

Nutrition Tips for Athletes Dining Out

The best athlete can be ripped to shreds with a poor nutrition. Dining out is a huge problem for many athletes. Some athletes dine out to frequently or occasionally have a massive meal that could be several thousand calories, but with large tournament schedules we can't avoid restaurants completely. I would always recommend athletes skip the drive through but learning to be smart about your choices will help tremendously.

Below are tips for eating out and you don't have to follow these tips every time you dine out. On tournament weekends when they are eating out more frequently athletes should aim to follow these tips. One thing we don't want is to hurt all the progress your athlete has made during season and on the court by splurging on poor nutrition frequently. Although our girls like to think they are on a mini vacation, tournaments are meant to be fun, but the goal is winning!

- **Start with water** – Can I drink a soda? If you are looking to recover after a long day on the court, soda is not the best choice for hydration and recovery. Stick with water. You'll stay hydrated, have more room for good food, and you won't have unnecessary sugars.
- **Avoid appetizers** – How many healthy and nutritious options do you see for appetizers on most menus? These are often the least healthy food choices you can find at a restaurant. Nachos, fried foods, and other items are stuffed with empty calories without nutrients to benefit their bodies or their game.
- **Consider a salad** – “I'm starving I need an appetizer!” Have a salad, they are a great way to fill you up with fuels and provide you with some helpful nutrients. I don't get too caught up in healthy or non-healthy dressings, any dressing is better than fried, greasy food.
- **Base your meal on needs** – You should base what you eat based at least partially on the amount of games for the day. These are times when eating more food and some extra carbs may be beneficial. If you are going to have a light schedule, you probably don't need as much.
- **Get picky with the main course** – Sometimes eating your favorite meal at your favorite restaurant is ok just be smart with what you choose for an entree. It's not a bad idea to fill most of your plate with a non-fried protein choice and veggies. Try not to overdo starches unless you are trying to recover from a long weekend of volleyball.
- **Do you really need dessert?** – If you must have a dessert, see if there are any healthy options or if you even need one at all. Sugar is not horrible and can sometimes be beneficial for muscle endurance in athletes, but fruits and berries as a source of sugar are completely different from triple decker brownie Sunday 😊.
- **Save some for later** – Remember you don't have to eat the entire plate of food. Most restaurant entrees are 2-3 servings of food. Smaller athletes may want to get a to-go box at the start of the meal, so they aren't tempted to overeat.