

Global Thinning

Boost your health and drop pounds with these powerful eating strategies from around the world

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EVERY NATION HAS

its weapons in the nutrition wars. For the Chinese, it's antioxidant-rich green tea. The French have their red wine. In Italy, it's olive oil—cans and cans of the stuff.

Americans? We tend toward fad diets and expensive shortcuts like gastric-bypass surgery. But we're also big on openness and acceptance. So, in the best melting-pot tradition, we asked international nutrition experts, cooks, and the editors of our overseas editions of *Men's Health* for healthy-eating tips from their homelands. It was like having a dozen ethnic-restaurant menus slipped under our door, but with the healthiest items circled.

Then we culled out our favorites, compiling the best and most useful information from around the globe for fighting disease and battling the bulge. Like that exchange student who broke your heart back in 11th grade, it could change your life.

Add some Greece-y food to your diet.



ARGENTINA

Secret weapon: Great beef. An Argentine is likely to eat 30 pounds more beef each year than you do—without raising his risk of heart disease. How's that? "The beef in America is grain-fed, but in Argentina the cattle eat only grass, which is natural for a cow," says Alicia Rodriguez, chef and co-owner of Chimichurri, an Argentine steakhouse in New York City. "The beef has about half the calories, and a lot less fat and cholesterol." In fact, one independent test found that a 4-ounce cut of American beef contained 10.8 grams (g) of saturated fat and 328 calories, while the same cut of Argentine beef had 2.5 g saturated fat and 140 calories.

American translation: Sizzle lean. As you peer through the shrink-wrap, look closely at the marbling—the fat inside the muscle, not the easy-to-remove rind on the outside. You want less. Better yet, go grass-fed. It's leaner, like the Argentine steaks. Buy it at grasslandbeef.com.

AUSTRALIA

Secret weapon: Smart fast food. "Most of our fast-food outlets offer healthier choices that aren't available in the United States," says Sharon Natoli, director of Food & Nutrition Australia. A typical Aussie breakfast: "A low-fat fruit smoothie along with raisin toast or a fruit salad, which are much healthier options than coffee and a doughnut." Their hamburgers "come covered with salad—it could be plain lettuce, tomato, and onion, with or without the addition of beetroot, pineapple, or cucumber," she says.

American translation: Toss the bun, low-carb style, and "ask for more salad on your burgers," says Natoli. Skip the cheese and mayo, and pile on leafy greens, tomato, onion, and pickles. It could start a healthy habit: Did you know you can eat leafy greens *without* ground beef?

GERMANY

Secret weapon: Some kind of healthy wheat beer, right? Actually, no. "In 2003, for the first time, Germans drank more water than beer," says Kirsten Segler, nutrition editor of *Men's Health* Germany. "Germans on average drank 129 liters of water but only 117.5 liters of beer." The quality of tap water equals and sometimes exceeds that of bottled water, she says. Just like here!

American translation: If the Germans can cut back, so can you. And get creative with water. "A lot of German people prefer a mixture of apple juice and water if they want some flavor," says Segler. "We call it *Apfelschorle*." We call it a smart idea.

GREECE

Secret weapons: Lemon and oregano. Lemon was originally used in Greece to kill bacteria, says Elena Paravantes, R.D., a member of the Hellenic Dietetic Association. "Today, Greeks add it to anything. Not only is lemon an excellent source of vitamin C (a potent antioxidant), but it has fewer calories than other citrus fruit," she says.

American translation: Paravantes recommends whipping up a batch of the ultimate free-radical-fighting salad dressing or meat marinade. "Just mix lemon juice with olive oil, oregano, and garlic," says Paravantes. There's your dressing. You can toss that bottle of goopy ranch now.

INDIA

Secret weapon: The original smoothie, the *lassi*. "Smoothies in America have fruit syrups and unnecessary sugar," says Suvir Saran, author of *Indian Home Cooking*. "Our smoothies are made with yogurt and fresh fruit or spices." That's it. The wholesome combination delivers calcium, vitamin C, and protein, which helps keep you feeling satisfied so you'll eat less during the meal. The dairy also neutralizes chili peppers' burn—which will come in handy if your Indian-restaurant order includes the word "vindaloo."

American translation: "Put yogurt in a blender with a few slices of mango or orange," Saran says. It's that easy.

LATIN AMERICA

Secret weapon: Shopping socially. "In Central and South America, you do your shopping on a daily basis, and it becomes a social thing—you find friends, you talk to people. It's like going to happy hour," says Claudia Gonzalez, M.S., R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. It's also an active pursuit that could prompt you to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.

American translation: Instead of the monthly run to Sam's Club or Costco for frozen dinners in bulk, stop at the market—or better yet, a farm stand—once or twice a week for your meats, fruits, and vegetables. Get to know the farmer. Maybe he has a daughter.

THAI

EAT THIS



CHICKEN SATAY

Why: Lean meat and a peanut sauce that's heavy on "good" fats.



YAM NUA

Why: Salad? Good. Steak? Good. On the same plate? Great.

NOT THAT



MI KROP

Why: It's made with deep-fried rice noodles.



ANY CURRY

Why: Fat-loaded coconut milk is a main ingredient. (Ask if a light version is available.)

CHINESE

EAT THIS

STEAMED DUMPLING

Why: Key word: "Steamed."

WONTON SOUP

Why: Light, filling broth.

BROCCOLI BEEF IN GARLIC SAUCE

Why: Three healthy ingredients in one dish.

NOT THAT

CRAB RANGOON

Why: Chinese-restaurant version of the deadly jalapeño popper.

FRIED RICE

Why: It has soaked up lots of oil.

CRISPY DUCK

Why: Superfatty, skin-on fowl.

INDIAN

EAT THIS

CHICKEN TIKKA MASALA

Why: Lycopene-rich tomato sauce.

DAL

Why: Lentils are near-perfect protein.

RAITA

Why: It's just two ingredients: yogurt and cucumbers.

NAAN

Why: Harmless bread, baked until it bubbles.

NOT THAT

BEEF KORMA

Why: Made with fatty coconut and fattier cream.

MUTTER PANEER

Why: Even worse—cheese in cream sauce.

GHEE

Why: It's clarified butter.

POORI

Why: Evil bread, set afloat in boiling oil until it bubbles.

OKINAWA

Secret weapons: Shiitake mushrooms and other low-calorie, nutrient-dense foods like soy, seafood, and sweet potatoes. Bradley Willcox, M.D., who coauthored *The Okinawa Diet Plan* with his brother, Craig Willcox, Ph.D., says shiitakes are "among the most nutritious of mushrooms." They're a good source of protein, their calorie content is negligible, and "compounds found in shiitake mushrooms have been shown to lower blood-cholesterol levels and high blood pressure." Which helps explain why these islands off Japan are home to more centenarians per capita than anywhere else on Earth.

American translation: Buy shiitakes fresh or dried (rehydrate them with hot water for 15 minutes). Chop them into soups, salads, and pasta dishes, or just brush them with oil and slap them on the grill. "With its meatlike quality, this mushroom acts as a meat replacement," Craig Willcox promises. Beats raw fish, right?

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