

CHAPTER TWELVE

RESTAURANTS

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

8 Tips for Drinking Less Without Your Friends Knowing

I have nothing against people who like to party. Partying is really fun, and a lot of the time I'm right there leading the crusade. But we all know those people who *really* like to drink, and like to do it often. Not only do these people take their own drinking a little too far; they're experts at pressuring others to keep up with them drink for drink. And they'll use mockery, guilt, generosity, logic, peer pressure, and dozens of other tactics to get everyone around them to keep the party going. These friends are fun to have, until they aren't. As fun as it is to party, sometimes you want to go out and have a good time without regretting it the next day. Rejecting drinks can be even more awkward if alcohol is a big part of your offsite work culture, where turning down a glass makes you look antisocial or not a team player. It is nice to have a way to hit it a little less hard, preferably without drawing attention to your secret plan. Feel free to mix and match these tricks, as different situations call for different lines of defense.

1. Alternate with water

Alternating with water is a tried-and-true way to both cut back on alcohol and stay hydrated, thereby preventing a hangover. Every drink or two, go to the bar and ask for some water. You don't need to make excuses for this: you're thirsty and will get another drink in a second. Just be sure to finish the water and feel free to take your time.

2. Drink clear liquids

Clear liquids like gin and vodka look like ice that has melted. So if you don't want to finish every drink that comes your way, you can always leave a little in your old glass, and no one will notice you aren't tossing back as much as everyone else is.

3. Order drinks that look like alcohol (but aren't)

Another advantage of clear liquids. Vodka soda with lime is my favorite go-to drink on late nights, and it's awesome for several reasons.

Besides being easily palatable and sugar free, it gives you the option of leaving out the vodka altogether. Just order a club soda with lime and ask the bartender to make it look like a cocktail—they are usually more than happy to comply.

4. Be forgetful

You don't have to be limited to clear liquids to abandon the occasional half-full glass. Leave your drink on the bar, in the bathroom, on a random table, or anywhere it won't attract attention. That way when someone hands you another, you're ready.

5. Drink light beer

If you're a beer drinker and all this talk of clear liquid is making you squirm, never fear. There is a huge difference in the alcohol content of beers, with light beers coming in around 4 percent alcohol and some fancy Belgians topping out at over 10 percent. You do the math.

If you know you'll have to get through more than you've bargaining for, opt for lighter beers. If you're like me and think some domestic light beer tastes like donkey pee, go with a Mexican beer like Corona and add a lime. I can drink those all night and barely get a buzz going—and I'm little.

6. Master the shot spit

Drinking nights often don't turn crazy until someone starts ordering shots, and then it's all over. Bartenders have this problem too, since drunk people often think they've found a new best friend and gratefully buy their server shots throughout the night. To avoid getting hammered on the job, bartenders keep a half-empty pint of beer nearby and pretend to use it as a chaser when in reality they are spitting the shots back into it.

If you know your friends are likely to "surprise" everyone with shots, be sure to have a nearby water glass or pint that you're nursing. Use the old bartenders' trick, and no one will suspect. I know it's gross, but it works. Just remember to not actually drink the beer later.

7. Show up late

Sometimes special occasions are specifically set aside for excessive drinking. If you need to make an appearance, but would rather not sacrifice your liver, show up forty-five minutes to an hour late. Everyone else will already be one drink ahead of you.

8. Order half shots

If you're in charge of ordering your own drinks and vodka soda isn't your thing, ask for your regular cocktail, but request a half shot instead of a normal one. You'll still get the fun of drinking, but each drink will contribute less to tomorrow's headache.

10 Simple Substitutions for Making Restaurant Foods Healthier

When nothing on the menu perfectly fits my preferences, I don't hesitate to swap out whatever I don't want for something better. Whether it's to avoid processed foods or simply add vibrance and color to your plate, here are ten simple swaps to make the most of your restaurant meals.

1. Mixed greens instead of iceberg or romaine lettuce

I enjoy Cobb salads, but for some reason they're usually made using old iceberg lettuce. Most places these days carry mixed greens or spinach as well and are usually happy to make the switch.

2. Fruit instead of toast

I'm not sure why breakfast spots think you need two giant pieces of toast on top of your potatoes, eggs, and pancakes, but if you don't want toast, they'll often offer you fruit instead. This is one of the best upgrades you can get away with.

3. Salad instead of potatoes

Speaking of potatoes, although they are real food and have their place in a healthy diet, they're so often fried in rancid industrial oils that it's best to skip them. Swapping them out for salad or cooked greens is rarely a problem.

4. Avocado instead of mayo

Real mayonnaise, the kind made from egg yolks and olive oil, is perfectly healthy (and delicious). Unfortunately, that isn't what most places are putting on your sandwich. Instead, commercial mayos are typically made with soybean or canola oil (i.e., overprocessed industrial oil). It may cost a little extra, but avocado is a fantastic alternative to gooey up your lunch.

5. Cheese plate instead of dessert

One of the things I love about France is that it's perfectly acceptable to have cheese after dinner instead of sugar. If everyone is order

ing crème brûlée and you don't want to be a party pooper, get the cheese plate instead. Good cheese is healthy.

6. Brown rice instead of white

I don't mind white rice in small quantities, but if I'm stuck eating somewhere where I know the food isn't very healthy, I'll swap out my white rice for brown (and order as many vegetables as possible) if the option is available.

7. Wine instead of cocktails

Dinner often starts with a drink selection. Although wine certainly has calories, cocktails usually have hundreds more thanks to the liqueurs and syrups typically used. Mixed drinks have their place, but if you'll also be eating an extra few hundred calories, then wine is a better choice.

8. Beans instead of rice

If I see beans or lentils anywhere on the menu, I'll often ask if the kitchen can use them instead of one of the faster-digesting starches on my plate. Your waiter may be confused, but he or she will usually do it if you ask.

9. Olive oil and vinegar instead of sugary dressing

At some point in the past twenty years salad dressings started being made with ridiculous amounts of sugar and salt, probably to cover up the completely flavorless vegetables from the industrial food chain. Good old-fashioned olive oil and vinegar make a better choice, and most kitchens have them.

10. Anything instead of American cheese

Have you ever looked at the ingredients in American cheese? Besides water, the first ingredient is usually trans fat. The second is cornstarch. All the way at the bottom it says, "Contains: Milk." Replacing it with real cheddar, gruyère, provolone, or even nothing would be healthier.

20 Code Words to Look for on Restaurant Menus

Words to Avoid	Words to Order
glazed	roasted
crispy	baked
melted	broiled
smothered	rubbed
breaded	seared
creamy	grilled
honey-dipped	steamed
crusted	sautéed
gooey	spiced
cheesy	seasoned