

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

Planning vacation? Be a health-savvy traveler

I don't want to gain weight when I'm on vacation this summer, but for me that's easier said than done. How can I keep my focus on a healthy diet during my trip and still have a good time?

Attitude is key. You really can have a good time on vacation and still make smart food choices. But it's a lot more difficult if you think eating healthfully is all about self-sacrifice.

You're not alone: There's a very good reason for the term "comfort foods." It's not unusual for people to equate indulging in certain foods with fun, relaxation and good times, and those foods aren't necessarily, say, carrots. So when you're on vacation and focusing on pampering yourself, it's easy to throw caution to the wind when it comes to food choices. But you're smart enough to realize that you pay for that later.

One strategy you might want to try should begin before you even start packing your bags. It's inspired by information about comfort foods from the Obesity Action Coalition (for more, go to www.obesityaction.org and search for "Comfort Foods — Why do they make us happy?"). It involves taking a few minutes to think about your vacation and writing down everything — as long as it's not food-related — that you're looking forward to about it. Will you be sticking your toes into a sandy beach? Seeing new sites in a favorite city? Visiting friends and relatives you haven't seen in awhile? Giving yourself time to read a book or listen to music?

Writing these things down on paper will help you focus on them as the best things about your getaway. It will allow you put less emphasis on food choices that may, in the past, have been a big part of your vacation focus. By purposely shifting your focus away from food, it's easier to make healthful food choices and not feel deprived. After



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all, you're making that choice on a sunny beach — or wherever your itinerary takes you.

That said, making healthy choices while traveling does have its challenges. Here are some practical tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- When driving long distances, bring a water bottle and pack a small cooler to carry sealable plastic bags containing carrots, celery, bell peppers, snow peas, broccoli, cauliflower, grapes, cherries, strawberries or other favorite fresh fruits and vegetables. Also consider packing some yogurt and 2 percent milkfat cheese for some healthy protein options.
- On occasions when fast food is the only option, be sure to get out of the car instead of using the drive-thru. Walk around for 5 or 10 minutes just to stretch your limbs and get some physical activity. Skip anything from the deep fryer and forgo cheese and extra sauces on sandwiches.
- Breakfast offers a great opportunity to get some good sources of protein, whole grains and fiber. More often than not, choose eggs, oatmeal or other low-sugar cereal, low-fat yogurt and fresh fruit over doughnuts and sweet rolls.

See more at www.eatright.org; search for "travel."

And one last thing: Every time you make a healthful choice, congratulate yourself. Don't feel deprived. Feel great about pampering yourself in a whole new way.

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Editor: This column was reviewed by Caroyn Gunther, Ohio State University Extension's community nutrition specialist.

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