

## 15 Tips for Eating Healthy While You Travel

FOOD & WINE, HEALTH & SAFETY — BY MICHELE H ON MARCH 31, 2011 AT 3:00 AM



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Even the most health conscious *Lost Girl* can slip on her eating habits when traveling. So we asked five nutrition experts (and fellow travelers) for their advice in travel scenarios where healthy food might not be as readily available.



### Meet the Experts

**Tim Harlan** is an internist and medical director of the Tulane University School of Medicine who has authored books on diet and health. His latest release, "Just Tell Me What to Eat" (Da Capo), comes out in June.

**Molly Morgan** is a registered dietitian and author of "The Skinny Rules" (Harlequin Non-Fiction, April 2011).

**Joni Rampolla** is the director of nutrition and wellness at Medifast.

**Sharon Richter**, a registered dietitian, is a host of HealthNation's nutrition programs.

**Bonnie Taub-Dix** is the owner of *BTD Nutrition Consultants* and author of "Read it Before You Eat it" (Plume, August 2010).

### At the Airport

- **Bring your own food.** Pack snacks to ensure you'll have a healthy alternative to airport fast food, says Harlan. Spread a bagel with light cream cheese or jam. Toss an apple, a banana, a bag of almonds, or dried fruit into your bag. For extra protein, pack a peanut butter sandwich. Nutrition bars (with at least 5 grams of fiber and 5 grams of protein, between 150-200 calories) are another easy healthy pick, recommends Taub-Dix. Along with fruit, Morgan also suggests bringing along dry roasted edamame (a soybean). And don't forget about liquids such as water. Bring along tea bags, an inexpensive option if you're traveling within the U.S. or to a destination where the tap water is safe, says Morgan. Even take packets of instant oatmeal, notes Richter, which also just needs H2O.



- **Don't skip out on breakfast.** Build time into your schedule, even if you have to wake up for an early a.m. flight, for breakfast. A bowl of whole grain cereal or oatmeal that's high in fiber will hold your appetite longer, says Harlan. Juice can be a healthy option, says Rampolla, but there are more nutrients in whole fruit compared to juice. Add a protein like as egg whites, cheese, or peanut butter. To satisfy a meat craving, go for Canadian or turkey bacon. Avoid donuts, muffins, croissants, and greasy breakfast sandwiches.

- **Don't skimp on lunch/dinner either.** Harlan says lunch and dinner at the airport can be a challenge because most of us go to the closest fast food joint. Look for wraps as a portable alternative. Salad is an obvious lunch choice. Subway is OK because they list nutrition information on their sandwiches, but be careful because some sandwiches are high in calories. Starbucks has some prepared meals as well. With lunch or dinner, Rampolla advises having a lean protein (chicken, turkey, hummus, and roast beef) along with some vegetables (cucumber, tomato, avocado, salad, or spinach) in a salad bowl, a wrap, on whole grain bread or a pita. Skip sliders, wings, and quesadillas, as they are high in calories, fat, and sodium. Also, shop around for your meal, says Morgan. Not everything has to be bought in one place.

### On the Plane

- **Order a meal in advance.** Based on your dietary needs, Taub-Dix suggests pre-ordering airplane meals such as a vegetarian dish or if you have a medical condition such as diabetes or follow religious observances. Yet an airline's take on a vegetarian meal might not always have the healthiest result (such as a heavy-cheese sauced pasta). "It's important to ask what the meal can consist of," says Taub-Dix.

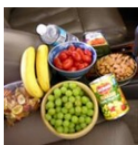
- **Watch your fluid intake.** Rampolla says it is best to avoid caffeine and alcohol during a flight, as both can dehydrate you. Dehydration is the largest contributor to jet lag. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after your flight. Or go with non-caffeinated tea, club soda, and seltzer, suggests Taub-Dix. For an energy drink, Richter says airline carriers such as Virgin America sell EBOOST, a vitamin-powder to mix in water that can help in pumping up your immune system.



- **Steer clear of heavy-laden foods.** Avoid high fat foods such as cream sauces and fried or buttery foods, says Rampolla, as they can make you feel sluggish and make it harder to adjust to your travel schedule. They can also cause intestinal problems. With dinner, try to have some sort of carbs and whole grains, which will release serotonin to aid with your sleep, explains Taub-Dix. Don't eat too much, so that you are able to rest well. Avoid candy and bags of chips and trail mixes, as they can be high in calories and salt. "We retain water when we fly so adding salt increases the problem," Richter explains.

