

MANAGING YOUR MENU IN AN INDIAN RESTAURANT

Lets start with appetizers

A healthy appetizer in Indian cuisine is rare, most are deep fried, for example: samosas, pakoras, puris. Papad can be either fried or baked, so of course the baked version is the preferred healthy piece. Recommendations are to share the appetizer or take a half of two different types.

Soups

Typical Indian soups are a lentil variety or a mulligatawny type soup. Both of these type of soups are healthy and low in fat and calories and high in carbohydrates. Creamy soups with coconut, which is a saturated fat should be avoided.

Breads

There are healthy options and of course the not so healthy ones, papads if they are baked area great choice, the fried ones are the ones to avoid. Chapatis and nans are fine as long as they are not swimming with ghee or oil. Puris and parathas are also laden with fat and not a great choice.

Entrees

To keep total fat, saturated fat and calories on the low end, try and select fish, chicken, or shrimp. Tandoori and tikka are healthy and low in fat, malai and korma dishes are creamy and high in fat .

Rice

Most restaurants serve plain pullao, a healthy version. And if one wants something more, biryani is always on the menu, there are many varieties of biryani, the chicken, shrimp and vegetable versions would be recommended over the lamb and beef, mainly for the fat content.

Vegetable dishes

All the vegetable dishes made with garbanzos, lentils, potatoes, spinach, cauliflower, onions and/or tomatoes. These are in the form of curries and if limited oil is used then they are a definite healthy addition to the menu.

Accompaniments and condiments

Raita, and all the other chutneys, like mint and tamarind, are all prepared with a variety of low calorie ingredients, and spices. The pickles and some chutneys though low in calories, may contain a lot of sodium and if a person has hypertension, then it would be a red flag.

Desserts

Are an integral part of the meal, kulfi, various versions of kheers, are all high in calories and saturated fat, and should be eaten with caution or with portion sizes in mind.

It is easy to choose a healthy meal in an Indian restaurant. The main items to watch out for are the fats, fried foods, and overeating. Portion control should not be too difficult, as very large portions are not served. Try to not over order and not overeat, but enjoy and stay healthy.

Karmeen Kulkarni, MS, RD, CDE, BC-ADM Diabetes coordinator, St. Mark's hospital, SLC, UT. Past board member, American Diabetes Assoc, and American Association of Diabetes Educators, and recipient of the Outstanding Educator Award for 2002, from the American Diabetes Association.