

Light Side

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Mission impossible or possible: Can you eat healthy at the State Fair?

State Fair time comes each year, and for many of us who are trying to make healthier food choices, lose weight or maintain fitness, eating at the State Fair presents us with a special challenge. Fortunately, here in Iowa, we do have plenty of healthy (and tasty) food choices at the fair. This makes our mission of maintaining healthy habits possible, if we choose to accept it.

Here are a few tips that may help you eat healthier at the fair this year:

- Be sure to eat healthy in the days leading up to the fair, especially for breakfast the day before you go. Make sure to avoid starting your fair experience while you are hungry.
- For the car trip to the fair grounds, pack a small insulated cooler or bag with fresh fruit/veggies, whole grain cereal bars, pretzels, nuts and dried fruits. If you have a healthy snack just before entering, you will be less tempted to overindulge at meal time.
- Purchase a bottle of water early in your visit and then find places where you can refill it – you will save lots of money and calories that way. Drink plenty of water, as you will more than likely

be walking around in the heat. Water quenches thirst and hydrates better than soft drinks do. If you do want a soft drink, opt for the small size instead of the larger one. Also, consider choosing a diet soft drink as another way to save on calories.

- Check out what foods and food vendors are there before you decide what to eat. Imagine you have a “calorie salary,” and plan to enjoy the foods you like the best with that “salary.”
- Look for a main dish or sandwich that is grilled or broiled. Add vegetables when possible.
- Find a spot to sit down and eat, rather than graze your way from one end of the fair to the other. It is easy to overeat when wandering and not paying attention to what you are eating.
- Limit yourself to one treat. Choose reasonable serving sizes of lower sugar and lower fat items for the rest of your foods.
- Split foods among several people. For example, most large funnel cakes will probably serve four to six people. Share with others, so everyone gets a taste, and no one feels overloaded.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes so you are more likely to walk off some calories. Wear a pedometer and see how many steps you can take at the fair. One mile equals about 2,000 steps. Do not worry – the “fashion police” won’t be out checking to see if you wore those cute sandals that do really hurt your feet! It makes more sense to be comfortable.
- Lastly, if you do indulge a little too

much, remember to return to your balanced eating plan the next day. A day here and there of not following your healthy eating plan will not sabotage all your hard work up until this time. Weeks of it will, however! Eating 100 extra calories each day may result in a 10-pound weight gain yearly.

In conjunction with Iowa’s Healthiest State Initiative, Iowa State University and The Des Moines Register have developed a list of healthier State Fair food options. Check out the list at www.iowastatefair.org/fair-attractions/food/healthy-choices for foods available this year.

Walk off those midway munchies

The State Fair involves a lot of walking, so we’ll probably burn off all those extra fair food calories ... right??? Maybe, but you might be surprised to see how much physical activity or how many steps it really does take to walk off your favorite fair foods. Following are the approximate distances/steps we need to walk to burn off the calories of some popular midway foods:

- Caramel apple: 3 miles/6,000 steps
- Corn-on-the-cob: 1.5 miles/3,000
- Corn dog, large: 4.5 miles/9,000 steps
- Cotton candy: 1.5 miles/3,000 steps
- Fried candy bar on a stick: 4.5 miles/9,000 steps
- Funnel cake (6-inch diameter): 3 miles/6,000 steps
- Soft drink, regular (32 oz.): 2.5 miles/5,000 steps
- Sno-cone: 2.5 miles/5,000 steps
- Soft pretzel: 3 miles/6,000 steps
- Turkey leg (giant): 11.4 miles/22,800 steps



This month’s On the Light Side is written by registered dietitian Nancy Schive

Banana Cream Smoothie

This delicious smoothie is loaded with calcium to keep your bones and teeth strong. Mix up one of these to enjoy before you head to the fair.

Serves: 2 (1 cup/serving)

- 6 ice cubes
- 1 banana (sliced and frozen if possible)
- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup low-fat milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon flaxseeds, ground
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon, ground
- 1 tablespoon non-fat dry milk powder
- 2 tablespoons graham cracker crumbs (about 2 squares)

Instructions: Place ice cubes into blender and crush ice. Place remaining ingredients into blender, except for graham crackers. Blend until smooth. Pour into cups. Sprinkle with graham cracker crumbs and extra cinnamon (optional). Enjoy!

Nutrition facts per 1-cup serving: 210 calories; 4 g fat; 2 g saturated fat; 180 mg sodium; 32 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber.

