choices and stay on the program without your reference materials. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to your health. So, if you know you'll be visiting a salad bar, bring your food list with you and mentally visualize the various serving sizes (1 oz., 2 oz., 3 oz., ½ cup, etc.).

- **Do A Drive-By**

Remember, it's not a conveyor belt! Before you even pick up a plate or bowl, get to know your options and begin with the end in mind. Considering your FirstLine Therapy daily servings, scan the salad bar noting your options for each category and visualizing serving sizes for those you'll select. Only then, with your plan set, pick up your plate. And remember, just because it is a salad bar doesn't mean you have to mindlessly fill every inch of the plate or bowl. Instead, envision the type of salad that a health-conscious restaurant would serve.

- **Start With the Greens**

Go dark! Even if you don't know the varieties of lettuce at the bar, always choose the darkest, most colorful options. These might include dark greens, such as kale, or "reds," such as radicchio or red leaf lettuce. These are much richer in nutrients than the lighter greens commonly found in salad bars, such as romaine, butter, or iceberg lettuce.

- **Other Colorful Vegetables**

Salad bars make "eating a rainbow" easy. Select as many colorful category 1 vegetables as you like, sticking with the fresh, rather than marinated options. If fresh or cooked vegetables are marinated or in dressing, be sure to drain them as much as you can. Otherwise, you'll be adding not only extra calories and fat, but possibly extra sodium as well.

- **Add Crunch: Healthy Category 1 Vegetable Crunch**

Salad bars often include plenty of celery, cucumber, jicama, and radishes. If you don't normally eat some of these category 1 vegetables, this is a great way to try them. Add as much as you want. Although less colorful, they are still very nutritious. Full of water, they'll hydrate you and fill you up while adding crunchiness and volume to your salad.

- **Category 2 Vegetables or Not?**

If you're really hungry, adding a serving of category 2 vegetables can help with satiety. However, first evaluate if you think there are already enough options to make you feel 80% full.

- **Protein: A Major Player or Supporting Role?**

If this salad will be your meal, be sure to include protein, keeping serving size in mind.

- **Animal Protein Options:** At most salad bars, simple animal proteins are best. Select hard-boiled eggs, grilled chicken or fresh tuna instead of egg, chicken, or tuna salad. However, use caution when selecting meats. Often they are sliced up cold cuts, which are highly processed and generally very high in sodium.

- **Dairy Protein Options:** If selecting cheese as your protein and you don't know the serving sizes for specific types, ask a server. Serving sizes vary significantly. Consider cottage cheese—available at most salad bars—as it has the largest serving size at ¾ cup.

- **Plant Protein Options:** Most salad bars will offer various FirstLine Therapy friendly plant-based protein options, from beans and hummus, to tofu and tempeh. However, avoid any fried (or refried) items.

- **Legumes:** Even if the salad is a side dish, adding legumes will provide protein, creating satiety. Just remember that the serving size will be different than if they are a protein serving.

- **Grains**

Only add grains if simply prepared whole grain options are available (barley, bulgur, quinoa, rice, etc.). Skip any prepared grain salads, such as pasta salad as they will have added an unknown dressing. Also consider if you need the grains on the salad to fill you up, or if you would rather save your grain "allowance" for another meal.

- **Nuts and Seeds**

These are great salad toppings, but avoid the fried or candied options. Also, be careful with the serving size. The serving spoons are likely much bigger than ones you might use at home, making it easy to far exceed the proper serving size. Likewise, be very cautious if the nuts or seeds are dispensed out of a shaker.

- **Skip These Toppings**

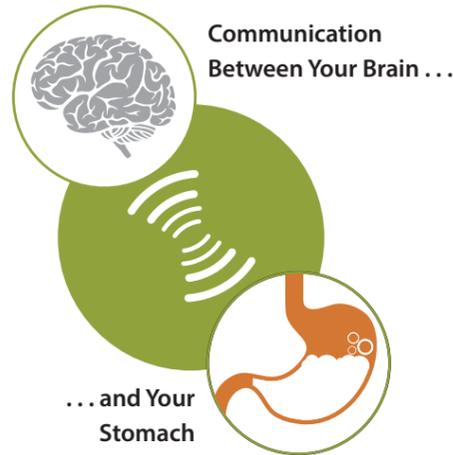
Avoid croutons, tortilla strips, wonton strips, bacon bits, and dried cranberries. These are all typically highly processed, deep fried, and in the case of the cranberries, probably sweetened. Regarding olives, if you use them, be sure to count them, 8-10 medium or 1/4 cup sliced per serving (if you want to use them as one of your fat servings).

