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On the Road Without Weight Gain

How to Eat Healthy, Away From Home

by Melinda Hemmelgarn

Health-conscious and sustainably minded folks know how challenging it can be to eat well on the road. Most restaurants dotting interstates and airports offer supersized portions of soulless, processed foods, devoid of satisfying whole-food goodness or regional flair. They're more like a drive-by shoot up of fat, sodium and sweeteners.

Yet it is possible to find healthy foods while traveling, given a little pre-planning that can add fun and excitement to the adventure. Whatever the mode of transportation, follow these tips from seasoned registered dietitians to feel fit, trim and happy while out and about for business or pleasure.

Bring Food: Number One Rule of the Road

Once we feel hunger pangs, we're more likely to eat whatever's within arm's reach, so for driving trips, take a cooler of healthy options that are kind to hips and waistlines. If flying, pack non-perishable snacks in a carry-on bag.

Diana Dyer, an Ann Arbor, Michigan-based dietitian and organic farmer, has logged thousands of miles travelling



and speaking about "food as medicine." Her secret: "I carry dried organic fruits and vegetables, organic granola bars, organic nuts and organic peanut butter." Before arriving at her hotel, she'll ask the cab driver to take her to a local food co-op to pick up organic fresh fruits, juice and yogurt. Dyer is adamant about organic food, no matter where she goes, because she doesn't want to consume hormones, antibiotics and agricultural chemical residues, many of which contribute to weight gain, especially in combination with typically high-fat Western diets.

Dyer rejects hotel breakfast buffets too, which typically offer low-fiber, highly processed fare. Instead, she packs her own organic rolled oats, dried fruits, nuts and green tea. Then, all she needs is the hotel's hot water to stir up a fortifying, satisfying, health-protecting breakfast. Hotel rooms with mini-refrigerators make it easy to store perishable items. If a fridge is unavailable, use the in-room ice bucket to keep milk, yogurt and cheese at a safe temperature.

When road-tripping with children, a cooler will save money and time and provide a tasty and energizing on-the-spot

picnic for road-weary, hungry travelers. Remember to bring silverware, napkins, cups and a blanket or tablecloth.

Roadside rest areas and community parks provide free access to picnic tables, clean restrooms and a place to romp and stretch (read: burn calories). Plus, Mother Nature's entertainment surely beats a potentially dirty, plastic, fast-food play space.

When it's time to restock supplies, ask for directions to the closest supermarket, food co-op, natural foods grocery store or farmers' market. Most are located close to major highways.

Seek Out Farm-Fresh Foods and Regional, Ethnic Cuisine

To find fresh fruits and vegetables while on the road, stop at state welcome centers for free maps and guides to farm stands and farmers' markets to enjoy the taste of healthy local seasonal flavors.

Before Lebanon, New Hampshire-based dietitian KC Wright goes on the road, she goes online to check department of agriculture websites for the states she'll visit. She searches for both farmers' markets and farm-to-restaurant programs.

Also check a destination city's calendar of events for regional and ethnic food festivals. The food won't necessarily be low in calories, but will be high in the fun-factor. Simply share larger-than-life servings with travelling companions for the best of all worlds.

Reevaluate Restaurants and Accommodations

Raleigh, North Carolina Dietitian Nicole Miller chooses vacation rentals over hotels when traveling so that she has ready access to a kitchen. Being

able to prepare some of our own food saves money and slashes calories.

Beware of all-you-can-eat buffets; they nearly guarantee overeating. Also be prepared to split entrées at most restaurants or order two items from the appetizer menu. Inquire about local menu items and ask how food is prepared. Request sauces, gravies and dressings "on the side" to control those extra calories.

Having access to the Internet or a smart phone makes it even easier to locate healthy eating restaurants (as does asking folks at farmers' markets). Dawn Brigid, project manager for Sustainable Table, notes, "Free apps like Yelp's Menupages can be very helpful." She recommends filtering searches with the word "healthy."

Think Exercise and Hydration

Many hotels have exercise rooms and swimming pools, but also ask for a walking map of the area to explore interesting sights on foot. State and national parks provide scenic and invigorating hiking trails. Bring a day-pack for healthful snacks and water.

Note that people often mistake hunger for thirst, and it's easy to become dehydrated when travelling. Keep a refillable water bottle to refresh and reenergize.

Here's to fun, safe and healthy travels.

Melinda Hemmelgarn, aka the "Food Sleuth", is a registered dietitian and award-winning writer and radio host at kopn.org, in Columbia, MO. She co-created F.A.R.M.: Food, Art, Revolution Media to support organic farmers (Enduring-Image.blogspot.com). Reach her at FoodSleuth@gmail.com.

Health Food Finds on the Road

Healthy Highways: the Traveler's Guide to Healthy Eating

by Nikki and David Goldbeck
Keep this glovebox-friendly directory handy; it lists 2,800 U.S. healthy eateries, natural food markets and co-ops. The website offers updates plus bonuses like yoga class and swimming sites. HealthyHighways.com/travelinfo.shtml

Eat Well Everywhere

part of the *Eat Well Guide*
Locate real, good food via zip code or city and state. EatWellGuide.org (free)

Local Harvest

Find a farmers' market by product or location. LocalHarvest.org (free)

Vegetarian Journal's Guide to Natural Foods Restaurants in the U.S. and Canada

Search by state and city to find the healthiest fare. vrg.org/restaurant/index.php (free)

Bon' App

Track calories of healthy food accessed nearby. Bon-App.com (free)

Locavore App

Identify seasonal, local food and pinpoint nearby farmers' markets. GetLocavore.com (free)

Happy Cow App

Enjoy this compassionate guide to vegan and vegetarian-friendly restaurants. Tinyurl.com/6rt2dbq

iVegetarian App

Locate healthy and sustainable vegetarian restaurants. Tinyurl.com/6orgcq3 (free)

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