

Healthy Eating on the Road During the Pandemic

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Like many drivers these days, you may feel safer cooking and eating in your truck, avoiding the risks associated with social contact. In general, grocery and big box stores, are restocking at an incredible pace, making food available for all of us. Cooking your own food allows you to control the fat, sugar, and sodium along with the portion sizes. With some planning, a few cooking tools, and your determination, you can improve your on-the-road diet and possibly change some habits for good.

Healthy eating basics:

- **Fruits and vegetables** are key for providing vitamins, minerals and fiber. Shoot for at least 3-5 servings per day. Optimal intake is 7-9 servings.
- **Whole grains** in bread, crackers, cereals, beans, and grains provide cleansing, satiating fiber to help with weight control.
- **Healthy fats** from things like nuts, avocado, and salmon are better choices than saturated fats found in red meat, full-fat dairy, and junk food like potato chips and fried foods.
- **Lean protein** from chicken, fish, turkey or low-fat dairy helps you feel full and fuels your muscles.
- **Whole foods** that come from the earth rather than processed foods are your best choice.
- **Your own prepared meals** allow you to control the calories, fat, sugar and sodium. Restaurant meals tend to go heavy on all three to make things delicious.....but oh so bad for you!



Plan and pack food ahead of time. Stock up on food containers, pack a few nice utensils (not plastic), and invest in mini appliances. With a small fridge/freezer, mini microwave and mini slow cooker or instapot, you can enjoy some healthy, tasty meals and possibly even lose weight.



Cook ahead of time:

- **Broth based soups** loaded with vegetables, beans, and lean protein keep for up to a week in the refrigerator. Cook whole grain pasta to mix in or enjoy a fiber-rich whole grain roll or crackers. Add a few chunks of avocado for a dose of healthy fat.
- Make a big batch of **slow cook oatmeal** with your favorite milk like skim, almond, soy or oat. Slow cook oatmeal is thick and satiating, especially in the winter. Oatmeal is a great source of fiber, the milk adds protein and top it with chopped nuts and frozen blueberries and raspberries to up the nutritional value. Unlike eating a donut, oatmeal will keep you feeling full to lunch. Bring a week's worth.



- **Roast up a variety of vegetables** to add to salad, pasta, or to eat as a snack. Roasting brings out the natural sweetness in your favorite veggies. To roast veggies, spray with olive oil, add a bit of salt and pepper, and your favorite spices. Roast on high heat (400+). Sweet potato, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, brussels sprout, beets and squash travel well.
- **Hard boiled eggs** are a great staple for a meal or snack.
- **Boil or roast chicken breast** and cut up into single servings. This lean protein combined with some roasted or cut up veggies and a whole grain is a tasty and healthy meal.

Pack it up:

- Cut up carrots, celery, cucumber, mini tomatoes, peppers, apples, melon, or pears.
- Chop up a bag of kale to add to salads, soups, pasta, or sandwiches. Kale is a sturdy, chewy, nutrient rich green that lasts for a week or more.
- Clementine, banana and kiwi are always plentiful and come in their own wrappers.
- Stock up on single serving peanut or other nut butters, hummus, guacamole, and low-fat cheese. Paired with a fruit, veggie, or whole grain, you can create a healthy, satisfying snack or mini meal.
- Beef jerky provides a protein punch and satisfies the urge to chew.
- Make your own trail mix with whole grain cereal, unsalted nuts, unsweetened coconut and mini-chocolate chips. Package ¼ cup servings in snack bags.
- Fill your fridge with protein rich greek yogurt that is lower in sugar. Look for 10 grams or less per serving.
- Plain popcorn can be an easy snack to satisfy a snacking urge. Choose carefully here as many are loaded with unhealthy fat.
- Drink lots of plain old water loaded in your thermos. Bring a few decaf tea bags to add a little flavor to your afternoon drink.



Take out:

When you have to get take out food, choose healthier options:

- Pick broth based soups rather than creamy soups
- Choose salad with darker greens like kale or spinach. Top with vinaigrette or bring your own bottle. Steer clear of the high fat toppings like cheese, croutons, potato salad, or fried items. Instead load up on cut up veggies, a little shredded parmesan, chopped nuts, and fresh fruit.
- Stick with healthier condiments like mustard rather than mayonnaise.
- Ditch the ridiculous serving of white bread or eat open faced or even bring your own high fiber, skinny bread to swap in.
- Steer clear of the processed and deep fried foods.
- Opt for grilled or broiled options.



Spend a day preparing your healthy fare before you hit the road. Plan on making a stop at Walmart to load up on a few healthy staples as your supply dwindles.

Take charge of your meals, during the pandemic, and cook your own healthy fare.