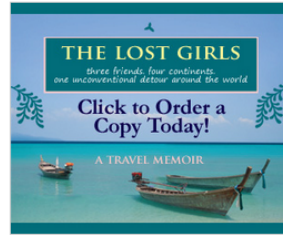
### Road Tripping

- **Pack the cooler.** Keep your tummy occupied in the car. Richter suggests bringing along a cooler stocked with veggies such as carrot sticks and fresh fruits. Bring snacks that are not high in calories. As water is a good beverage, Richter says even iced green tea can provide a little bit caffeine. Morgan recommends also throwing in yogurt, hummus, and cheese sticks. Dried goods such as granola bars and popcorn (3 servings will take a person longer to eat than a serving of 13 chips) are healthful as well.



- **Cease the chance of motion sickness.** If you're prone to motion sickness, have a moderately full stomach prior to getting in the car or on a plane, suggests Rampolla. Here are some remedies if your nerves kick up. Olives produce tannins and can help reduce the amount of saliva in your mouth which can reduce the nauseous feeling. Also, carry some crystallized ginger or slice freshly peeled ginger root in a small bag. Soda crackers or any unseasoned dry cracker can help settle an upset stomach. Lemon is another calming food. Carry slices in a bag and put one on your tongue until all of the juice is squeezed out of it.

- **Go easy on your diner order.** Who doesn't like pulling over at a roadside diner? Here Morgan says to put some balance in your splurge. For example, order an egg white omelet and enjoy home fries. Then add some fruit or veggies on a side plate. It's easy to overeat in any restaurant, says Harlan, so consider ordering two or three appetizers instead of a full main course. A Main Street-like diner can be a good option because



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the portions are generally reasonable and have not been super-sized. Or if there's a grocery store nearby, Morgan suggests making a stop to restock on snacks or pick up a pre-made meal.

#### Cruise Buffets/Hotel Restaurants

- **Plan out your plate.** Use a plate-balancing strategy: stock up on 1/2 fruits/vegetables, 1/4 starch or grain, and 1/4 protein source such as meat. With restaurant menus, Morgan says look for keywords such as grilled, broiled, baked, and stir fry, and avoid crispy, fried, smothered, and sauced. When choosing from a buffet, scan the line and choose only what you love to eat, says Rampolla. If dessert is too tempting to skip, have a bite of something you love or share a dessert. With buffets, Harlan suggests avoiding them if you can. On cruises, chefs will always accommodate "special needs"; take advantage of that because the "spa" cuisine will be better. Let the purser know as soon as you are on board that you will want that option.



- **Diversify what you like to eat daily.** Taub-Dix suggests if you're on a week-long trip, perhaps pick up hot/cold cereal on one morning day, then maybe waffles or mini-muffins the next. "Each day you can enjoy everything that's on that buffet but you don't have to enjoy it in one day," she adds.

- **Search the web for options.** Before your trip, Harlan suggests doing a Google search of area where you are staying. Type in the hotel address and the words "healthy food." Other resources are OpenTable.com, a booking service, as well as ChowHound.com or Chow.com. (Back at the airport, Harlan says to try out the iPhone app, GateGuru, to get food explanations on concourses.)

#### Street Food

- **Use your best judgment.** When debating about buying street food, Harlan suggests these questions. Does the cart or stall look clean? How about the vendor? If the cart is not spotless, move on. The same holds true for the guy serving your food. Look at the ingredients. Are they fresh? Look at the steam table or where the food is cooked or stored. Is it super hot?

- **Do as the locals eat.** If you wish to try street food overseas, go by local reputation, says Taub-Dix. If there are long lines at one vendor, that could be a good sign that it's a popular place. Perhaps go for a dish like grilled marinated chicken over rice and vegetables. Richter suggests getting a smaller portion first so you can try it out. With fruit, purchase what you can easily peel.

- **Weigh in your options.** In New York City, who can resist a pretzel? Choose nuts over pretzels as they have protein and less calories, says Morgan, unless you have someone to share a pretzel with. Go with nuts that are dry roasted. Produce stands are also good for picking up fruit while on the go. Harlan advises avoiding fried food, not just due to calories but also because the frying oil might not have been changed often enough.

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