

HEALTHY EATING AT A BBQ

By Owen Rothstein

BBQ season is well upon us. Backyard grilling, pool parties, holidays in the local park, tailgating at a baseball game... BBQ is everywhere. Spring and summer are great seasons for exercise and the opportunity for better fitness is abound, but the temptation of too many cheeseburgers or hotdogs can really throw a wrench into your health and wellness goals. I am fortunate enough to have a great friend (BFF?) with a beach house. Every year we throw an enormous party at his house which has an obscene amount of food & libations. We put on quite a spread ourselves, but a significant number of the attendees also bring food and drink. The opportunity to trash a week's worth of exercise is everywhere and incredibly difficult to resist. Through the years, I've picked up a few tips to make sure that I get through the all-day event without overindulging in the many nutritionally questionable foods (& libations).

The basic principle here is to pace yourself, make smart decisions the whole way through and remember that momentary indulgences may not be worth it long-term. While BBQ foods tend not to be the stuff that's going to win any nutrition awards, you can partake in all of your favorites and still walk away with your shorts buttoned. It just means making the right choices—and, no, you don't have to limit yourself to the corn on the cob and watermelon. Just skip (most of) the worst BBQ dishes because the best ones are often just as satisfying.

1. Preparation is Key – Whether you're the host or the guest, taking a little extra time to prepare healthy foods can make all the difference. Whether you're making turkey burgers instead of hamburgers to save a few calories, or choosing cole slaw over potato salad to get your mayonnaise fix, smart preparation choices can help you win the war before the battle has begun. Buy leaner meats or trim the fat prior to grilling. Use more homemade blends of olive oil and vinegar instead of store-bought dressings. Don't be afraid to bring healthy selections to a friend's BBQ, either...other nutrition-conscious guests will thank you for it.

2. Go Big Early – It turns out that appetizers may be a saving grace at a BBQ. Crudite with hummus or deviled eggs are filled with good taste & good nutrition, and will help fill you up before the 'heavy' stuff is served. Remember, the smart choices start here...you're not eating all of the healthier appetizers and all of the entrees. Find a balance and your waistline will thank you.

FITNESS FLYER



3. Don't get Saucy – Wanna know what's in BBQ sauce? Sugar, lots and lots of sugar. If you have to have some on a chicken leg, use less...a lot less. If you frame the event (in your mind) as a cookout instead of a BBQ, you might find this easier to do. If you wouldn't typically cook inside with heavy sauces, don't do it here either. Use sensible marinades instead of those heavy sauces and save yourself the empty calories.

4. Miss the Boat – Boat Drinks (Piña Coladas, Daquiris, Margaritas) are loaded with sugar and calories. Unless it is whipping up a nutritious fruit & protein smoothie, that buzzing noise coming from the blender should be a warning sign. With a content often topping 400 calories, these drinks can be your downfall even if you've picked the right BBQ foods. A typical beer has about 150 calories and a light beer is usually closer to 100 calories. If you want to splurge, pour some fresh homemade lemonade into a light beer to make a "Shandy", and sip away. Beer is hydrating and there is some vitamin content in the lemonade. Not to mention that the lower sugar content than a Boat Drink will help keep your head from pounding the next day.

5. Tend the End – Dessert is a personal downfall, no matter what the event. When it comes time, at the party, for my friend Karen's blueberry pie, resistance is futile. Luckily, we always have some fresh blueberries available as well. I'll take half a slice of the pie with a scoop of fresh blueberries (I usually take some fresh whipped cream too...don't tell) and I get the best of both worlds. Choosing fruit over sweets is a great way to make sure that your intake doesn't go over the top. Watermelon, although high on the Glycemic Index, is fairly low in calories. I don't know that I've ever attended a reputable BBQ that didn't serve watermelon.

6. Work it Out – There's a swimming pool over there, man... dive in. They're playing horseshoes out back...go toss a few. Badminton anyone? Take advantage of any opportunity to get some exercise while the grilling goes on. Keeping your metabolism moving throughout the day is a great way to make sure that the day's calories don't tally against you. Typically, we don't get a ton of chances to be outside for our meals, so take advantage of it and get a game of croquet going. Tally ho!

EAT WELL!

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