

Why I “strip” at restaurants  
By Monica Ehlers

It was a hot steamy night in New Orleans. I’ll never forget the way my husband looked at me. How the waiter responded to me. I had just stripped. Now before you start thinking I am a mom gone wild, the story is way milder than your imagination would lead you to believe. I didn’t strip off my clothing. I stripped my dinner.

Two days’ worth of eating Beignets (deep fried pastries buried under an avalanche of powdered sugar) washed down with whole chocolate milk, a Po’Boy (a sandwich as long as my forearm filled with fried anything and served on a French roll), Hush puppies, French fries, fried catfish, fried shrimp and fried calamari; creamed spinach and bread pudding, left me a desperately sick and bloated woman.

I meekly asked the waiter if I could have the salmon broiled instead of grilled and my vegetables steamed as opposed to sautéed with butter. In my husband’s dagger eyes, I was the greatest dining offender. “The food is such a large part of New Orleans. How can you come to New Orleans and not enjoy the way it is prepared?” he asked from under the table.

The waiter reluctantly honored my request after he replied, “We’re not used to doing that around here. Let me understand this, you want me to ask the chef to take the flavor out of the food?” I just didn’t see it that way. I substituted lemon for the creamy sauce that was to be poured on the salmon and a little dish of salad dressing instead of the butter on the vegetables. This brings me to my case in point. If you don’t see an entrée that agrees with you at a restaurant, “strip”!

When you don’t know how your food is being prepared, it’s really hard to control how many calories you consume. Some things to keep in mind are portion size, sauces or dressings as well as how your meal is prepared. We all know a cheeseburger can set you back 600 calories, and that doesn’t even include the fries!

What you might not be aware of is the other seemingly innocent items on the menu. Did you know a taco salad can have just as many calories as a cheeseburger? If it is served in a deep fried tortilla shell the size of a face, made with ground beef, refried beans and is loaded with cheese, guacamole and sour cream, you might as well order the burger.

Indulging like that is okay every now and then. If you only eat the entree, not appetizers, bread and butter or dessert, you won’t have to think twice. Add any one of those and you could easily consume more than half of your daily caloric intake. Again, once in a while, a splurge like that will not make your clothes feel tighter. But do it more than once a month, say while you are on vacation, and that’s another story.



I just came back from a Hawaiian holiday with an intimate 40 members of my family. You know what they say, “the more the merrier”. In my family’s case, it’s “the more, the hungrier”. Getting together for huge dinners and lunches is a tradition among my incredibly talkative and warm relatives. This year was no exception.

We had a blast but I made sure to “strip” at every meal and I am so happy to report that I didn’t have to wear a mumu this time to cover a newly gained food tummy. Even greater is that it only takes one person to do this. As soon as I did, others in my family followed suit. I’d like to think that I saved them from their mumus, too. Don’t get me wrong, I love mumus but it seems to be my fallback if I’ve had one too many slices of Lilikoi pie.

So the next time you find yourself perusing a less-than-calorie-friendly menu, try “stripping” and see what happens. Remember, you can have that juicy steak and baked potato. Just order condiments on the side so YOU-not the overzealous food preparer-can decide just how much is enough. Oh, and don’t forget to let me know how it goes. Good luck!