

Eating Smart When Dining Out—On The Menu: Nutrition Information

(NAPSA)—Diners in the United States spend a billion dollars a day eating out—and they also spend billions to lose weight. With an estimated one-third of our daily calories coming from restaurant food, more and more people are looking for healthier choices on the menu. And now the special order of the day from consumers is getting nutrition information about menu items as well.

Consumers watching their waistlines are not the only ones calling for this. Nutritionists say that knowing what you are eating gives you more diet control and helps improve eating habits. It does the most good if the food value information is right next to the menu item, according to nutritional expert Carol Ann Rinzler, author of *Nutrition for Dummies*.

“You seldom order a meal without knowing the cost of the entree, and it should work the same way for nutritional content. Knowing food values before you order helps you avoid putting temptation on your plate.”

Providing the Tools for Healthy Eating

Restaurant web sites sometimes provide nutrition data, and some fast food chains display posters or keep reference material available upon request, but only one casual dining chain, Ruby Tuesday®, provides nutritional information on the menu for every food item—available at the point when you are ordering. Informa-



When dining out, people are hungry for nutritional information. At some restaurants, it's on the menu.

tion on total calories, carbohydrates, total fat and dietary fiber are listed on the menu next to the item so that consumers can make informed choices. And consumers have responded positively—83 percent of Ruby Tuesday guests surveyed noticed the change, showing that people are hungry for this kind of information.

Revolutionizing the Restaurant Industry

Recently, the FDA's Obesity Working Group, led by Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, released its strategy for reducing the incidence of obesity in America and encouraged the restaurant industry to voluntarily include nutrition information at the point of sale. While leading health officials have been advocating industry-wide standards regarding nutrition infor-

mation on restaurant menus, bills pending in the Senate and House would take this one step further with the creation of new legislation requiring nutrition information in restaurants. With nearly half of all Americans currently making an effort to control their weight through dieting and other means, these changes would help people make healthier choices when eating out.

Making Smarter Choices Now

While the vast majority of restaurants do not yet offer nutrition information, some, including Ruby Tuesday, have added more low-fat and low-carb choices to their menus to accommodate a variety of healthy eating plans. Additionally, there are several ways that consumers can eat healthier when dining out in restaurants where nutrition information or healthy options are not available. Dr. Ann Kulze, a nationally recognized health and wellness expert, offers this tip to help dieting diners:

“It is possible to stay within your diet plan when eating out by choosing dishes that are naturally lower in fat and calories, such as lean meat and vegetables. Restaurants with salad bars are good choices for a meal with plenty of fresh fruits and veggies. And always stay away from the bread basket.”

For more information about eating well while dining out, visit: www.rubytuesday.com.