



Balanced Eating at USC Village

**A Guide to Support Balanced Food
Choices for the Trojan Community**

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Introduction

Access and availability of healthy foods and beverages plays an important role in an individual's overall health and wellbeing. The link between diet and health has been well documented in scientific literature for many decades, and there is continuously growing evidence showing that food and beverage environments conducive to healthy dietary patterns can help individuals achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases throughout different life stages.

USC Village is located on the north side of University Park Campus and opened in Fall of 2017. The Shops at USC Village has over 104,000 square feet to shop, dine, exercise, and unwind with convenient validated parking and unique dining experiences, shops, and services. USC Village is also home for USC students and a commodious place for USC students, faculty, staff, and the community to enjoy shopping, fitness options, and delicious, healthy meals.

The USC WorkWell Center is pleased to share the Balanced Eating at USC Village guide to support the USC community to choose nutritious food and beverages and improve overall health and quality of life. Recommendations in this guide are based on 2020-2025 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

We encourage you to use this guide as a reference when dining at the many eateries at USC Village. If you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback, please contact Julie Chobdee, MPH, Associate Director, Health & Well-being Program, jchobdee@usc.edu or Lindsey Pine, Registered Dietitian, USC Auxiliary Services, Hospitality at lpine@usc.edu.





Tips for Eating Out

People *really* enjoy dining out, for a variety of reasons. They might be short on time, need convenient options, don't like to cook, or are socializing over a meal at a restaurant. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 44% of all food spending went to dining out. The most common meal eaten out of the house was lunch. Not surprising, data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey showed that younger adults ages 20-39 consumed more fast food than older adults. Since dining out is prevalent in our daily lives, it is crucial to know about and apply healthy habits while eating out. These are general guidelines for eating out that can be applied anywhere!

Build a balanced meal.

Build a balanced meal that contains a source of protein, fat, carbohydrates, and non-starchy vegetables. For example, if you have a sandwich as your main dish, split the hummus and ask for vegetables instead of pita to get more vegetables in. Follow these estimates for serving sizes: protein (fist size), carbohydrates (palm sized), fat (thumb size). Try to incorporate as many vegetables as possible! Note that each individual's serving size will look different than the next.

Choose quality food sources.

If a food group is missing, consider adding a side like soup, salad, or mixed fruit or vegetable to add more fiber, vitamins, and minerals!

- Lean proteins such as tofu, tempeh, chicken breast or fish/seafood
- Whole grain carbohydrates such as brown rice, corn tortilla, or whole grain bread
- Heart-healthy fats such as olive oil, avocado, olives, nuts or seeds.

Consider how the menu item is prepared.

Choose items that are raw, baked, steamed, poached, or stir-fried. Try to avoid or share any menu items that are "lightly" fried or covered in sauces. Ask for sauces or dressings on the side and add them while you eat to reduce chances of overuse.

Check out the menu ahead of time.

Pick a few options so you don't make decisions in a panicked state of hunger. If you want to choose a calorically dense appetizer, split it! Have a few bites and share with the table to help with portion control.

Moderation is key, nothing is off limits.

No need to abandon all health and nutrition related goals. Take your time chewing, avoid distractions like phones and electronics to help with digestion. Ask for a take-out box as soon as you start to feel full to practice mindful eating.



Balanced Eating at **USC Village**



The following recommendations support healthy food choices at the numerous USC Village eateries. A healthy lifestyle looks different for everyone! Any food item can be incorporated into your lifestyle as long as it is in moderation. Find the balance that works for you individually. These are general recommendations as individual needs, preferences, and availability may vary.



Bruxie is a chain restaurant that is known for their fried chicken and chicken waffle sandwiches!

- Order from the grill - Opt for a grilled chicken sandwich to reduce the fat and calorie content.
- Include as many vegetables as possible. Add lettuce and tomatoes to your order.
- The Bruxie Salad - Opt for grilled chicken instead of fried.
- If ordering a combo with a side and a drink, lean towards the side of pickles instead of fries for lower fat and calories. As for drinks, choose orange juice or sparkling beverages over soda for lower sugar content.



CAVA is a Mediterranean cuisine restaurant with lots of diversity in their menu. They make it fast and simple to create-your-own bowl or pita with vibrant ingredient choices and lots of variety.

- Build your own bowl so you have more control in order to optimize opportunities for fiber.
- Instead of white rice, opt for brown rice, salad, greens and grains, or “right rice” (a rice alternative made from lentils, chickpeas, green peas, and some rice) as your base for more fiber and fullness.
- Choose grilled chicken, grilled meatballs, or falafel as a healthier protein option.
- If you choose one of the vegetarian options, try to incorporate plant-based protein such as falafel or lentils in your base or toppings.



[Check out the nutrition information here.](#)

Chinese Street Food has authentic Chinese food options as well as snacks and popular drinks.



