



Eating Healthy When Traveling or Eating Out is So Easy...

Once you know some simple tricks!

Aloha from the big island of Hawaii! I'm writing this weeks' blog article on a grassy hill overlooking the beautiful deep blue Pacific and the blue sky above! I felt the topic of the week is well timed for summer traveling.

Every time I teach nutrition and cooking classes, I always get the question, "what do you eat when you are traveling or eating out at restaurants if you want to continue a healthful lifestyle?" And of course, I always say it is easy. Everyone always thinks that to live a healthy and vibrant life that they have to be deprived or must spend endless hours shopping and cooking. Well, being that I love to travel and love to eat out, I have gained a lot of experience in learning how to best handle the concern.

As we move into our summer season, road trips most likely will become a common theme. The world is filled with the most amazing sites, both in your back yard and at far distances alike. So hit the road and take in all of the wonderful sights and sounds and local flavors of the towns you are visiting.

Here are some tips:

- 1) **The first thing I always do BEFORE I hit the road is pack some easy to grab healthy foods.** The choices I make depend on whether or not I am flying or driving. Driving is certainly easier because you can always pack a cooler filled with fresh fruit, pre-made salads, veggie sandwiches or wraps and side dishes. I often make some smoothies at home and put them in mason jars for an easy no-spill option. I've even been known for taking my blender with me on road trips so that I can whip up a healthy drink or dessert almost anywhere.

If I am flying, then I need to plan a bit more carefully. A healthy trail mix filled with raw nuts, seeds and dried fruit is an obvious option. Healthy raw fruit and nuts bars from the health food store are a great thing to always have in your carry on too. I love the raw versions, like Larabar, because I know the ingredients are pure and simple. I often even take whole pieces of celery or a cucumber to munch on as they are hydrating and nutritious. If I have time, slicing or chopping some fresh veggies or fruit and having them in a container in my bag along with a small container of hummus or raw almond butter works very well. I sometimes put a healthy dressing that I made in a small jar that will pass security easily. I'll choose my "creamy" cucumber or ranch dressing, both of which are perfectly healthy with no cream added and can be found in my recipe book, "Fabulous



Recipes for Vibrant Health” which is on my web site at www.janetmckee.com.

If you are dealing with a serious digestive disorder, like IBS, colitis or Crohn’s, there is no need to stay home and avoid traveling because you won’t be able to find something to eat. As many of you know, I suffered greatly from colitis many years ago. Being personally experienced with the challenges of traveling while ill, I have many easy and great ideas.

Soft, easy to digest plant based foods are the secret to resolving digestive health challenges. I was often known for packing avocados and bananas for traveling by air or land. To season the avocado, I would put a delicious dressing in a small jar, as mentioned above, or even take some organic yellow mustard with me as this is high in turmeric which is a wonderful anti-inflammatory. Sometimes, I would even bake a sweet potato the night before a flight and take it with me seasoned simply with some sea salt. And finally, you may even find a miso soup package at the local health food store that you can pack in your carry on. You simply add hot water that the flight attendant can offer when they are serving tea and coffee. Miso soup is not only very healing to the digestive system, it is very flavorful as well. Keep some extra green, ginger or peppermint tea bags with you to enjoy a healthful anti-oxidant/anti-inflammatory rich hot drink.

Of course if you are driving, you can pack nut milks and highly blended smoothies for the trip. One of my favorites when I was discovering how to resolve my colitis was a green smoothie made with bananas, frozen mangoes or peaches, and green leafy vegetables fresh from my garden such as kale or spinach. Be sure to see my recipe book for great ideas on green smoothies and nut milk smoothies. Boxes of pureed organic soups that you can find at almost any grocery store is an easy thing to throw in the car as well.

- 2) **Seek out local health food stores or other sources of great things to keep in your hotel room once you arrive at your destination.** Every town these days has a natural store or at least some natural or organic ingredients at the standard local grocery. I love to stock up on bottled water and natural juices and smoothies as well as purchase some fresh fruit and avocados for the room. If my son is with me, having some natural tortilla chips with salsa and guacamole or other natural type snack foods is a good idea too. If there are not a lot of options, then a bag of apples and some natural nut butter is always a handy breakfast or snack alternative to grab in a pinch.

