Happy Trails To You

SUMMER OFTEN BRINGS TRAVEL PLANS, and you leave behind your low-fat kitchen and venture out into a fat-filled world. While vacations can bring excitement and adventure, they don’t have to throw your low-fat eating plan off course. By using the skills you’ve already honed back home, and planning ahead for challenging situations, you’ll be able to enjoy your trip and feel good about your food choices along the way.

Here are some tips to help:

TRAVELING BY CAR OR MOTOR HOME

A long drive can bring boredom or leave you with limited restaurant choices when it’s time to stop for a meal break. Planning ahead and making good choices will help.

- For ready-made meals the first day, take along some food prepared at home, such as oven-baked skinless chicken breasts or your favorite low-fat sandwiches. Tuck in small jars of mustard and low- or non-fat mayonnaise. Savor your fare by stopping to eat at a scenic spot.

(To keep your food safe, be sure to put cold packs or ice cubes in the cooler and store it in the coolest, darkest area of the car.)

- Bring along plenty of healthy snacks for eating with or between meals: small cans of fruit and vegetable juice, dried fruit, low-fat muffins, fresh fruit, pretzels, dry cereal (to be eaten as finger food), bagels, string cheese, rice cakes, cut-up vegetables, non-fat yogurt, and low-fat crackers and cookies. Keep refrigerated foods on ice.

- If you find it hard to limit your serving size of reduced-fat foods, try placing individual servings into plastic bags ahead of time. Replace these snacks at grocery stores during stopovers.

- Don’t forget water! Fill small, plastic bottles with fresh water daily and keep them chilled. A drink of good, cold water is often hard to find.

- If you find yourself eating simply because you’re bored, try listening to a book on tape or your favorite music. Stop often for stretch breaks or for a short, brisk walk. If you’re traveling with a companion, take turns driving. Chew gum or suck on hard candies.

- Look at Session 6 in your participant manual for tips on making low-fat choices in restaurants.

- Stop at roadside produce stands. What could be better than fresh from the farm fruits and vegetables? Such stands usually carry the most nutritious and least expensive produce, and you might be able to find some regional treats. This is a good chance to talk with local folks, too.

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VIVA WHI!
A Spanish-speaking Dietary Change group from the Chula Vista Clinical Center in California celebrates their success at low-fat eating with a group potluck.

WHAT'S NEW

- Take a “skinny” dip at your next picnic or potluck with Land O’ Lakes No Fat Dips. Flavors such as Cucumber Dill, French Onion, Bacon Horseradish, and Ranch will perk up a vegetable tray or baked tortilla chips. You’ll find them in the dairy case for about $1 each.

- What if meeting your fruit/vegetable goal was as easy as munching on snacks? Well, it is! Try Just Tomatoes’ Just Veggies and Just Fruit Crunchies. The former are crunchy bits of freeze-dried or dehydrated carrot, corn, peas, bell pepper, and tomato, without added salt, color, preservatives, or flavorings (about $3.99 for 4 ounces). Just Fruit Crunchies are mixed dehydrated apples, raisins, blueberries, sour cherries, mango, pineapple, and raspberries (3 ounces for about $4.25). Along the same line, but in convenient, individual packages, Beverly Hills Farmers Market Veggies are an all-natural mix of freeze-dried vegetables in three flavors: Teriyaki, Chile and Lime, and Barbecue. A 1.2 ounce package is about $1.99 in most supermarkets. All are perfect for lunch boxes, road trips, or snacking at home. 1/4 cup of dried fruits or vegetables counts as one serving.

- Add some flair to your backyard fare this summer with a sampler set from Specialty Sauces. The Barbecue Sampler ($29.95) features five fat-free sauces from restaurants around the country. The Salsa Sampler ($29.95) and Fruit Salsa Sampler ($20.95) feature hot and sweet salsas from around the U.S.; they can be used as dips or marinades. To order, call 1-800-SAUCE-1 (1-800-728-2371).

- On those summer nights when the last thing you want to do is cook, just open a box of Bean Cuisine’s Pasta & Beans and you’ll have a wholesome, low-fat dinner in 15 minutes. Varieties include Mediterranean Black Beans with Fusilli, Country French Beans with Gemelli, Barcelona Red Beans with Radiatore, and Florentine Beans with Bow Ties. You just combine the pasta, beans, and herbs and spices with some broth, a little olive oil, and chopped vegetables or canned tomatoes, and that’s it. There are two to six grams of fat per cup. Look for these meatless meals-in-a-box by the beans and pasta at your market.

The information provided in this section is not an endorsement by WHI of specific food products.
Cookout Vegetable Packets

1 1/2 cups sliced yellow squash
1 1/2 cups sliced zucchini
1 1/2 cups cauliflower flowerets
1 1/2 cups broccoli flowerets
1 cup thinly sliced carrot
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon dried whole basil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2/3 cup commercial oil-free Italian dressing
vegetable cooking spray

Combine first 6 ingredients in a large bowl, tossing gently. Combine basil, salt, pepper, and Italian dressing in a small bowl, stirring well. Pour basil mixture over vegetable mixture, and toss gently to combine.

Divide vegetable mixture evenly among 6 large squares of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Wrap vegetables securely, sealing edges of foil packets.

Coat grill rack with vegetable cooking spray; place on grill over medium-hot coals. Place vegetable packets on grill rack, and cook 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp tender, turning packets once.

