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Do not let extra calories get in the way of a delicious Mexican meal

From the blog:
Nutrition Tidbits

Tuesday, June 05, 2007

The Mexican fare served up at restaurants like Chipotle or Qdoba is often seen as a healthier fast food option than the usual burger and fries. But the volume of food you get at these places can go well beyond your needs for one meal! Their supersized burritos can contain more than 1400 calories and 65 grams of fat - far more than the fair share of one menu item! This amount of fat is recommended as an upper limit for a whole day, never mind one meal.

Read on to see what you can do to customize your burrito order to make it a healthier option that won't put you over your calorie and fat gram budget for a meal (or the day!)....

Burrito Makeover

1. Cut the cheese: By simply cutting out all that gooey cheese, you will remove over 100 calories and 9 grams of fat.

2. Hold the sour cream: Although you may be tempted to have sour cream added to your burrito, it will cost you an extra 120 calories and 10 grams of fat. Try a burrito without the sour cream - with all the flavors already in there, we bet you won't even notice!

Did you notice that just by following the first two steps of the burrito makeover - resisting the cheese and sour cream - you will save over 200 calories and close to 20 grams of fat?

3. Consider your carbs: When you have both rice and beans, you are consuming over 60 grams of carbohydrates (and that doesn't even include the tortilla shell, salsa and extras, which pack on up to 90 more grams). That's a lot of carbs (up to 150 grams in one burrito), when you consider that the recommendation for a 2000 calorie diet is a total of 300 grams for a whole day. If you are a carb counter, a burrito with rice, beans, and fixings is equivalent to over 5 slices of bread!

Here are a few things you can do to reduce the carbs (and calories) in your burrito:

- **Go naked**: Cutting out the tortilla shell (and having a naked burrito) will reduce your meal by 340 calories, 54 grams of carbohydrates, and 9 grams of fat.
- **Hold off on the rice**: This will cut out 240 calories, 40 grams of carbohydrates, and 9 grams of fat.
- **Go for the beans**: Keeping black or pinto beans as a source of carbs in your burrito meal is a good idea because they actually offer more than just carbs - they contain lots of protein and fiber, compared to the tortilla shell and rice. The beans add only 130 calories, 1 gram of fat, and 22 grams of carbohydrates, while offering a whopping 9 grams of protein and 6 grams of fiber!

4. The Salsa Dance: When you choose corn salsa instead of tomato salsa, you add an extra 75 calories and 16 grams of carbs! By simply opting for the tomato salsa, you can keep your burrito's calories down without compromising flavor.

5. Do the guac: Guacamole is one add-on that I recommend. Despite the fact that guacamole is high in fat, it is high in monounsaturated fats, which are the heart-healthy "good" fats. So, by including this extra, you may actually be doing your body a favor.

6. Split it Up: Regardless of how you choose to cut the calories and fat in your burrito, the servings at most fast-food Mexican restaurants are still huge. Try splitting your burrito in half (to share or eat later). It's a great way to make your meal more reasonable calorie-wise, and I bet you'll still feel full.

The Bottom Line

Trimming down the calories and fat in your Chipotle or Qdoba burrito is possible without cutting out the flavor. Use the burrito makeover tips above to help you in cut back on how much you consume when treating yourself to one of these burritos.

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