



The Restaurant Rescue

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Our Single and On Plan editor dishes out advice for tackling the dinner date.

"Single and On Plan" chronicles my adventures and challenges as a single urban woman. I love being able to go where I want *when* I want; do what makes *me* happy; and include friends, family and my significant other wherever possible.

But staying healthy and losing weight is about focusing on my goals and making smart decisions... whether it's at a bar, restaurant, concession stand or in front

of my fridge.

Technically, I'm not completely single. I'm in a great relationship with a fantastic guy. He's generous; I'm lazy and live in New York City, which translates to his taking me out to dinner at least three times a week.

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Before I met him, I went on quite a few dates so I know all about The Dinner Date. But I still have trouble ordering food that doesn't leave a negative balance in my daily **POINTS®** values bank.

It's hard enough to eat healthy in a restaurant, but it's a bigger challenge if you're not ready to tell your date (or friend or colleague) that you're following

Non-Food Date Ideas from the Community

- Visit a museum or zoo.
- Go on a hike.
- Play mini-golf.
- Go bowling.
- Shoot pool.
- Try roller skating or ice skating.
- Hit some balls in a batting cage

a weight-loss plan. With these eight tips, you can enjoy your meal without the side of guilt. And be sure [to send me](#) your pointers so I can share them with our readers.

- or at a driving range.
- Visit historical sites.
- Play board games or card games.
- Walk in the park.

Hold the fries.

I rarely order a burger at a restaurant because of its high **POINTS** value but when I do, it's got to have cheese. I balance this indulgence by ordering a side of steamed vegetables, rather than fries. It's not because I want the vegetables—quite often, I'll ignore them—it's because I'm a fry junkie and don't want to be tempted to pick on them after I'm full. I like to give my full attention to the juicy burger (and my date) and not be distracted by so-so fries.

Don't always choose favorites.

My boyfriend *always* orders an appetizer, but I'm usually looking forward to my entrée and don't need the extra food. So when he asks which one I'd like to share, I suggest Buffalo wings or calamari because they're my least favorite options, and he loves them. The same goes for sharing dessert. I'll suggest flan because I know I'll only have a bite and he'll devour the whole thing. Sometimes I think this is why our relationship works.

Earn part of the meal.

If I know in advance about a dinner date, I try to work out that morning or during the day. I aim to earn at least 3 activity **POINTS** values and have found that I usually make healthier decisions at the restaurant that night, remembering how hard I worked out.

Use the message boards.

Yes, I *work* at and write for this site, but I turn to you for healthy restaurant tips. I'll type "Italian" in search and come up with over 7,000 mentions on the message boards. I'll jot down or try to remember a few menu items that are healthy choices, and off I go.

Tips from single friends at work.

I asked some of my friends at the company how they eat healthy on a date. Here's what they had to say:

"I like sharing several little plates on a date: that way I can eat less than him and still not appear to be dieting. I also try to eat slowly—which isn't as much of a problem when he's interesting and there's a lot of talking." — *Jenn C.*

"I pick the restaurant myself, if at all possible. But regardless, I go to the restaurant's Web site and look at the menu in advance to plan what I'm going to order and enter it in the **POINTS** Tracker online." — *Diana L.*

"I'll start with a side salad, split dessert and limit myself to one drink during the meal. I'm less likely to eat appetizers and bread if I save my drink for when the entrée arrives." — *Kelsea B.*

"I recommend you date a guy with a healthy appetite; then push a few potatoes or half of the steak or entrée onto his plate. It keeps down your food consumption and is a surefire way to his heart." — *Barry C., United Kingdom*

Restaurant Strategies from Readers Like You

Ask your server to bring a take-home container at the beginning of the meal, then portion out your entrée when it arrives. Just make sure you don't dig into the "leftovers" while you're at the restaurant.

One "daily diner" created a booklet for herself with restaurants she frequents and the **POINTS** values of her favorite foods.

Limit yourself to four...bites that is. One reader splits dessert with friends and puts down her spoon after four "samples." I'll have to try this trick the next time I order a side of fries.

Take a break halfway through the meal. Put down your utensils, take a breath and talk to your dining companion. One reader said she goes to the restroom in the middle of the meal and finds that she's doesn't need to eat any more by the time she returns to her table

Eat something small before you go. A few readers recommended light cheese with a few whole-wheat crackers or fruit to keep them from diving into the breadbasket.

Savor every bite. Readers suggest putting smaller amounts of food on your fork to slow yourself down during the meal.

***Portion Distortion**

The beef rib-eye in this photo was almost *seven times* a recommended Weight Watchers portion! My boyfriend ate some in the restaurant and we turned the leftovers into two more meals.

Share your suggestions for dining out on plan.

[Tell me](#) how you stay on plan at a restaurant or on a date. I'll add my favorites to this article and link to them from the next column.

I updated [my first column](#) with your fantastic bar tips. I received over 230 tips and wish I could include them all. Thanks for sharing and keep them coming.