



Trainer Joe's Top Ten Strategies For Dining Out *By Joe Stein, President*



When uttered with a smile, certain phrases have the ability to simultaneously strike fear or bring joy depending upon the listener's state of mind. "I'm pregnant. We have tickets to the opera. It's the police. And...We're going out to dinner." If dining out is your Achilles' heel, read on. Like Q arming James Bond with a secret arsenal, allow me to equip you with my top ten strategies for dining out in style while maintaining your waistline.

- 1) Restaurants are in business to serve us: They are there to please us by meeting our culinary requirements. Repeat customers are what they need to survive...they want us to come back! Be specific about your needs; just don't be a jerk about it.
- 2) Don't eat "off the rack." Who buys a suit, and it fits perfectly without alteration? When you moved into your house, did you keep the carpet, paint and curtains? So why eat what someone else has determined is appropriate for you? Customize your eating to suit *your* taste and needs. Have two appetizers instead of a dinner plate; ask for brown rice instead of mashed potatoes, ask for steamed or grilled veggies instead of French fries. Be especially careful about the portion sizes on the dinner plate: the sides as well as the entree. Understand that your requests may be received and executed differently at upscale eateries verses mass-market chain restaurants.
- 3) Be a Regular: Making special requests and having it just the way you need, will take some finesse by the waitstaff and the kitchen. Being a regular will go a long way to accommodating your special needs, especially during Friday and Saturday nights. If you will be dining at a new restaurant, review their menu online so you will be familiar with their offerings.
- 4) Lie a little: If you do not want cream sauce, pasta, etc., just say you have allergies to specific foods and will become ill if you ingest them. No waiter wants to see a patron barfing at his table. If you just can't bring yourself to say that, then, "...I'm in training, and that's not in my regimen..." will often help you get things your way. Your dining partners will be duly impressed.
- 5) Learn to say, "On the side." When it comes to dressing, sauce, etc.
- 6) Avoid menu selections that contain the five deadly words: Fried, deep fried, in a cream sauce, butter and rich. Look for words such as baked, broiled, grilled and lite.

- 7) A good way to stay in control when dining is to always choose a healthy entree, then consider an alcoholic beverage, appetizer and desert as three options. If you are satisfied with your nutrition and exercise that day, choose two. If you need to reduce your intake a little, choose one.
- 8) Regarding deserts, a gourmet coffee or espresso, fresh fruit or sharing is an option to indulge in moderation.
- 9) Once you gain confidence in your abilities to navigate these waters, you may attempt the daring "Second Plate" maneuver: When the waitstaff delivers your main course, say, "Wow, may I have another plate please? This will be wonderful for tomorrow's dinner." This is a great way to bring portions under control and prevent incremental nibbling on what was to be placed in a doggie bag at the end of the meal.
- 10) Remember, you will be asking for special treatment, so be a generous tipper. Your kindness will be remembered the next time you ask for something out of the ordinary.

Above all, enjoy your dining experience. Whether you like your martinis shaken or stirred, treat the waitstaff with respect and your dining companions with tolerant understanding...they may not be equipped with your black belt restaurant skills.

Joe Stein, B.S., M.B.A., is a certified personal trainer, weight management and lifestyle consultant and owner of Renaissance Fitness & Wellness. Call 732.345.5151 or e-mail Joe@RenaissanceFitness.com with questions or to receive a complimentary fitness consultation and session.