You may even find great farmer’s markets nearby to get wonderful locally grown



options. Meeting the friendly local people and learning more about the area is an added benefit to such an outing! Even if you don't have a cooler, all hotels have ice machines so you can safely store fresh drinks and foods in your room in a plastic bag, ice bucket, or even the bathroom sink!!! One of the simplest and most convenient sources for quick options is any convenience store, cafe or Starbucks. They almost always have some pieces of fresh fruit or I always look for the green smoothie or fruit smoothie option at every Starbucks and take a few to keep in my room. That way, you always have a grab and go healthy meal.

The local health food store will be a great option for some prepared foods for a lunch or dinner picnic idea. I always look for wraps and salads for a great energizing meal on the go, or for a picnic. If dealing with digestive issues, always look for pre-made soups for ease of digestion.

- 3) **Yes, there are healthy foods at just about every restaurant; you just need to learn what to look for and how to ask the right questions.** The first trick is to search for any local vegetarian or vegan friendly restaurant. There are web sites, like happycow.com, that help you locate good options. You don't have to be vegetarian to eat at a vegetarian friendly restaurant. The key here is that they tend to serve healthier options than the typical fried and greasy foods at the local burger joint and usually have choices that satisfy every taste and texture you desire.

Learn, also, to search for ethnic-style restaurants and here are some ideas for making the right choice. For example, you can go to any Italian restaurant and get a wonderful bowl of pasta with marinara/tomato sauce with a fresh salad. Learn to say "hold the cheese" if you are making the wise choice to avoid or cut back on your dairy intake. Mexican restaurants also usually have a bean burrito or a veggie quesadilla where you can be specific about what they do or do not include. Rice and beans are a good option or a great salad with veggies and avocados can be very satisfying. Don't forget that salsa and guacamole are very healthful and fun foods to enjoy as well.

Asian style restaurants are usually excellent choices for a great plant-based meal. We love to eat at Japanese restaurants as you can always get miso soup or vegetable soups, sea weed salads, boiled spinach called "oshitashi", veggie sushi and hand rolls, and of course rice and steamed veggies. Chinese restaurants always have rice and steam veggies too and often have brown rice as an option. One trick here if you are being really careful, is to ask them to put the sauce on the side and maybe ask if they have an MSG free choice. Thai restaurants have



many similar options including wonderful vegetable curries that are rich with healing spices. And, thinking about antioxidant rich spices, consider Indian food. Now I am not a fan of the fried foods at many Indian restaurants if we are trying to choose healthy choices, but all of the other choices are often very vegetarian friendly and extremely delicious.

Ok, but what about all of the other restaurants? Well, it is still easy to eat a healthy meal almost anywhere. Almost every restaurant has a salad on the menu. Since most of them offer iceberg lettuce with little else of nutritional value, I often carry with me some hemp seeds for protein and some dulse sea veggies for extra minerals to sprinkle on top.

One trick at any restaurant is to order from the appetizer or side dish portion of the menu, especially if it is a very meat centric menu. One time I had to eat at Ruth's Chris steakhouse for a family birthday celebration and everyone I knew gasped as they know I tend to follow the vegan diet. Well, I have to say I had the most wonderful feast. Of course I started with a great salad and a tomato based vegetable soup that they happened to have on the menu that day. I proceeded to then order from the side dish portion of the menu. I enjoyed a wonderful dish of steamed asparagus and a huge tasty portion of broccoli that was well seasoned and out of this world – delicious. I also got a potato that was sprinkled with salt and pepper. I don't think anyone would have gone hungry with five different dishes to enjoy.

The final trick is to simply and politely ask the waiter or waitress to accommodate your needs and desires. Don't hesitate to tell them you have certain needs and have them make some suggestions. One trick is to tell the waitress to have the chef put some of every veggie he has in the kitchen on a great huge salad. They may even offer to steam or sauté some, if that is what you prefer. The chefs at a few restaurants have actually enjoyed the challenge of coming up with something creative for me as opposed to the standard fare they dish out every day.

So, don't be afraid to travel or eat out because you are trying to stay on the path of healthful eating. Travel the globe and enjoy experimenting with options as this is all part of living a vibrant and happy life!

Mahalo