Vacation Tips for Eating Well:  
Indulging Wisely Without Guilt

Vacations are a time to enjoy and indulge in experiences that you may not otherwise have, including food. However, this does not mean you should eat the highest-calorie, highest-fat foods at every meal. Here are a few tips you can use while traveling to make sure you indulge wisely, without guilt or going overboard.

**Enjoy local foods and cuisine**
When in Rome, eat like an Italian. Why go to a major fast food or coffee chain when you are in Italy, when you have some of the world’s best pasta, cheese, produce, fish, cured meats, gelato, and espresso at your fingertips. In addition, the prices usually are much more reasonable than having to buy the same foods imported. If you are traveling to a location with special, local foods and cuisine, make sure to enjoy those foods while you are there. You may not have another chance!

**Choose how many times to indulge, not which times**
Half the fun of indulging is stumbling across a great restaurant when traveling and enjoying a spontaneous, delicious meal. Unless you have a specific-destination restaurant planned, simply choose the number of meals you plan to have that are more lavish, and let local recommendations/fate serve as your guide. A great rule is the 80/20 rule—try eating well 80% of the time, so you can indulge without guilt the other 20%. Having a particular number of meals in mind will keep you focused on moderation. It also will give you a greater appreciation for those special meals you have chosen.

**Do not turn hunger into an indulgence**
Make sure that the meal you are choosing to indulge in is one that you really are looking forward to, not one that results from you walking into the nearest restaurant because you have not eaten in 6 hours. Always pack some easy-to-carry snacks for those long days of adventures, sightseeing, or beach-going. This will ensure that you can indulge when you want to, not when your body is screaming for food.

**Do not worry if you go overboard one day**
Sometimes one gelato becomes two, becomes a pastry, and then becomes an indulgent meal out for dinner. Vacationing is a departure from the normal routine of life—enjoy it!

Despite our best attempts at healthy choices and moderation, you may find yourself second-guessing some of your food choices at the end of the day. Do not worry about it. One over-the-top day does not make or break a healthy lifestyle. Often we will try to compensate for the rest of the vacation and restrict our food choices. This usually does not work well, because you are defeating the purpose of enjoying your vacation. Treat the next morning as a new day, with a new opportunity to make healthy choices.

**Indulge wisely**
Keep these tips in mind when on vacation:
- Enjoy local foods and cuisine—when in Rome, eat like an Italian
Choose how many times to indulge, not which times—the 80/20 rule
Do not turn hunger into an indulgence—pack snacks
Do not worry if you go overboard one day—treat the next morning as a new day, with a new opportunity to make healthy choices

References and recommended readings

Rogers PJ, Hill AJ. Breakdown of dietary restraint following mere exposure to food stimuli: interrelationships between restraint, hunger, salivation, and food intake. Addict Behav. 1989;14:387-397.


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