



# Adopting Healthy Ways at Restaurants



Diet has a critical role to play in the extent of obesity in a society. In the recent years, India has also joined the developed countries in the race of the rise in obesity. Hotels and restaurants need to upscale their menus in order to provide nutritious options.

■ Sandhya Gugnani

The prevalence of obesity varies with the socio-economic status. Globalisation is one of the factors that affects dietary patterns of those with higher incomes.

Data on the physical quantities of consumption of various items has been collected and published by the National Sample Survey Organisation, Government of India. For urban India as a whole, consumption and diets have changed substantially from 1987. The consumption of rice and wheat has decreased marginally, while that of milk and eggs has increased. Substantial increases are seen over various periods of time in the consumption of tea, biscuits, salted snacks, prepared sweets, edible oils, sugar and country sugar (jaggery). There is a decline in the intake of fruit and vegetables. Thus, it seems that the average diet has shifted more towards sugar and fats and less towards fruits and vegetables. There is no evidence of a substantial shift of the average diet towards nutritious food.

In order to provide nutritious options, hotels and restaurants need to upscale their menus so that they include organic vegetables, lean meat and low-fat dairy products produced without chemicals. Portions of dishes should be smaller, thus trimming calorie counts.

All-time favourite dishes, such as hamburgers, can still stay on the menu, but they should look different. It is not necessary that every single item on the menu has to be focussed on health and

wellness. For items like hamburgers, the restaurants should focus on how they can make that hamburger the most nutritious and tasty as well. Restaurants also need to take small steps to revamp their menus completely. Restaurant menus should take a new approach and design menus so that they include the key nutrients from fruits and vegetables. They should focus on healthy, local, fresh and organic products and have a menu that is kids friendly.

Another important factor to consider while designing menus is the Glycemic Index (GI). The GI measures how quickly the blood glucose levels (i.e., blood sugar) rise after eating a particular type of food. Research has found that including foods with low GI in the diet

## TIPS TO PRESERVE VITAMINS

- ▶ Prepare fruits and vegetables at the time of cooking
- ▶ Avoid preparing vegetables in advance or soaking them in water for a long period of time
- ▶ Microwave or boil vegetables in just enough water that covers them and serve it immediately after cooking
- ▶ Don't chop and store the cut vegetables for a long time

can improve blood sugar control for people who are diabetic and is also beneficial for weight loss and other metabolic disorders. So restaurants and hotels should bring about awareness of the issue to their customers by offering food items that have better nutritive value.

Food establishments should add a variety of healthier choices to their menus and include items such as salads, grilled foods, baked potatoes, soups, whole-grain buns, fruit cups, low-fat frozen yogurts and juices in it. It is also important for restaurants and hotels to provide a nutrition analysis of the dishes on their websites or on their menus to help nutrition-conscious diners eat healthy.

*(The views expressed are that of the author, Sandhya Gugnani, Diet and Nutrition Consultant at Sukhmani Hospital and consultant dietician with Paras Meadows Hospital.)*

### Change in the pattern of consumption of selected food items of the urban population (kg/month/per capita)

Food items	1987-88	1993-94	1999-2000
Rice	5.26	5.13	5.1
Wheat flour	4.37	4.44	4.45
Pulses	0.87	0.77	0.85
Liquid milk (litres)	4.26	4.89	5.1
Eggs (number)	1.43	1.48	2.06
Milk fat	0.04	0.05	0.07
Edible oils	0.41	0.46	0.74
Flesh foods	0.39	0.4	0.46
Vegetables	3.94	3.09	3.00
Leafy vegetables	0.40	0.15	0.17
Mangoes	n/a	0.12	0.16
Bananas (number)	5.10	4.48	5.00
Lemons (number)	n/a	1.23	1.39
Sugar/jaggery	0.97	0.97	1.32
Tea leaf (g)	60.43	63.93	70.44
Biscuits	0.07	n/a	2.06
Salted refreshments	0.04	n/a	1.36
Prepared sweets	0.11	n/a	0.40

Source: GOI, National Sample Survey Organisation, 2001

