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MASTERING THE BUFFET BEAST

Ashleigh Feltham helps you avoid overeating at your next buffet.

We all know the buffet, what is sometimes rows and rows of food choices, with enough supplies to feed a nation!

You would not be the first to overindulge and plate up multiple servings for each course. Then there is the regret or sickly feeling from the experience.

Do you want to know some strategies to minimise the additional calories? Here are a few handy tips:

1. Set the number of plates for each course to one. This means you will select the foods you really want rather than trying everything and anything being served as an option.
2. Remember the half and two quarters rule. Try serving each plate with half vegetable or fresh fruit and then a quarter protein source and quarter carbohydrate or grains. This balanced plate model will help you feel satisfied and not wanting to go for those extra servings.
3. Remember water! Selecting still or sparkling water over soft drink, juice or alcohol means you are not drinking extra energy. Drinking with the meal will help you eat less and keep you hydrated, especially if the food choices are salty.

4. You can judge a book by its cover! Read the label or ingredients of the dish if available. The no nos are words which include: fried, creamed, crispy, breaded, scampi-style, creamed, buttery, au gratin, and gravy. Try to select dishes with words which include: In its own gravy, steamed, boiled, charbroiled, broiled, poached, marinara and tomato sauce. Try looking for low fat or no fat options of dairy such as yoghurt, cheese or milk.

5. If possible plan ahead. If there is a menu board before you enter the dining room, use this to plan what you may like to eat. It can help detour the less healthy options if you are committed to your choices before seeing the less healthy ones.

6. Take a chill pill. We often overeat when we eat fast because it takes time for our brain the process the feeling of being full from our stomach. Try to enjoy each bite of the meal and try putting your knife and fork or spoon down between each mouthful. Savour the taste and enjoy the experience of eating.

7. Fresh over processed. If it is a breakfast buffet, try selecting the fresh fruit over the apple straddle, the poached or boiled egg over the fried. The best choice in cereals are oats, bran or Weet-bix over cornflakes, Nutra Grain or Coco pops. If

the healthier choices seem bland try adding some low fat yoghurt with some fresh fruit to spice it up. You will be adding valuable nutrients to your meal not added sugar.

The bottom line: Go to the buffet with a plan, select the fresh and healthier cooking methods and balance your plate. You can still enjoy the experience of a buffet without leaving with the unnecessary guilt and calories.

References

1. Now being served, better nutrition advice. Our Healthy Eating Plate alternative to the government's MyPlate. Harvard health letter / from Harvard Medical School. 2011;37(1):4.
2. Healthy Eating Plate dishes out sound diet advice. Harvard Health Publications Harvard Heart Letter. 2011. **OH!**

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