- **Salad Dressing**

Your dressing selection is important—choose wisely. Too much of cream-based dressing (think blue cheese, French, ranch, thousand island) could sabotage your otherwise good choices. If you don't know the ingredients, it is best to stick with vinaigrette or add oil and vinegar (or lemon juice) separately. However, don't skip dressing altogether. A little bit of fat in dressings helps your body absorb fat-soluble vitamins and many of the phytonutrients in the salad. Avoid fat-free dressings not only for this reason, but also because most contain sweeteners.



At the Restaurant: Your Action Plan During the Meal



Go Slow

Keep time on your side and eat leisurely. Why? First, you'll likely enjoy your meal more and digest it better. Second, your stomach and brain need time to communicate. As we drink water and eat food, the stomach starts to fill. The filling and stretching of the stomach triggers the release of hormones from our fat cells and small intestines. These hormones send messages to the brain about our energy needs, level of satiety, and also give us that pleasurable feeling of being well fed.

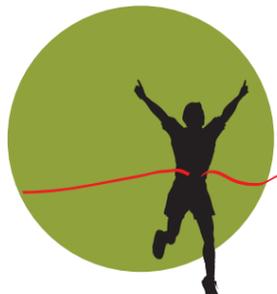
Meanwhile, you have more than your belt monitoring your state of fullness. You also have stretch receptors in your stomach. These are activated as your stomach fills and sends the message to the brain that it is full and time to stop eating. The message travels via the vagus nerve, which connects the gut to the brainstem. This signal, along with the hormones, tells the brain, "Let's put that fork down."



Take 20 Minutes



Be Social



Finish Strong

Take 20 (Minutes, That Is)

The communication takes at least 20 minutes and continues after you have stopped eating. So, when you begin eating, note the time. Your goal should be to make your meal last at least 20-30 minutes. Otherwise, you're out-running the messenger (the vagus nerve). Give this communication system time to work by eating at a leisurely pace.

Tips to Help You Eat More Slowly:

- **Chew thoroughly.** Try counting how many times you normally chew your food and be mindful of increasing the count. Or, try chewing until you reflexively swallow. This will help you not only eat more slowly, but also improve your digestion.
- **Put your fork down in between bites.** Or, try holding the fork with your less-dominant hand. It will slow down your eating while increasing your dexterity as a bonus.
- **Be social and engage in conversation.** If you're dining alone, focus on mindful eating. Smell the aroma of the food and savor each bite.
- **Try to be the last one to finish eating.** That way, you won't be left with an empty plate while everyone else is still eating.

Finish Strong

- After making smart menu selections and eating in a leisurely, mindful manner, don't drop your commitment to health after the main course.
- Review the decision you made earlier about how you wanted to feel at the end of the meal—confident, in control, and only only 80% full.
- Unless a serving of fresh fruit is an option, avoiding dessert may be the smartest choice. Instead, order a cup of unsweetened coffee or tea, decaffeinated as needed. Experiment with green teas and herbal teas. Once you find a favorite, bring some sachets with you and simply request some hot water.



Restaurant Menu Terms to Know

This easy to use guide will help you make sensible menu choices when dining out at your favorite restaurants.