- Entrees here are typically served individually, not giving you a balanced meal. Consider ordering a protein (chicken, fish, tofu) and vegetable option, then saving half to consume later.
- For example, try the braised chicken with any vegetable option like garlic broccoli, stir fried string beans, or bok choy. They have many vegetable options that are a great source of fiber to keep you full longer and also help boost your immunity!
- Great appetizer choices include the spicy fish fillet or broccoli salad
- More nutrition options include dishes that are steamed or stir-fried with lean protein (chicken, fish, shrimp, tofu) and lots of vegetables.
- Choose brown rice, soups, vegetables, lean proteins and avoid fried dishes and excessive sauces.



City Tacos has fresh Mexican food with some heat and unique flavors. They combine traditional Mexican recipes with Southern California flavor to view food as a celebration!

- Ask for cheese on the side to reduce calories and saturated fat since most of the dishes have large amounts of Oaxaca and cotija cheeses.
- When ordering tacos, opt for corn tortillas instead of flour. Corn tortillas are considered a whole grain and typically contain less calories and fat than flour tortillas.
- Healthier entrees include pollo city, mahi a la veracruzana (with cheese on the side), and the city veggie burrito.

DULCE has specialty coffee as well as teas. They have fresh salad, sandwiches, and baked goodies that are prepared fresh in-house every day!



- A healthier breakfast option includes the breakfast sandwich with avocado.
- Choose unsweetened plant milks or low fat cow's milk.
- For less sugar and calorie options choose a drip coffee, espresso, macchiato, cortado, cappuccino, americano, or iced tea.
- Ask for salad dressing on the side and add chicken, avocado, or tuna for more protein.
- When choosing a sandwich, try to look for a lean protein such as chicken, tuna, turkey, or the vegetarian options.
- For a healthier dinner option, order a tuna melt with a side of coleslaw for an extra side of vegetables.



Il Giardino brings authentic Italian food such as pasta, salads, paninis, and other traditional dishes. They present a taste of Italy in a comfortable environment with affordable prices.

- Gluten-free pasta is an option. Check with restaurant about any practices to minimize cross contamination.
- Opt for a pasta sauce such as the tomato basil, checca, or pesto then add vegetables and protein or a side salad to make it a more balanced meal.
- A healthier entrée includes the chicken with lemon and capers.
- If ordering one of the salads, add chicken or shrimp to increase protein.



Insomnia Cookies offers lots of different cookies, ice-creams, brownies and more. They are known for being a late-night bakery!

- Opt for an oatmeal raisin cookie, peanut butter chocolate chip cookie, white chocolate macadamia cookie, or snickerdoodle which have a higher protein to sugar ratio and less than 20 grams of sugar.
- When consuming sweets high in sugar, practice portion control and eating in moderation.



[Check out the nutrition information here.](#)



Jimmy Johns is a one stop shop for everything sandwiches! They have traditional sandwiches and wraps. When ordering a sandwich:

- Opt for wheat bread for more fiber.
- Use hummus as a condiment for plant-based protein or avocado spread, which is rich in heart-healthy fat.
- Use mustard as a condiment for a tangy, strong flavor that is low in calories.
- Try to choose lean proteins for your meat choice, such as chicken or turkey.
- Sub the cheese for extra veggies with for more fiber and vitamins.
- For a healthier alternative:
- The best option is to order the sandwich only, but if you need chips, choose the Thinny Chips.
- Choose sparkling water over drinks with added sugar like soda.



Kobunga Korean Grill offers a hospitality and chef-driven experience to Korean BBQ. They have simplified and shortened the Korean BBQ experience to a fast and casual version.

- Build your own plate to add more fiber and leaner proteins.
- Healthier base options include brown rice, mixed greens, kale/perilla, and the cauliflower rice to give you more fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Healthier proteins include the Korean BBQ grilled chicken and soft tofu with spicy garlic soy sauce.
- If you are using any of the greens as a base, add sauteed corn or roasted sweet potatoes as a side to increase the carbohydrate and fiber content, which will keep you satiated for longer.
- Pick one of the kimchi options for your side dish to boost your gut health.



Ramen Kenjo serves up a “hot bowl of happiness” incorporating both traditional ramen as well as some not-so traditional Japanese dishes. They have lots of appetizers and rice bowls as well as normal and vegetarian ramen.

- Healthier ramen noodle entrees include the Shio chicken, shoyu chicken, miso hungry (veggie option) as they all have a lower sodium and fat content.
- Healthier donburi rice entrees include the slow cooked chicken, veggie, or spicy tuna options.
- Add an appetizer of boiled edamame or seaweed salad for more protein and fiber.



Rock & Reilly's brings a communal spirit to a modern Irish pub. They offer yummy food and a fun atmosphere for friends and family to enjoy sports.

