

Restaurant appetizers that make great main dishes

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At Middle Eastern and Mediterranean restaurants, try a traditional cucumber-and-tomato-based chopped salad with a small portion of feta cheese or a single lamb kebob.

For Italian fare, grilled and marinated antipasto with peppers, mushrooms and olives is tasty and filling.

Asian cuisines, from Chinese to Thai to Vietnamese, feature clear soups with vegetables and lean meat or seafood for a hearty meal. Avoid dumplings because they're mostly dough. When the urge for Japanese food hits, stick with sashimi for a protein-rich experience—but skip the sushi because rolls are mostly rice, with calories that quickly add up.

Have fun experimenting with appetizers. But for the healthiest options, try to stay away from dishes that are fried or have a lot of cheese.

(HealthDay)—Ordering an appetizer rather than an entree can be the answer to enjoying restaurant meals without busting your calorie budget.

The trick is to ask for yours to be served when everyone else gets their main course so you're not just left watching your dining companions enjoying their meal. If they're ordering appetizers, make yours a green salad with dressing on the side—a healthy and filling way to start any meal.

Even though you're ordering a scaled down "entree," you still need to choose carefully. Think [seafood](#), a low-calorie protein that's on most appetizer menus. At a steakhouse, shrimp cocktail or a seafood tower is a great choice. At a French or Spanish [restaurant](#), try steamed mussels or clams.

Going out for Mexican? Go for nutrient-dense, heart-healthy guacamole, but instead of dipping in with greasy chips, order a small plate of raw vegetables like red pepper strips and carrots.

More information: The American Heart Association offers [a wealth of ordering tips](#) for all the most popular cuisines.

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