Restaurant Rules

Laborers work hard, and working hard makes people hungry. They also lead very busy lives. And when people are busy but gotta eat, what do they do? Eat out! In fact, in the United States, almost half of the average household food budget is spent on food eaten outside of the home.

Eating out can be fun—the food tastes good, and no one has to cook it or clean up. But eating out can really do a number on healthy eating habits. Food in restaurants has about 22% more fat than food cooked at home. Plus, even if you’re hungry, the portions are often huge—sometimes with more than a day’s calories in just one meal!

But there’s no need to stay away from restaurants forever. Here are some ideas for eating out without selling out:

• You’re not a kid, so you don’t have to clean your plate. Take half of that huge portion home, pack it up, and eat it for lunch or on a break the next day. Or leave it in the fridge, and you’ve got dinner when you get home the next night.

• Don’t super-size meals at your favorite fast-food restaurant. It seems like a good deal, but adds lots of fat and calories.

• When you’ve got a healthy salad in front of you, don’t glop on lots of dressing. Many salad dressings are packed with calories and can add as many as 250 calories to an otherwise healthy meal. Ask for the dressing on the side, so you can control how much you put on.

• A baked potato is a great choice, but how you decide to dress up that spud can make or break how healthy it is. If you like butter or sour cream, use just a small amount. Or try eating it with a little bit of steak sauce or salsa for some unusual flavor.

• Nowadays, restaurants are used to special requests from customers. Ask to have your food prepared without butter or oil, and see how you like the taste.

• Sometimes a little motivation is all you need to cook at home. Decide to cook one more meal every week and put the money you save in a jar. At the end of the month, splurge on a sports event or a trip to an amusement park or the movies!