

Veggie omelet wins Eat Cheap nutrition honors

Breakfast is either forgotten, eaten on the run or a weekend luxury. But it is arguably the most important meal of the day because it gives you the energy you need to start the day and keeps your metabolism active.

Many people tell me they aren't hungry for breakfast, but often it is because they eat prior to going to bed. So how can you eat out and still have a healthy breakfast? The Times-News reporters put that to the test. Let's see how well they did.

Veggie-egg sandwich and blended chai

Melissa Davlin, I grew up eating bagels and love them. They are one of the most popular breakfast items in the U.S. because they are so versatile and can be eaten on the run.

The best part about eating a bagel is that your imagination is the only limitation on what you can put on it. Melissa, you were right: Omitting the provolone cheese or cream cheese or both would have helped lower the saturated fat and cholesterol in this Zulu Bagels eggwich. I am proud you had at least a couple of veggies in this breakfast, which made it a bit healthier.

Whenever there is a choice offered for a bread, wrap or bagel, always choose the whole-wheat or whole-grain option. With more of our food being processed and having a predominantly animal-protein-based diet, Americans need as much fiber in their daily diets as possible.

Melissa, ordering chai, a spiced black tea blended with milk, would be tempting in the heat of summer. The problem with frozen, creamy, sweet coffee and tea drinks is that they are filled with empty calories. So once in a while it is a nice treat — but indulge everyday and you can really add a lot of calories without knowing it.

Quiche and apple juice

Virginia Hutchins, ordering the quiche with broccoli sounded like the healthiest of the three quiche options. Whenever there is a choice, always order vegetables over or in addition to a meat choice.

The huge layer of cheese did increase the saturated fat and cholesterol in this dish. As yummy as it is, scraping it off prior to eating would have helped.

The fruit cup sounded like a nice idea, but since it was over your budget, the apple juice was a good choice. The sweetness of the juice would help balance the saltiness of the quiche.

The great thing about Hodge Podge Cafe is that it makes all of its menu items from scratch. That is hard to find these days. Perhaps real men will eat quiche after all!

Veggie omelet

Wow, Ariel Hansen — have a little egg with your veggies! This omelet is oozing with vegetables. I love that the omelet came without cheese and the richness of the veggies was enough for you.

Perhaps Perry's doesn't add cheese because the omelet is served with sour cream, which is loaded with saturated fat and cholesterol. I am proud of you for scraping it off. I have learned that sour cream is one of the most popular condiments in Idaho, so I am impressed with your willpower.

Many people enjoy omelets for breakfast but are uncertain how to make them healthier. One way is to add as many veggies as possible and leave out the bacon, ham or sausage. Omitting the cheese or requesting egg whites would help reduce the cholesterol and saturated fat, too.

Ariel, I am surprised this omelet wasn't served with toast. Not having a grain with our meal leaves us feeling dissatisfied. So eating the muffin probably helped a lot, even though I am supposed to ignore the fact that you had it.

This is the third Eat Cheap breakfast installment I have written, and because of the eggs, cheese and processed meats, it has always been difficult for me to choose the healthiest breakfast.

However, Ariel, I am choosing your veggie-filled omelet as the healthiest of this bunch!

Egg and cheese muffin with bacon

The breakfast sandwich was created by the fast-food industry in 1971 so that people could eat a hot breakfast with their hands. This has started a breakfast phenomenon: morning meals eaten on the run.

When you take time to eat your breakfast, no matter what it is, you will feel more satisfied with your meal. Eating without doing other things will help you feel full and eat less.

Ariel, because ham is leaner than bacon, choosing ham would have made this Double A Cafe sandwich healthier. Omitting either the cheese or the meat would have helped, too, but then you would just have an egg muffin.

The saltiness of the bacon, cheese and eggs would make you want something sweet afterward. I'm glad you listened to your body and realized you were full before getting the piece of pie and using the rest of your budget.

Pancakes, eggs and potatoes

Melissa, you can't expect fine dining at any restaurant that has the word "camp" in its name.

Ordering eggs, hash browns and pancakes is the sweet-and-salty combination most people crave. The eggs sounded like they were made to order, which is a good thing — although you could have saved yourself saturated fat, cholesterol and 75 cents if you had omitted the cheese. It is disappointing to expect shredded potatoes and receive potato discs instead. So many restaurants today rely on food-service products because they don't have the staff, expertise or time to make things from scratch. Most of these items taste good, but unfortunately it is because they contain artificial colors, flavors, chemicals and preservatives.

Sorry this breakfast wasn't what you hoped for, but it sounds like it is what could be expected in a campground restaurant. Better luck next time!

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