	Caution	FirstLine Therapy Friendly Tips
Cooking Method	Pan-fried, fried, crispy, crunchy, stuffed	Baked, grilled, roasted, poached, or steamed
Menu Descriptions	Cholesterol-free: Could be filled with unhealthy, calorie-dense oils. Lite or Low-carb: Doesn't mean low in calories, fat	"Healthy, light, or low-fat" Note: Ask to see nutritional information for menu items with these descriptions
General	Avoid buffets and butter or cream-based sauces. Avoid dishes featuring cheese	Eat with chopsticks, choose broth-based sauces and soups, focus on vegetable-based dishes or add extra non-starchy vegetables
Portions and Plate Terms	Combo, feast, grande, jumbo, king size, supreme, platter	Luncheon, petite, senior, junior, regular
Chinese	Chinese noodles, Crispy noodles Batter fried, breaded, or deep fried Sweet and sour dishes "Glaze" duck, spare ribs, or pork (typically fatty cuts are used), Egg rolls or pupu platters	Steamed brown rice (FirstLine Therapy portion), vegetables, seafood: hot and spicy or sour, stir fry (ask for less oil), steamed dumplings Terms to look for: zheng (steamed), jum (poached), kao (roasted), shao (barbecued)
BBQ	Brisket Limit BBQ sauce, coleslaw, fries, potato salad, potato casserole, ribs, sausage, white bread	Black eyed peas, broccoli, green beans, chicken breast, pork tenderloin, salad
Delis/Cafes	Bologna, corned beef, any cold cuts Tuna or chicken salad Cream soups Extra cheese Croissants	Turkey, ham, roast beef, and chicken Extra vegetables Broth-based soups, fresh fruit Whole wheat, whole grain breads
French	French bread and baguettes, cream soups, pate, crepes, brioche, sauces: béarnaise hollandaise, mornay, pastries, and eclaires	Bouillabaisse, flambéed cherries, fresh and poached fruit, consommé, nicoise salads, poached or steamed fish, and steamed mussels
Greek	Meat stuffed items, Fried calamari, Baba ganoush, Moussaka, Gyros, Spanakopita (or any phyllo pastry dish)	Eggplant appetizer, dolmas (stuffed grape leaves), tzatziki (yogurt sauce), Roast lamb; shish kabob; bulgur wheat with vegetables or chicken Chicken pita sandwich, Plaki (fish cooked in tomatoes, onions and garlic)
Indian	Ghee, coconut milk, fritters, fried, stuffed, battered, korma (cream sauce), cream curry, basmati rice, chutney, malai (a thick cream)	Skinless chicken, mattar (peas), Indian spices, vegetables, dahl (lentils), tandoori (baked)
Italian	Sauces: cream, alfredo, pesto, carbonara, cheese filled pasta (tortellini or ravioli), eggplant parmesan, focaccia, gnocchi, white bread, frito (fried)	Sauces, red, marinara, red clam, piccata (lemon-wine) Whole wheat pasta Soups: minestrone, pasta y fagioli Griglia (grilled) fish or calamari Shrimp cocktail

	Caution	FirstLine Therapy Friendly Tips
Japanese	Tempura, katsu (breaded, fried meat), sukiyaki (fatty beef), fried wontons, egg rolls	Miso soup and dressing Tofu: steamed, simmered, boiled or grilled Sashimi and sushi, edamame, lettuce wrap Tip: Eat with chopsticks!
Mexican	Chimichangas, enchiladas, burritos, chorizo, extra cheese, sour cream, guacamole, refried beans (unless vegetarian), chips. Avoid crispy, stuffed or fried.	Black bean soup, corn tortillas, fajitas, grilled chicken or fish, salsa, gazpacho, chili, black or pinto beans, vegetarian refried beans
Pizza	Bacon, extra cheese, pepperoni, sausage, meatballs	Vegetable topping (mushrooms, jalapeños, spinach, artichoke, onion), part skim or feta cheese, shrimp, grilled chicken, pineapple, thin and whole wheat crust, extra tomato sauce
Thai	Peanut sauce, coconut milk, fried, golden brown, crispy, curry sauce, mee-krob	Lemon grass, curry paste, napa cabbage, mixed vegetables, broth soups, lime sauce, sauteéd

Dining the FirstLine Therapy Way

In summary, dining out can be an enjoyable part of FirstLine Therapy, but it means advocating for your own health. You're the only one who will do it. Be polite, yet unapologetic to your companions and the restaurant about your need for information or special requests. By becoming familiar with some of these tips and tricks, you'll be able to enjoy restaurants and eating socially while meeting your health goals. Further, the knowledge and skills you are learning will serve you for a lifetime of healthy eating.



