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with the dietician'

## From September 2006:

This is the second of a series of reports on healthy eating choices available in neighborhood restaurants.

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This month:

- Breakfast at the City Cafe.
- Lunch at R Bistro.
- Dinner at Datsa Pizza.

In part one:

- Breakfast at Hoaglin To Go.
- Dinner at the Old Point.
- Dinner at MacNivens.

For that report, see the Urban Times website at [www.brookspublications.com](http://www.brookspublications.com).)

# Downtown dining with the Dietician

BY KIM GALEAZ

ON A RECENT VISIT TO THE City Café with my editor (the award-winning and regionally famous Bill Brooks), I pondered the menu choices and tried to decide if I wanted to start the day sensibly (granola pancakes) or indulgently (biscuits and gravy).

As a dietician, ordering either way is perfectly fine in my world.. I love to eat and enjoy every bite I take, whether it's indulgent or sensible. That's because I practice balance, variety and moderation with all things foods. Or to look at it another way, I follow the 80/20 rule for eating: sensible, nutrient-dense choices 80 percent of the time balanced with indulgent foods 20 percent of the time.

So at the City Café that morning, I ended up ordering the sensible granola pancakes because I was practicing balance and moderation. I knew over the next couple of days I would probably be over-indulging with friends at several dinners and celebrations. (For the record, Bill ordered sensibly, too. Reason unknown, but I wondered if he felt the pressure of dining with a dietitian.)

Sensible eating doesn't have to be difficult or tedious, even when you're eating out at restaurants. It's actually quite easy since *every* type of restaurant has *always* had at least one sensible, healthier choice on their menu. That's my own longstanding theory and I've yet to be proven wrong.

Join me as I visit three neighborhood restaurants and share tips for choosing sensible, healthier choices.

**B**REAKFAST AT CITY CAFÉ. Hands down, breakfast is the most critical meal of the day because it provides essential fuel and nutrients to rev up your metabolism. Breakfast also increases concentration, attention span and productivity.

Choosing more high-fiber breakfast foods means an additional benefit: fiber-filled foods keep you fuller, or satisfied, longer so you end up eating less at your next meal. (That's the science behind the adage that oatmeal "sticks to your ribs.")

Two City Café breakfast offerings contain oats and are clear winners in the high-fiber, nutrient dense category, Oatmeal Our Way and Granola Pancakes. Chef Brad Royal makes his granola – the main ingredient in Oatmeal and Granola Pancakes - from scratch with oats, dried cherries, dried cranberries, walnuts, pecans, vanilla and a touch of honey and salt.

This dish is incredibly high in fiber due to the oats, dried fruits and even the nuts. But what I really like about this granola is the fact it's a balanced dish in and of itself - carbohydrate from the oats and fruits, protein from the oats and nuts and heart-healthy fat from the nuts. You even get omega-3's from the walnuts, the only nut containing a valuable source of this essential fatty acid.

If you're trying to eat more whole grains, order the Granola Pancakes. You'll end up with a double dose of fiber from the oats in the granola and the cornmeal in the cornmeal pancake batter. At least half your grains daily should be whole, so you could also choose the Cornmeal Pancakes. Whole grains are definitely emphasized here at City Café; even the main breakfast bread/toast is multi-grain.

Locally produced and high-quality fresh foods and produce are also emphasized at City Café. Granola pancakes are topped with an ample serving of in-season, fresh fruit. Pair these pancakes with a big glass of freshly-squeezed ruby red grapefruit or orange juice and you have a hefty dose of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

Other smart, sensible breakfast choices at City Café include the eggs and omelets cooked to order (remember, one egg has only 5 grams of fat yet contains 6 grams of protein), as well as the roasted potatoes served on the side. Eating vegetables early in the day is easy if you add a few to an omelet. Choose between black bean salsa, mushrooms, caramelized onions, red onion, roasted red pepper, salsa, spinach and tomatoes.



The City Cafe's Brad Royal with two alternative breakfasts.

Keep your omelet healthier and lower fat by adding sensible ham instead of indulgent sausage or bacon. Go light on the cheese, too. Or just add one kind of cheese and no other higher fat ingredient like bacon or sausage, like Jeff did recently when we visited City Café. My eating, cooking and power-walking partner was the perfect role model for balance and moderation with his cheese omelet and not even a side order of his favorite bacon or sausage.

Even if you have a hankering for hash, City Café accommodates you with a healthier version. Veggie Hash is made with red potatoes, carrots, asparagus and red and yellow bell peppers. Once it's topped with an egg or two, it's a fiber-filled and protein-rich hearty way to start the day. Just add that glass of fruit juice!

**L**UNCH AT R BISTRO. Chef Regina Mehallick changes her menu weekly and focuses on seasonal and local foods. The menu is designed for enjoying all three courses according to our waitress, so the portions may be a little smaller than most of us are used to. But even Jeff, a big eater at 6'5" and 230 pounds, left full after our 3½-course lunch date recently. (3½ because we ordered a panini along with our other main course choices. Semi-moderation, since we split the panini.)

The menu at R Bistro literally includes choices to meet anyone's needs. Nearly every day you'll find a red meat, poultry, seafood, vegetarian and comfort food choice. Talk about balance and the ability to choose sensibly. It's all there.

You'll need to rely on menu description for choosing sensibly since the menu changes weekly. When Jeff and I visited, nearly every menu item, except those decadent desserts of course, indicated a more sensible choice. Words like pan-seared, pan-roasted, sautéed, grilled, baked, seared, braised, steamed and roasted all indicate a healthier method of cooking, which usually results in a dish that has minimal added calories and fat.

