

Dining Out with Diabetes: Restaurant Guide for Seniors

Your pocket guide to enjoying restaurants while managing blood sugar

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Before You Go: Planning Tips {#before-you-go}

Pre-Restaurant Checklist

- [] Check menu online first
- [] Eat normal breakfast/lunch (don't "save up")
- [] Take medications as usual
- [] Pack glucose tablets/snacks
- [] Consider eating a small protein snack before
- [] Plan your insulin timing if applicable

Helpful Apps

- **MyFitnessPal:** Check calories/carbs
- **Glucose Buddy:** Log readings
- **Restaurant nutrition websites:** Most chains post full info

Questions to Ask Your Server {#questions-to-ask}

Essential Questions (Don't Be Shy!)

1. "Can you tell me how this is prepared?"

- Is it fried, grilled, or baked?
- What oil or butter is used?
- Any sweet sauces or glazes?

2. "Can I make substitutions?"

- Vegetables instead of fries?
- Sauce on the side?
- Grilled instead of fried?

3. "What's the portion size?"

- Can I get a half portion?
- Is there a senior menu?
- Can you box half before serving?

4. "What's in the sauce/dressing?"

- Any added sugars?
- Can I get it on the side?
- Do you have oil and vinegar?

🗣 Magic Phrases That Work

- *"I'm managing my blood sugar..."*
- *"For health reasons, I need..."*
- *"Could you help me with a special request?"*

Portion Control Strategies {#portion-control}

Visual Portion Guides

- **Protein:** Size of your palm (3-4 oz)
- **Carbs:** Size of your fist (1/2 cup)
- **Fats:** Size of your thumb
- **Vegetables:** Two cupped hands

Smart Strategies

1. **Box It First:** Ask server to box half your meal before serving
2. **Share:** Split an entrée with your dining companion
3. **Appetizer as Meal:** Often perfect portion size
4. **Side Dish Method:** Order 2-3 healthy sides instead of entrée

Restaurant-by-Restaurant Guide {#restaurant-guide}

Applebee's

Best Choices:

- Grilled Chicken Salad (no croutons, dressing on side)
- Cedar Grilled Lemon Chicken (sub veggies for potato)
- Blackened Cajun Salmon

Watch Out For:

- Riblets (high sugar glaze)
- Oriental Chicken Salad (sweet dressing)
- Any "crispy" items

Hidden Gem: Ask for their "Lighter Fare" menu

Red Lobster

Best Choices:

- Grilled Fish (any type)
- Shrimp Skewers
- Steamed Lobster Tail
- Garden or Caesar Salad (light dressing)

Watch Out For:

- Cheddar Bay Biscuits (limit to 1)
- Admiral's Feast (fried items)
- Sweet chili shrimp

Smart Swap: Get double vegetables instead of rice/potato

Outback Steakhouse

Best Choices:

- Victoria's Filet (6 oz)
- Grilled Chicken on the Barbie
- Simply Grilled Salmon
- House Salad (no croutons)

Watch Out For:

- Bloomin' Onion (2,000+ calories!)
- Alice Springs Chicken (high fat)
- Loaded baked potato

Pro Tip: Their vegetables are cooked in butter - ask for steamed

Olive Garden

Best Choices:

- Herb-Grilled Salmon
- Grilled Chicken Margherita
- Minestrone Soup
- Garden Salad (2 breadsticks max)

Watch Out For:

- Tour of Italy (huge portions)
- Alfredo anything (high fat/calories)
- Unlimited breadsticks trap

Smart Order: "Lunch portion" available all day - just ask!

Chipotle

Best Choices:

- Salad Bowl (no rice)
- Chicken or Steak
- Fajita Vegetables
- Salsa instead of sour cream

Watch Out For:

- Chips (540 calories!)

- Flour tortilla (300 calories)
- Queso and sour cream

Build Your Bowl:

- Lettuce base
- Beans OR rice (not both)
- Protein
- Veggies
- Salsa

Pizza Hut

Best Choices:

- Thin crust veggie pizza (2 slices)
- Naked wings (6 pieces)
- Garden salad

Watch Out For:

- Stuffed crust
- Meat Lovers
- Breadsticks

Portion Trick: Order personal size or share a medium

Chili's

Best Choices:

- Classic Sirloin with Steamed Broccoli
- Ancho Salmon
- Margarita Grilled Chicken

Watch Out For:

- Awesome Blossom
- Honey-Chipotle items
- Texas Cheese Fries

Hidden Option: Ask for "Guiltless Grill" menu



Best Choices:

- Simple & Fit 2-Egg Breakfast
- Grilled Chicken Salad
- Veggie Omelette (no toast)

Watch Out For:

- Pancakes (even "healthy" ones)
- French toast
- Hash browns

Morning Tip: Stick to eggs and meat, skip the carbs



Best Choices:

- Grilled Chicken (remove skin)
- Green Beans
- Side Salad

Watch Out For:

- Original Recipe (breaded)
- Biscuits
- Mac and cheese

Surprising Find: Grilled chicken is quite good!



