

# have food, will travel

The road to summer vacation may be paved with fast food and vending machines, but that doesn't mean healthy eating has to go out the window. With a little planning and some creativity, you can eat real food on the road. (Really.) by **Christina Le Beau**

## Dining In

...the car, the hotel room, the great outdoors. Here's how to eat well when you're bringing your own food:

### RETHINK "FAST" FOOD

Stock your cooler with nonperishables like nuts, dried and freeze-dried fruit, trail mix, popcorn, granola bars, whole-grain crackers and cookies, and unsweetened applesauce cups. Throw in some cut veggies (carrots and celery) and easy fruit like clementines, grapes, and apples (prewashed). Lunch is a snap with whole-grain wraps and fillings like hummus, cheese, nut butter, or jam. Cereal, granola, and shelf-stable boxes of organic milk travel well for breakfast.

### PACK A PORTABLE KITCHEN

Fill a reusable shopping bag with a few meal-prep and storage essentials: a small cutting board and knife (wrap it in a dish towel); forks and spoons; cups, which can double as bowls; some empty food-storage containers; reusable water bottles; biodegradable plastic baggies and cloth snack bags; recycled paper towels and biodegradable wet wipes; and dish soap.

### MAKE THE SUITE CHOICE

Get a hotel room with a kitchenette, or at least a refrigerator. If you can get a microwave and small sink with a counter, even better. Make your dinner from farmers' market greens, cheese, and sweet potatoes cooked in the microwave. Skip the hotel's highly processed breakfast buffet—but use its toaster, dishes, and utensils.

## Dining Out

...without resorting to fast-food chains or questionable menu items. Find a restaurant (see box) and then:

### SKIP THE CHILDREN'S MENU

Just do it. Let the kids color on it, but don't order from it. Most children's menus offer nothing but cheap, processed junk food: fried chicken bits, neon mac and cheese, pizza-flavored cardboard. The more that restaurants hear disapproval from parents—the more you order real food instead of so-called "kid food"—the better the chance of change.

### ORDER FAMILY-STYLE AND SHARE

A salad, a few appetizers, an entrée or two. Order just a few items, with your family's varying palates in mind, and dish it out like you would at home. If there are leftovers, get those empty food-storage containers from the car and take them to go.

### VIEW THE MENU AS A SUGGESTION

Ask for half-portions (at half-price) for the kids.

If you want to order the less-expensive kid's grilled cheese, go for it, but ask for cheddar on wheat instead of the standard American on white. Substitute a side salad, veggies, or fruit for the fries (if the menu doesn't offer that option, ask anyway). Scan the à la carte menu and create your own snack platter by ordering, say, whole-grain toast with cream cheese, carrot sticks, and applesauce.

### QUICK WAYS TO FIND HEALTHY FOOD, ANYWHERE YOU ARE:

[eatwellguide.org](http://eatwellguide.org)

for stores, farmers' markets, and restaurants

[allergyeats.com](http://allergyeats.com)

for allergy-friendly restaurants

[localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org)

for farmers' markets and stores

*Healthy Highways: The Traveler's Guide to Healthy Eating*

for stores and restaurants (\$20, Ceres Press)

Find even more insight on raising food-literate kids at Christina Le Beau's blog [spoonfedblog.net](http://spoonfedblog.net).