MyPlate Nutrition Education Series: Be Choosey in the Dining Hall

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, with an Introduction by Linda B. Bobroff

After introducing MyPlate in June 2011, USDA provided a series of one-page fact sheets to help consumers use the dietary advice of the Dietary Guidelines 2010. The USDA added new fact sheets in December 2011 and continued adding fact sheets in 2012, 2013, and 2014. These fact sheets are distributed by UF/IFAS Extension for Extension faculty, health professionals, and consumers.

This fact sheet is Be Choosey in the Dining Hall, and it can be found on the following page.

Figure 1.

Credits: http://choosemyplate.gov

1. This document is FCS80062, one of a series of the Family, Youth and Community Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 2014. Visit the EDIS website at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

2. Linda B. Bobroff, PhD, RD, LD/N, professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.
Dining halls are full of healthy food options. You just need to know which foods to put on your tray. Use these tips to plan your food choices and know which options are best for you.

1. **Know what you’re eating**
   Many dining halls post menus with nutrition information. Look at the menus ahead of time, so you can be ready to create healthy, balanced meals when you get there. Having a plan is the first step in making smarter eating decisions! Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov to find information and tools like SuperTracker to help you make meal selection a breeze.

2. **Enjoy your food, but eat less**
   Everybody loves the all-you-can-eat dining hall! To resist the urge of eating too much, take smaller portions and use a smaller plate. Remember you can always go back if you are still hungry.

3. **Make half your grains whole grains!**
   Whether you’re at the sandwich station or pouring yourself a bowl of cereal in the morning, make the switch to whole grains like 100% whole-grain bread and oatmeal.

4. **Re-think your drink**
   Americans drink about 400 calories every day. Consider how often you drink sugary beverages such as sodas, cappuccinos, energy drinks, fruit beverages, sweetened teas, and sports drinks. Drinking water instead of sugary beverages can help you manage your calories.

5. **Make half your plate fruits and veggies**
   Fruits and veggies can make your meals more nutritious, colorful, and flavorful. Add to pastas, eggs, pizza, sandwiches, and soups. Try spinach in a wrap or add pineapple to your pizza.

6. **Make it your own!**
   Don’t feel like you have to choose pre-made plates. Design your own meal! Fresh veggies from the salad bar can be thrown into your omelet for brunch, or grab some tofu on your way to the pasta station for lean protein.

7. **Slow down on the sauces**
   Sauces, gravies, and dressings tend to be high in fat and sodium. Watch out for foods prepared with a lot of oil, butter, or topped with heavy condiments, such as mayonnaise. You don’t have to do away with sauces and condiments all together; just ask for less or put them on the side. Reducing extras will help you manage your weight.

8. **Be on your guard at the salad bar**
   Most veggies get the green light but limit foods high in fat and sodium such as olives, bacon bits, fried noodles, croutons, and pasta or potato salads that are made with mayo and oil. Stick to fat-free or low-fat dressings on the side.

9. **Make dessert special**
   Save dessert for a Friday night treat or on special occasions. When you can’t resist, opt for something healthy, such as a fruit and yogurt parfait.

10. **Don’t linger**
    Dining halls should be just that, where you eat. Although it’s great to chat with friends while you eat, avoid staying for long periods of time to reduce your temptation to keep eating.