

BLUE ZONES

“Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of year.” – Franklin P. Adams

Top 5 Blue Zones Project tips for dining out

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Americans love going out to eat. In fact, pre-COVID, the average person was eating out around 2-3 times per week. Going out to eat is one of the ways we get to socialize with friends and family, celebrate a special occasion, take a break from the kitchen, or simply enjoy great food that you normally wouldn't prepare at home.

With all the many attractions of dining out, there are also drawbacks to be aware of. Some restaurants are add fat, salt, and sugar to make foods taste better and keep you wanting more. To make matters worse, the portion sizes are often enough to feed two or three people.

Follow these 5 practical tips to help you not only enjoy your meal, but also support your goals of eating a healthy diet:

1. “Hara Hachi Bu!” This Japanese term means to stop eating when you are 80% full. This concept is also a Blue Zones Power 9 principle shared by the longest-lived people in the world. The key here is to eat slowly to allow time for your stomach to signal to your brain that you are full. You can also take the left-over portion home and enjoy it for lunch or dinner the next day. It's like getting two meals for the price of one!

2. Go Plant Slant. This Power 9 principle reminds us to eat more vegetables. Look for those menu items that are vegetable based or better yet, order a salad before ordering anything else on the menu. A study out of State College, Pennsylvania, found that volunteers who ate a big veggie salad before the main course ate fewer calories overall than those who didn't have a first-course salad. Make sure to avoid salads with heavy dressings, cheeses, or croutons. Instead, look for a simple salad that's mostly greens with some veggies. Ask for a simple vinaigrette on the side.

3. Dine at a Blue Zones Project Approved Restaurant. When you have an



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abundance of healthy items in your refrigerator or kitchen pantry, you are more likely to make healthier eating choices. The same concept goes for eating at restaurants. Blue Zones Project currently works with 102 local restaurants to help make healthy choices easier for customers. This includes increasing healthy menu options by adding delicious Blue Zones Inspired® dishes and promoting a tobacco free environment. For a full list of Blue Zones Project Restaurants near you, visit BlueZonesProject.HS-Sites.com/SouthwestFlorida/Restaurant.

4. Drink a lot of water. Don't be

tempted by those fancy drinks that can add a lot of unwanted sugar, empty calories, and dollars to your final bill. Water is free, helps with digestion, and will keep you fuller throughout the meal. You can add a slice of lemon or lime to add more flavor.

5. Eat with your Right Tribe. This Power 9 principle tells us to surround ourselves with people who support positive behaviors. When we eat with others who are eating healthier, you are more likely to stay on track and do the same.

If your favorite restaurant is not yet Blue Zones Project Approved, we would

love to have them on board. Talk to the manager and ask them to contact David Longfield-Smith at david.longfield-smith@sharecare.com.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is a vital part of Southwest Florida's well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

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