- Healthier starters include the griddled cauliflower hummus and the wings.
- When ordering salads:
 - Ask for the dressing on the side so that you can control how much goes on top and it won't get your greens all soggy.
 - Opt for the vinaigrette dressings as these have less fat.
- Add salmon or chicken for your choice of protein.
- Healthier sandwiches include the roasted chicken wrap and the grilled chicken sandwich.
- When ordering a burger, substitute for a turkey patty instead of a beef patty.
- Healthier entrees include the blackened salmon or the forbidden rice bowl.



Starbucks has a wide selection of coffee, teas, pastries, and other treats to please your taste buds. They strive to give customers a rewarding coffee house experience.

- Healthy light bites:
- For more antioxidants try the berry trio grain parfait.
- For whole grains, healthy fats, and fiber try the sprouted grain bagel and avocado, rolled and steel cut oatmeal-opting for nut medley or dried fruit on the side instead of extra sweeteners.
- For more protein and vegetables try the veggie egg white bites.
- Healthy sandwiches:
- For more protein and iron try the spinach feta and egg white wrap.
- For another vegetarian, high protein option, try the roasted tomato mozzarella panini.
- Salad options have dressing conveniently packed on the side to easily drizzle exactly the right amount that you want and need.
- Healthy boxes and bowls include the cheese and fruit box, grilled chicken and hummus box, chickpea bites and avocado box, egg and cheddar box, and the chicken quinoa bowl which are all packed with protein and healthy fats making them great afternoon snacks.
- When ordering drinks:
- Choose unsweetened plant milks or low-fat cow's milk.
- Adjust the sweetness level by asking for "half-sweet" or unsweetened as excess sugar has been associated with chronic diseases.
- Opt out of adding whipped cream and artificial sweeteners as these are also associated with weight gain and health issues, even though they may be lower in calories.
- Order a smaller size which can save you both calories and money.



[Check out the nutrition information here.](#)

sweetgreen

Sweetgreen is a chain where you can create your own salad bowl that provides fresh ingredients with lots of variety.

- Build your own bowl with a base of greens and quinoa to optimize fiber and micronutrient intake.
- Choose brown rice or quinoa as your grain as an alternative to white rice for more fiber and fullness.
- Choose grilled chicken, salmon, and tofu as your protein source
- Choose a wide variety vegetables such as sweet potato, chickpeas, onion, tomato, cabbage, broccoli
- Aim for vinaigrette dressings for lower calorie and fat options or drizzle on dressing
- Choose still or sparkling water



[Check out the nutrition information here.](#)

Sunlife Organics uses the best quality organic ingredients in all of their products. They promote a healthy, happy lifestyle through everything they offer.



- To lower sugar content in shakes and smoothies, substitute juice with milk or coconut water and order without maple syrup, honey, or granola.
- Create a better-for-you bowl by:
- Skipping the added sugars in granola, superfood trail mix, and chocolate spread.
- Add some produce like kale and spinach for some extra nutrients and minerals.
- Consider adding protein powder or nut butter to the menu item to make it a more balanced selection.



Terra Mia Pizzeria offers classic, New York-style pizza in addition to wings, salad, sandwiches, and more, in a fun environment.

- Instead of a whole pizza, order a slice of pizza and a salad to add vegetables and fiber to your meal.
- Order pizza with no cheese(or light on the cheese) and extra vegetables
- Ask for salad dressing on the side and lightly drizzle
- Omit the fried croutons from the Caesar salads to reduce the fat and calories.
- Order a sub sandwich and a salad, and share the sandwich with a friend or save the other half for later.
- Make a “salad pizza” by ordering a cheese pizza and topping it with a salad to add vegetables to your meal.



Yoboseyo Superette is a specialty market and boba cafe. They offer matcha, boba, and other signature drinks as well as delicious snacks, grab and go meals, and much more!

- When ordering a drink:
- Oat milk is available for those looking for a plant-based milk option.
- Ask for a drink to be made “less sweet.” Almost all of the drinks on the menu can be adjusted for sweetness.
- Order a smaller size to save calories and money.
- Choose grab and go items that include lean protein and are made with whole wheat lavash wrap.
- Try a plant-based grab and go option like the curried chickpea wrap or the vegan fusilli pesto to increase your fiber intake.
- Choose their wild albacore tuna wrap for some brain-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

Closing and Contact Information

We hope that this guide to Healthy Eating at USC Village is useful in supporting your health and well-being and allows you to make healthy, mindful food choices when dining out. We encourage you to share these resources and let us know if you come across any further resources that we can consider adding.

We thank our nutrition interns Brittany Kwong, Morgan Michalak, Rob Siabanis, Marissa Gaab, Lotta Andonian, Tiffany Chiu, Denecia Fernandes, Emily Wagstaff, and Faith Bentley for their collaboration in making this guide.

Fight On Trojans and Stay Healthy!

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