

Eating Well in the Dining Hall

This handout is to help you with a few, last-minute tips or reminders in regards to eating well in an Athletes' Village dining hall. Living in an Athletes' Village provides a new culture shock and a new set of challenges. At first, expect to be overwhelmed at the opportunities. After a week or so, you may find that you become bored with the menu options despite the exciting atmosphere. You will be going to the same dining room, with the same people, the same layout and the same cutlery. Since the menu cycle is likely to be brief, once you have been in the Village for more than a week, you will also see the same food. Your creativity in menu selection will make all the difference. Hopefully, the following hints will come in handy.

Eating in a dining hall means a big change to the food habits of most people.

Dining Hall Traps and Challenges

- Great quantities of food

You can serve yourself as much as you want from an almost inexhaustible supply. It is easy to eat more than usual, and more than you need.

- Many choices of food all at once

When in doubt, have it all! It would be too awful to miss out on something nice.

- Different and unusual foods

Some people find it difficult to adjust to food that is different to the way Mum/Dad cooks. You may have reluctant and unadventurous taste buds when it comes to trying new foods, or maybe you are unsure of their nutritional value.

- Lack of supervision

Mum/Dad is no longer around to make you eat your vegetables.

- Distraction

It's hard to concentrate on your own nutritional goals when you are surrounded by the eating habits of a large group of people. Given the competitive nature of athletes in general, it isn't surprising that 'eating challenges' take place.

- Eating for entertainment

You may have an incredibly busy day and find that mealtimes are your only leisure activity in the day - or perhaps you have too much spare time on your hands and can't wait for the meal service to open. In either case, if the dining hall becomes a 'hang out', a lot of extra food can be demolished in the name of unwinding and relaxing together.

- Meal hours

Basic catering provides for three meals a day - but healthy snacks are an important part of an athlete's diet, especially if you are a big eater. You need to think ahead to have food on hand.

Strategies to Eat Well in an Athletes' Village Dining Hall:

- **Clearly know your nutritional goals and how to choose food to achieve these.**
- **Your best asset is to be focused and organised.**
- Plan your mealtimes and snacks into your day - don't leave it to chance. Stick to this plan - don't try anything new or tricky in a competition phase.
- **Treat the dining hall like a restaurant.** Look at the menu, or 'do a lap' to check out what is on offer. Make a decision as you wait in the queue. Don't just grab!
- **Don't concern yourself with the amount & type of food that other athletes consume.** The nutritional needs of other athletes may be quite different to your own. Stick to what is right for you.
- **Piling a bit of everything on your plate is haphazard, unbalanced and probably more than you need.**
- **Eat just what you need from a balanced food selection.** Check your plate for mostly high carbohydrate foods, a protein-rich food, some vegetables or fruit - the more colourful, the more vitamins! Don't forget to choose fruit that can be peeled and vegetables that have been cooked if the country's water is unsafe for drinking.
- **If you are a big eater, come back for a second helping or take a second plate.** Don't try to pile it up all at once!
- **Relax.** There is plenty of food for everyone and menu items will be repeated. If you decide on one item tonight, you can look forward to another choice next night. This isn't your last meal.
- **Plan for healthy snacks between meals** especially if you have high energy needs. If available and allowed, take what you need from the dining hall - fruit, yoghurt and bread/sandwiches are good choices.
- **Don't hang around the dining hall once you have finished your meal.** You'll end up eating things that you don't need and don't remember.