One dish in particular caught my eye because of the nutritional benefits – the Seared Pork Tenderloin with Himalayan Red Rice. Pork tenderloin has always been one the leanest pork cuts available. But this past June, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture released new nutrient data for six cuts of pork, the fat, saturated fat and calories in pork tenderloin were even lower. With just a mere 3 grams of fat in a 3-ounce cooked serving, pork tenderloin is now *just as lean* as skinless chicken breast.

The amount of pork in this R Bistro dish looked about 6 ounces, which is only 240 calories and 6 grams of fat! (Other lean pork cuts to choose in restaurants include the rib, loin or center cut chop and the top loin and sirloin roast.) The Himalayan Red Rice served with the pork is a whole-grain rice as opposed to white rice, which is refined.

Once again, it's becoming easier than ever to eat at least half your grains as whole, even when you're dining out at restaurants. There was even a serving of vegetables with this dish; the rice contained celery and onions and the plate was garnished with two huge tomato slices.

You can get even more vegetables by ordering salad – and the Herb and Leaf Salad at R Bistro is a considerably more nutrient-dense because of the variety of darker green lettuces and lack of iceberg lettuce. A salad without iceberg lettuce is actually a good thing nutritionally, because iceberg is mostly water and really doesn't contribute any vitamins or minerals. (Or taste, which may explain why many people douse their iceberg salad in fat-laden dressings.) This salad was dressed with raspberry vinaigrette and it didn't take much to add a burst of flavor.

The comfort food choice for lunch recently was the

Grilled Indiana Canadian Bacon with Organic Poached Eggs and Fried Potatoes. It's comforting to know the entire dish itself is a blend of balance. The eggs are poached, which means cooked without any fat, and the Canadian bacon is extremely lean with around 4 grams fat in 3 ounces. These two lean protein choices easily balance out the fried potatoes.

**DINNER AT DATSA PIZZA.** This was our night of planned over-indulgence, so Jeff and I ate lighter at breakfast and lunch and power-walked 20 extra minutes to compensate for the extra calories of double-cheese pizza at Datsa Pizza.

Let's set the record straight with pizza. Pizza is not a "junk" food, even though that's the prevailing misconception. Food that inherently contains three different food groups – crust/grain, tomato/vegetable and cheese/dairy – hardly qualifies as "junk."

The problem with pizza is that it tends to be higher in calories, fat and saturated because of all the decadent toppings *we choose* to throw on it. On the flip side, the tomato sauce on pizza is the only vegetable some people eat. (At least it's a nutritious one: Processed tomato products, like pizza and tomato sauce, actually contain more prostate cancer-fighting lycopene than fresh tomatoes.)

But you *can* eat sensibly at a pizza restaurant -- if you practice moderation with those "red-light" toppings. Typically, "red-light" toppings should be eaten in moderation if you like to have pizza regularly. They tend to be higher in calories, fat, saturated and/or sodium. "Yellow-light" toppings have something about them re-quiring caution. "Green-light" toppings are nutrient-dense and can be enjoyed liberally no matter how often you enjoy pizza.

Sensible salads are readily available at Datsa Pizza, from Dinner Salad to Caesar Salad. You can even order salads with grilled chicken. The salad lettuce blend contained far more romaine (darker green) than iceberg lettuce and tomatoes and red onion added valuable nutrients. But if you want to spend all your indulgent calories on double cheese pizza with black olives, then skip the croutons and cheese.

You will easily find a salad dressing at Datsa Pizza to suit your level of moderation and balance. Choose between full-fat dressings like Ranch, Greek, Blue Cheese and Balsamic Vinaigrette or save all the fat and go with Fat Free Raspberry Vinaigrette.

Here's something to ponder with salad dressings and

how easily fat and calories add up. A “serving” – according to the Food and Drug Administration for labeling purposes – is considered to be two tablespoons, which is one ounce. The average American uses about four tablespoons, or two ounces, of dressing on their salad. Restaurants serve salad dressings by the ounce with ladles or in soufflé cups, so this translation is critical. If your favorite vinaigrette or creamy dressing has 10 grams of fat in two tablespoons and 150 calories, then 2 ounces would be 300 calories and 20 grams fat.

That’s why it’s sensible to go light on full-fat dressings or ask for lower fat, reduced fat, light or fat-free versions.

***Since you asked...***

“Did Jeff get his Chili Nachos yet?” It seems that many of you are (overly) concerned about whether Jeff has been back to the Old Point to enjoy his favorite decadent, indulgent dish. If you recall (if you read the first installment of this feature in the July issue), he opted not to order it recently for the sake of balance and moderation. His idea completely.

The answer: Yes. Twice. With extra chili. ■

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**PIZZA TOPPINGS**

Most pizza restaurants offer far more green-light toppings that people realize. Here’s the rundown at Datsa Pizza:

**GREEN LIGHT**

Ham, shrimp, Cajun shrimp, chicken, Cajun chicken, barbecue chicken, mushrooms, onions (white, red or green), jalapeno, banana pepper, sundried tomato, green pepper, fresh basil, pineapple, barbecue sauce, tomatoes and tomato sauce, and cheese, which contributes protein and calcium (and also Iso qualifies as a yellow- and red-flag topping, depending on the amount).

**YELLOW LIGHT**

Anchovies (lower fat but extremely high sodium), black and green olives (higher in fat, but the heart-healthy type) and cheese.

Nearly all cheese is naturally high in fat and saturated fat. Part-skim mozzarella happens to be slightly lower in fat and calories naturally than other cheeses (unless it’s whole milk mozzarella).

**RED LIGHT**

Sausage, pepperoni, sweet or spicy Italian sausage, ground beef, Bacon, salami and “extra cheese.” ■

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