Best Choices:

- Any 6" sub as salad
- Turkey Breast
- Veggie Delite

- Apple slices

Watch Out For:

- Footlong anything
- Cookies
- Sweet onion sauce

Pro Build:

- 6" wheat bread OR salad
- Lean protein
- All veggies
- Mustard or vinegar



Panera Bread

Best Choices:

- Half salad + cup of soup combo
- Power Chicken Hummus Bowl
- Greek Salad

Watch Out For:

- Bread bowl
- Mac and cheese
- Pastries

Smart Hack: You can get any sandwich as a lettuce wrap



P.F. Chang's

Best Choices:

- Buddha's Feast (steamed)
- Ginger Chicken with Broccoli
- Mongolian Beef (small portion)

Watch Out For:

- Sweet & sour anything

- Fried rice
- Lo mein noodles

Ask For: "Half sauce" on any dish

Long John Silver's

Best Choices:

- Grilled Salmon
- Grilled Shrimp Skewer
- Side Salad

Watch Out For:

- Anything battered
- Hush puppies
- Cole slaw (high sugar)

Texas Roadhouse

Best Choices:

- Sirloin (6 oz)
- Grilled Chicken
- House Salad (no croutons)
- Steamed vegetables

Watch Out For:

- Bread with cinnamon butter
- Loaded sweet potato
- Ribs (sugar in sauce)

First Thing: Ask them not to bring bread!

Wendy's

Best Choices:

- Grilled Chicken Sandwich (no bun)
- Apple Pecan Chicken Salad
- Small Chili

Watch Out For:

- Frosty (even small)
- French fries
- Baconator



Best Choices:

- Grilled Chicken Sandwich
- Grilled Market Salad
- Fruit Cup

Watch Out For:

- Chick-fil-A sauce (high sugar)
- Waffle fries
- Lemonade

Breakfast Win: Egg White Grill



Best Choices:

- Any grilled fish
- Hearts of Palm Salad
- Steamed asparagus

Watch Out For:

- Bang Bang Shrimp
- Coconut shrimp
- Loaded mashed potatoes

 **Five Guys****Best Choices:**

- Bunless burger
- Veggie sandwich (grilled veggies)
- Side salad

Watch Out For:

- Fries (even small is huge)
- Milkshakes
- Multiple patties

Order Style: "Bowl style" - they'll put burger in a bowl with toppings

 **Taco Bell****Best Choices:**

- Power Menu Bowl (no rice)
- Fresco style anything
- Side of black beans

Watch Out For:

- Chalupas
- Quesadillas
- Baja Blast

 **Carrabba's****Best Choices:**

- Grilled Fish of the Day
- Chicken Bryan (light butter)
- Minestrone soup

Watch Out For:

- Pasta dishes

- Bread service
- Desserts

Emergency Backup Plan {#emergency-plan}

If Blood Sugar Drops

1. **Always carry:** Glucose tablets, hard candy
2. **Restaurant options:** Orange juice, regular soda
3. **Tell your server:** "I need some juice quickly"

Emergency Contacts

- Doctor: _____
- Pharmacy: _____
- Emergency Contact: _____

Quick Reference Card {#quick-reference}

Always Safe Choices

- Grilled chicken/fish
- Steamed vegetables
- Side salad (dressing on side)
- Broth-based soup
- Water, unsweetened tea

Always Avoid

- Breaded/fried items
- Sweet sauces/glazes
- White bread/rice
- Regular soda/juice
- Desserts

Portion Quick Guide

Cut your plate into quarters:

- 1/2 plate: Non-starchy vegetables

- 1/4 plate: Lean protein
- 1/4 plate: Carbs (if any)

Top 5 Survival Tips

1. **Never go starving** - eat normal meals before
2. **Water first** - drink a full glass when seated
3. **Order first** - avoid temptation from others' choices
4. **Eat slowly** - put fork down between bites
5. **Stop at satisfied** - not full

Notes Section

My Safe Meals:

My Trigger Foods to Avoid:

My Target Blood Sugar Range: Before meal: _____ 2 hours after: _____

Remember: You can enjoy dining out! It's about making informed choices, not perfect ones.

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