Tricks Restaurants Use to Make You Eat More and Faster

Several studies have shown that people eat faster and leave sooner when loud music is playing -- so restaurants have been turning up the volume to increase flow-through.

And this isn't the only tactic restaurants use. Diners seated at tables in the middle of the room tend to be less comfortable and eat faster. The same holds true for uncomfortable chairs.

They also want you to eat more as well as faster. Warm colors -- like red, orange and yellow -- stimulate the need to eat.

CNN reports that:

“On hectic nights, the reservationist at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto in New York City will inform diners that they need the table back in 90 minutes for the next party. If you lurk over your digestif too long, chef Cesare Casella will place your name on Salumeria’s ‘no salami’ list.”

Sources:

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If you’re in the mood to linger over appetizers and savor each bite of your main course, all while enjoying conversation with your dining companions, your local, trendy restaurant may not be the best choice.

There are actually many reasons why dining out may not be your best option -- not the least of which is food quality, or lack thereof -- but there’s also the issue of atmosphere.

Clearly there are many exceptions to this rule, but most restaurants primary mission is to generate a profit, and the more diners they can seat in any given night, the fatter their profits will be. Knowing this, those in the industry have carefully crafted tricks of the trade designed to subtly get you in, stuffed and out in the shortest amount of time possible.

As CNN reported, tactics include:

- Playing loud music, which makes people eat faster and drink more (in a shorter amount of time)
- Seating patrons in the middle of restaurant, surrounded by chaos
- Using uncomfortable chairs
- Displaying elaborate dessert trays, cheese carts and other visual enticements
- Decorating in warm colors like red, orange and yellow, which stimulates your desire to eat

These strategies strongly encourage you to rush through your meal, a practice that’s not only unpleasant but bad for your digestion and waistline as well.

**Why Eating Fast is Not Recommended**

When you visit most restaurants, taking your time to eat and chew your food thoroughly will likely go right out the window. There are certainly select upscale dining establishments that will march to a different drummer, and pride themselves on allowing patrons to linger and really taste each course of their meal … but these are the exception rather than the norm.
For the most part, you can expect that eating out will encourage you to shovel in more food, faster, than you likely would at home. Why is this not a good idea?

It will make you eat more, for starters.

A study published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* last year found that subjects given identical servings of ice cream on different occasions released more hunger-regulating hormones when they ate it in 30 minutes instead of five. So although the serving size remained the same, they felt fuller after savoring the ice cream compared to when they wolfed it down.

In another study from 2008, subjects also reported feeling fuller when they ate slowly. Interestingly, they also ended up consuming about 10 percent fewer calories when they ate at a slow pace as opposed to when they were rushing.

A third study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, found that eating quickly, and eating until feeling full, tripled subjects’ risk of being overweight. The authors concluded:

> “Eating until full and eating quickly are associated with being overweight in Japanese men and women, and these eating behaviors combined may have a substantial impact on being overweight.”

**Eating your food slowly**, chewing up to twice as long as you normally would, will also instantly help you control your portion sizes, which naturally decreases calorie consumption.

Another benefit of chewing longer is that your food is digested better. The majority of your digestive enzymes are actually in your mouth, not in your stomach. Therefore, chewing your food longer allows it to be broken down better.

You’re also likely to find that you actually enjoy the taste of the food more.
Most Restaurant Food is Far From Optimal

When it comes to top restaurant gripes, the pace of your meal may actually pale in comparison to food quality.

I've often wondered how restaurants can offer so many different menu options and in about 15 minutes, sometimes less, have it sitting in front of you ready to eat.

This just isn’t possible if you’re cooking food from scratch.

In reality, many restaurants are simply buying processed frozen foods, popping them in the microwave, and passing them off as “homemade cooking.” This is something you’d expect from a cafeteria, fast-food joint or chain restaurant, but it even occurs at five-star eateries.

Further, daily specials are not always “the chef's inspiration of the day.” Instead, daily specials are often dishes prepared specifically to get rid of ingredients nearing the end of their shelf life. To spot these iffy "specials," look out for expensive items used in a way that minimizes their flavor, such as cut and braised lamb chops playing second fiddle in a dish.

Also, similar to the way grocery stores pack the most visible shelves with the most profitable foods, restaurant dishes that earn the most profit are always located in the most eye-catching spot on the menu. This says nothing for quality, however.

It’s common at restaurants for inexpensive fish such as pollack to get passed off as something more expensive, like cod. Or, Maryland-style crab cakes may be made from crab that came from Vietnam. Most fish in restaurants is also farm-raised, which you definitely want to avoid.

Even the healthiest restaurant meals are typically loaded with calories as well. According to a registered dietician and representative for the American Dietetic Association, restaurant meals average between 1,000 to 1,500 calories, and because they’re served in gigantic portions, you’re likely to eat more than you would at home.

The end result is that eating out often means you’re typically eating low-quality food at a premium price, a lose-lose situation for both your health and your bank account.
Unfortunately, many Americans have made eating out a way of life. In 2008, the average U.S. household spent close to HALF of its food budget on meals eaten away from home, according to The Survey of Consumer Expenditures for 2008, released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**A Better Choice for Your Meals**

Most of you probably know that I am not a major fan of eating out, primarily because of the major unknowns at most restaurants in terms of food quality, preparation and addition of toxic substances like high-fructose corn syrup, preservatives and MSG. Also, as I said earlier, much of the food is actually cooked in microwaves to speed up delivery, and I try to avoid any food that has been cooked in a microwave.

Instead, I have long stated that if you want to be optimally healthy, you, ideally a family member or someone you hire needs to put some serious time into preparing your meals.

This way, you can prepare your meals with unprocessed, high-quality food, you control the portion sizes, and you can enjoy your food in an atmosphere that is calming and not rushed.

I am fond of saying that if you fail to plan you are planning to fail so before you go to bed at night make certain that you know what you are going to eat the next day so you don’t have to rely on purchasing unhealthy meals.