

## **Pizza with salad proves most balanced of these lunches**

February is Heart Healthy month, and with heart disease a top killer in this country, we need to make changes in our diet.

Eating less saturated fat and animal protein and more whole grains, fruits and vegetables can improve and prevent this disease. We as a nation must become more aware and discriminating about what we put into our bodies and our children's bodies.

These suggestions regarding *Times-News* reporters' featured lunches should help you make healthier choices the next time you dine out. Bon appetit!

### **Grilled ham-and-cheese sandwich**

Matt Christensen, I was wondering if the term "wolfed down" was another way to say, "chewed my food really well." Chewing helps your body digest and absorb food. It also helps you eat less. To look at a menu, order your meal, and have your meal prepared and eaten in 15 minutes is on world-record pace. Your body needs at least 20 minutes, whether it is eating or still sitting at the table, to feel satisfied with a meal -- which probably occurred on your drive back to the office. Hot and greasy food is always craved this time of year -- probably the reason this lunch was so appealing.

But between the cheese, ham, fries and grilled bread, this meal is loaded with saturated fat. Ordering grilled or fried items in a restaurant can be risky because some still use oil that contains trans fatty acids, which contribute to heart disease. The use of trans fatty acids is banned in many countries because of their danger, yet they are still allowed in the United States.

A side dish of vegetables, vegetable soup or salad would have helped make this meal healthier. The slice of ham left off the bill was nice, but it should have been left off the sandwich, too. Next time, Matt, take your time and enjoy your meal.

### **Italian wedding soup with salad bar**

Steve Crump, you are becoming quite the Renaissance man to pass up pizza for Italian wedding soup and salad. Was this part of your "culturization" (see last week's Food & Home section)?

Soup is so delicious this time of year. Ordering a broth-based soup instead of a cream- or cheese-based one is a healthier choice. Soup is very relaxing and aids with digestion. I like that the meatballs were in the soup as an accent to the meal as opposed to being the meal's main focus.

Having a meat portion the size of a side dish helps limit the saturated fat in a meal. So, either split the main entree with someone or bring it home for an additional meal. You can then order extra side dishes such as vegetables, soups or salads to fill you up.

I hope your body was not too shocked when it realized you were actually eating a healthy leafy green such as escarole! But it was slapped back to reality with your choice of potato and macaroni salads, both loaded with saturated fat and sugar. Choosing salads that do not have a mayonnaise or sour cream base would be a much healthier choice.

Steve, you certainly surprised me with this lunch choice. Next time you might be ready for quiche.

### **Patty melt special**

Steve, when I first saw this meal, I thought the only way to make it healthier would be to order something else or to just eat the garnish! The term "salad bar" usually conjures up an image of something healthy -- except for the "salad" choices you made. They were drowning in sour cream and mayonnaise-based dressings and, therefore, contained a lot of saturated fat and sugar.

You'd do best to leave the green Jell-O salad as a nice childhood memory.

A grilled hamburger patty with cheese and peppers, topped off with chicken and noodles? Let's face it: There was no broth in sight. Along with those "salads," this meal must have worked your liver and gall bladder overtime to digest the fat in this meal!

### **Burger and salad**

Virginia Hutchins, have Steve and Matt gotten to you? A hamburger patty with bacon and Swiss cheese? Where did I go wrong? Omitting the bacon and cheese would make this burger healthier.

Craving this oily, salty burger is understandable this time of year. Grilled meat creates more warmth internally and helps keep us active in the winter. Avocado contains a lot of oil, which is why it is so satisfying, but is also a great source of Vitamin C, folate, potassium and fiber. Requesting oil and vinegar as a dressing is a better choice than the cream- or cheese-based dressings which are loaded with saturated fat. Lettuce and cucumber in the salad help combat the salt in this burger.

Virginia, staying away from Steve and Matt during mealtimes may help you make better choices!

### **Pizza and salad**

Virginia, this lunch was the brightest and freshest of all the lunches eaten. It was the most balanced -- although, with the other choices, this was easy to do.

Even though Canadian bacon is leaner than regular bacon, a healthier option would be to choose another vegetable topping instead. Bacon can make you thirsty and leave you craving sweets.

The salad looked fresh and delicious, and ordering Italian dressing on the side is a great way to control the amount of dressing used.

Your decision to eat half the pizza and save the rest for another meal controls portion size. Way to go, Virginia!

*Jill Sherman Skeem is a certified macrobiotic health counselor and graduated from the Strengthening Health Institute in Philadelphia. She has studied food -- and the effects it has on the body -- for close to six years. She teaches health and cooking classes and has a private counseling practice. Skeem can be reached at [jillasherman@yahoo.com](mailto:jillasherman@yahoo.com) and 320-2786.*

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