Makes 6 servings
Fat: 0.3 grams per serving
Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 2.5 per serving

Recipe from The Low-Fat Way to Cook, Oxmoor House, Inc. 1993.

Note: This dish can also be prepared in the oven at 475°F for 10-12 minutes or until vegetables are crisp tender.
Peppered Turkey-Watercress Burgers

1 pound ground turkey breast, uncooked
1 1/2 cups chopped trimmed watercress
1/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1 teaspoon cracked pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cracked pepper
Cooking spray
1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt
4 (1 1/2-ounce) hamburger buns, toasted
1 cup trimmed watercress
4 (1/4-inch-thick) slices tomato

Combine first 5 ingredients in a bowl; stir well. Divide mixture into 4 equal portions, shaping into 1/2-inch-thick patties. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon pepper over both sides of patties, pressing pepper into burgers.

Prepare grill. Place patties on grill rack coated with cooking spray; grill 5 minutes on each side or until done.

Spread 2 tablespoons yogurt over cut sides of each bun. Line the bottom halves of buns with 1/4 cup watercress; top each with a tomato slice, a patty, and top half of bun.

Makes 4 servings
Fat: 4.25 grams per serving
Fruits/Vegetable Servings: 3/4 per serving
Grain Servings: 1 per serving

Recipe from Cooking Light Magazine, July/August 1996.
On the Road Again

To say that Caroline Johnson has the travel bug is an understatement. In fact, she and her husband, Andy, have traveled almost continuously throughout the U.S. since 1993. They only occasionally stop back home in Alabaster, Alabama. During these stops, Caroline manages to attend her Dietary Change group meetings at the Birmingham Clinical Center. She also checks in with her group nutritionist by phone.

The Johnsons hit the road after discovering retirement at home wasn't very restful: "When we’re at home, we have so much to do with yard work and keeping the house. It's so much more relaxing when we’re away from home," explains Caroline. Their son lives with them in Alabama, and maintains the home and routes mail to the couple while they travel.

Until recently, their "home away from home" was a motor home, but now the Johnsons have a 34-foot travel trailer which they tow with their pick-up truck. "It makes it easy," says Caroline, "because we have our food in our trailer and we cook our own meals most of the time. I have a steamer where I cook vegetables and rice. And I have a bread machine, so I can make our own bread and I can control how much fat is in it." Fortunately, the trailer's kitchen has as much storage space and even more work space than her kitchen at home! The refrigerator is large enough to hold the fresh produce the Johnsons often pick up at roadside stands.

But Caroline also faces situations familiar to most travelers: eating in restaurants and potluck dinners. "At restaurants, I generally order a big salad, with dressing on the side, and broiled meat," she explains. Does she find it uncomfortable to make a lot of special requests when dining out? "No, I've noticed that has changed in my life," she says. "As you get older, you don't have as many inhibitions."

When they spent a winter at a Florida campground, everyone shared a fire and dinner every Saturday night. Caroline always brought low-fat hot dogs and buns. "I never take anything to potlucks that is not low-fat," she says. "Most people are really cooperative and are concerned about their health, too." Andy also has the same eating goals.

Starting adventures later in life is not new to Caroline. After staying at home while her son and three daughters were growing up, she began attending college in her 40s and subsequently worked as a registered nurse for 20 years. Caroline’s healthcare background got her interested in WHI: "I also thought it was time I started watching what I ate. It was good for my health, my family’s health, and for generations down the line."

Andy was in the military for 20 years, so the family lived on military bases in France, Germany, Okinawa, and throughout the U.S., including Hawaii. When Caroline and her husband travel now, they spend time with couples they knew from their military days, camping friends, their own children and 13 grandchildren (who are scattered around the States), or friends that share their hobby of amateur radio operations. "Everywhere we go, we have friends," says Caroline.

Despite the call of the open road, Caroline remains committed to her Dietary Change group: "Our group leader has a way of keeping the group inspired. Everybody comes from different walks of life and has challenges. We just help each other meet the demands."
HAPPY TRAILS TO YOU
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TRAVELING BY PLANE
Some of the pitfalls in traveling by car can occur when flying, too—boredom, high-fat options, unexpected delays. Here’s how to cope:

- Get in the habit of reserving a special meal when you make your plane reservations or, at latest, by calling your airline 24 hours before your flight. While many airlines have “lightened” the food they serve to all passengers, you can help meet your goals if you order a low-fat meal or fruit plate. There’s no charge for this service.

- If you haven’t ordered a special meal, take comfort in the smaller portions usually served. Leave off or just use a bit of added fats, such as butter and salad dressings. Remove the skin from chicken.

- Drink a glass of water or juice for every hour in flight to minimize jet lag and prevent dehydration. It also keeps you feeling full.

- Read the labels on the bags of snacks often served with beverages.

- Airline travelers often think of their in-flight meals as snacks; they plan to have a “real meal” when they arrive at their destination. Keep a food diary during your flight to see how the frequent snacks and meals add up.

- Layovers and flight delays can leave your stomach growling at the airport, where you might not be able to find low-fat choices. Plan ahead by packing some snacks in your carry-on bag (see suggestions in previous section).

There’s a natural desire to treat yourself just because you’re on vacation. Why not make that treat a massage, a special souvenir to take home, or an extra day at your favorite destination? You can follow your low-fat eating pattern and enjoy yourself with a little planning and balancing.