

To Eat or not to Eat: What do you do with Aircrew or Airline meals?

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2 Day Gift of Wellness: Effortless Weight Loss you can do Together

I'm writing this from two perspectives. First, as an international Boeing 777 Captain I have to deal with aircrew meals almost every day. As a business owner and author, I have to travel as a passenger regularly. One of the most common question I'm asked is how do you maintain your wellness, and thus your weight, while eating food on the road?

I live my life using the 8 principles from my book, *2 Day Gift of Wellness: Effortless Weight Loss Process You Can Do Together*. The two principles that apply directly to this dilemma are to

- 1) Eat when you are hungry and
- 2) Eat mindfully.

Only eating when you are hungry seems straight forward, but we often eat by triggers such as

I just got up, so it must be time for breakfast

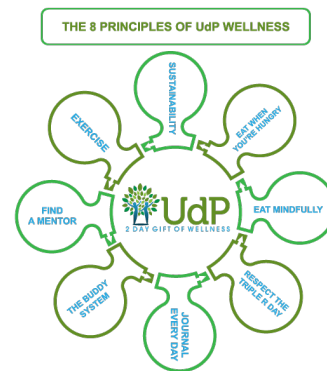
I always eat dinner at 6 pm

I eat because I'm stressed (comfort food)

I eat because it is available or free

I eat because I'm tired.

These are only a few reasons why we eat, but the only real reason to eat is because you are hungry. Simple, right? But how do you know if you are really hungry? There is a difference between *feeling* hungry and *being* hungry. If you pass by a shop with fresh baked cookies, for instance, you might feel hungry even though you just ate lunch. If you're paying attention, you'd realize you are not hungry, but you just want to eat (smelling good tasting food is often a trigger to eat when not hungry).



So, when you “feel” hungry, take a moment to decide if you really are hungry or just reacting to triggers. If you think it’s a trigger, wait a while. Maybe do something to distract you like, take a walk, read a book, or drink water. Check back with your body in 30 minutes or so and decide if you are really hungry. If you are - eat. After all the principle is *eat when you are hungry*.

Now that you know you are hungry, what do you eat? That’s a big issue when flying. You can’t just go to your refrigerator and grab something nutritious. Your choices in flight are what you can buy or what they are serving in 1st or business class (if your lucky). This is where eating mindfully comes in.

Each of us is unique. According to the Institute of Integrative Nutrition® (IIN), everyone’s’ body reacts differently to different foods. They call this *bio-individuality*. Allergies and allergic reactions are two obvious difference between people, but we also react differently on a cellular level as well.

Simply put, pay attention to food you crave and how the food you eat reacts with your body. Food should give you long-lasting energy. If you are tired after lunch, it might be the bread is causing you distress. The distress requires your digestive system to take blood from other areas to handle the sandwich you just ate. I suggest using a journal (another principle from the book) to keep track of food that makes you tired or upsets your stomach. Once you know the food you can eat, you need to decide what available food you should eat.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) releases a yearly list of foods you should avoid if not grown organically (Dirty Dozen) and food you can eat even if grown more conventionally. This is important because you have no idea the source of most processed foods and meals at restaurants or on airplanes. The dirty dozen was found to contain the most pesticides, even after washing several times.

EWG’s Dirty Dozen

- 1) Strawberries
- 2) Spinach
- 3) Nectarines
- 4) Apples
- 5) Peaches

- 6) Pears
- 7) Cherries
- 8) Grapes
- 9) Celery
- 10) Tomatoes
- 11) Sweet Bell Peppers
- 12) Potatoes

EWG's Clean 15

The Clean 15 list includes produce that is least likely to be contaminated by pesticides.

- 1) Organic Sweet Corn
- 2) Avocados
- 3) Pineapples
- 4) Cabbage
- 5) Onions
- 6) Frozen Sweet Peas
- 7) Papayas
- 8) Asparagus
- 9) Mangos
- 10) Eggplant
- 11) Honeydew
- 12) Kiwi
- 13) Cantaloupe
- 14) Cauliflower
- 15) Grapefruit

Looking at the list, a good rule of thumb is the thicker the peel, the more resistant to pesticides the fruit or vegetable is. The opposite is also correct, but add the closer to the ground (strawberries) the fruit or vegetable is, the more likely it will have pesticide residues.

So, when combing through your box lunch or dinners, eat, *if you are hungry*, from the clean 15 list and avoid the dirty dozen. Also, read the labels and look for hidden sugars. According to Coach Debra Thomas, an Integrative Holistic Nutritional Health Coach and author of *Feeding the Furnace, A Nutritional Approach to Healing THYROID DISEASE*, “There are over 65 different names for sugar, hidden in the ingredient list: anhydrous dextrose to xylitol to yellow sugar. Carbohydrates (refined starches like white flour, rice, cereals), also turn into simple sugars for the body to convert into glucose, which turns into fuel for our body.”



Coach Deb also recommends eating whole foods as much as practical. She defines whole foods as one food, such as an orange, chicken breast, etc. If you are eating from a box meal, look for food that has less than 5 whole foods as ingredients. When looking at the ingredients, ignore spices that are individually listed like ginger. Artificial flavors and GMO are never part of a whole food choice. Avoid any food that has “sugar” added in any of it’s forms. Finally, try to eat only meat that says “organic” and “pasture raised.” When your choice is limited by flying, just do the best you can. You still have to eat when hungry.

What I do? I carry food from my pantry and refrigerator, such as hard-boiled eggs and tuna packed in water (for emergencies). I also select food on layovers to refill my small insulated lunch bag. I also check the airport’s webpage for great places to eat on short turns. Most airports feature healthy living food choices.

Remember, eat (only) when you are hungry and eat mindfully. Be sure to keep the EWG’s list of clean foods to eat and the dirty dozen. Make sure you read food labels and look for hidden sugars and carbohydrates (that turn to sugar). Finally, if you can, choose organic, non-GMO foods.

Happy Flying!