

HEALTH YOURSELF ✱ A PHYSICIAN'S GUIDE

Your
**Restaurant
Playbook**

*Order with confidence, stay on track,
and still love every meal.*



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You're Not Here to Shrink

Read this first — it's the foundation everything else in this guide is built on.

Let me clear something up before we start looking at menus. The way you eat shouldn't be a set of rules to make you smaller, and it shouldn't be about earning your place at the table by being "good." You are not trying to disappear. You're trying to **build** — to trade the fat you're carrying for lean, powerful muscle, and to keep that trade going for years.

That reframe matters, because it flips the whole restaurant experience. When you look at food as a punishment or a reward, every meal out becomes a loaded decision — a test of willpower instead of a pleasure. When food is a **tool** — the raw material your body uses to grow stronger — a restaurant stops being a minefield and becomes just another place you get to use that tool well.

The goal isn't less. The goal is strong.

Every time you sit down to eat, you're either feeding muscle or you're not. That's the only question that actually matters — not whether the meal was "clean," and not whether you were disciplined enough to deserve it.

So no, we're not chasing a number on the scale or squeezing into someone else's idea of how a woman should look. We're after something you can feel: a body that's lean where it counts, strong enough to carry the groceries and the grandkids and the last thirty years of your life without a second thought.

And here's the part most diet advice gets backward — enjoying your food is not the enemy of that goal. Pleasure and progress are not mutually exclusive. You can order something delicious, laugh through a two-hour dinner, have the glass of wine, and still walk out having fed the exact body you're working on building. This guide shows you how.

This was never about shrinking. We eat to build the body that lets us keep doing everything we love.

Every Meal Is a Building Opportunity

Why muscle is the whole point — and why the fork is one of your best tools for growing it.

If we're going to "use food as a tool," it's fair to ask: a tool for *what*, exactly? The answer is building muscle — and muscle is worth so much more than how it makes you look in a dress.

Muscle is your metabolic engine: the more of it you carry, the more energy your body burns around the clock, which is what makes fat loss finally feel sustainable instead of like a war of willpower. It's your blood-sugar buffer, your protection against the falls and fragility that steal independence later in life, and, quite literally, the organ most associated with living longer and better. This is what I mean when I say **muscle is medicine**.

You can only build muscle from what you give your body.

Strength training sends the *signal* to grow. But protein is the actual raw material — the bricks. Train hard and under-eat protein, and you've mailed the blueprints with no lumber on the truck. Restaurants are simply another chance to deliver the bricks.

That's why we don't treat a meal out as time off from your goals. A dinner with 40 grams of protein in it did real work — it handed your body the material to repair and build. That's not "being good." That's using the meal to build something.

So as you read the rest of this playbook, hold one simple lens over every menu:

- 1 Protein is the priority, always.** It's the one thing your body can't build muscle without, and the one thing restaurant meals most often skimp on. Find it first.
- 2 Roughly 30–40g per meal is the target.** That's the amount that meaningfully switches on muscle repair — and it's very reachable at almost any restaurant once you know where to look.
- 3 Everything else is negotiable.** Carbs, fats, the fun stuff — you get to make an intentional decision about how much you have. Protein is the anchor; the rest is yours to decide.

The Order-Anywhere Method

Four moves that work at any restaurant — so you never feel lost again.

Every menu looks different, but you don't have to figure each one out from scratch. You need one repeatable process you can run anywhere, from the drive-thru to a white-tablecloth steakhouse. It starts before you even leave the house.

Pro move: eat before you eat.

A small protein snack 30–60 minutes before you go — Greek yogurt, a couple of hard-boiled eggs, string cheese, or a protein shake — does three things at once: you arrive calm instead of ravenous, you're already partway to your daily protein goal, and you spend less at the restaurant because you're not ordering with your stomach in charge. Then run these four moves.

1 Decide before you're hungry

Look at the menu online before you get there, and choose before you're starving and smelling everything at once. **The decision is easy in "goals mode" and nearly impossible in "I'm-starving-and-I-need-all-of-it" mode.**

2 Anchor the plate

Scan for the protein first and build your whole order around it. Grilled chicken, steak, fish, shrimp, eggs, tofu. Ask yourself, **"Where are my 30–40 grams coming from?"** Answer that before you look at anything else, and most of the work is done.

3 Add color, swap the density

Round the plate out with vegetables or a salad — volume and fiber that fill you up for very few calories. Then make one easy swap: trade the fries or heavy starch for veggies, a side salad, or fruit. **You're not removing food; you're upgrading it.**

4 Spend your extras with intention

Bread basket, cocktail, dessert — these aren't forbidden, they're budgeted. Pick the one or two that are truly worth it *tonight* and let the rest go without a second thought. **Choosing with intention feels like freedom; grabbing everything on autopilot feels like regret.**

The Drive-Thru, In Control

Yes, even here. Watch me walk the menu — exactly what I'd order, and what's running through my head.

McDonald's

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Egg McMuffin** (breakfast) or a **McDouble** / **Quarter Pounder** — skip the fries, get a bottled water or black coffee. **~17–30g protein**

***My thinking:** The Egg McMuffin is a genuinely solid ~300-calorie, 17g-protein breakfast. Later in the day I'd anchor on the beef patties themselves — a McDouble is ~22g of protein. The fries and the soda are where the real calories hide, so those are the easy pass.*

Chick-fil-A

DRIVE-THRU

★ **12-ct grilled nuggets** + fruit or side salad; grilled chicken sandwich if I want the bread. **~38g protein, ~200 cal (nuggets)**

***My thinking:** The grilled nuggets are one of the best protein-to-calorie deals in all of fast food — nearly 40g for around 200 calories. I'd swap waffle fries for fruit or a side salad, and reach for grilled over fried every time.*

Wendy's

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Grilled Chicken Sandwich** or a **large chili** (or both) — skip the fries and the Frosty-by-default. **~24–35g protein**

***My thinking:** Wendy's chili is a sleeper — real protein and fiber, around 24g in a large for very few calories. The grilled chicken sandwich is a clean ~35g. Pair either one with a side salad and that's a genuinely great meal at a drive-thru.*

Taco Bell

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Cantina Chicken Bowl** or **Power Menu Bowl**, or grilled chicken soft tacos ordered **"fresco style."** **~26g protein**

***My thinking:** I'd go straight to the grilled-chicken bowls and load the beans — that's where the protein is. "Fresco style" swaps cheese and sauce for pico, trimming calories with one word. The nachos and quesadillas are the trap; I'd let them go.*

Protein and calorie figures are approximate and vary by location, portion, and preparation. Use them as a guide, not a precise count.

More Windows, More Wins

Four more of the country's busiest drive-thrus — and the order I'd pull up to each one with.

Burger King

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Flame-grilled Whopper, hold the mayo** (or a double cheeseburger) — no fries, water to drink.
~28g protein

***My thinking:** The beef is flame-grilled, so I'd anchor there and pull one lever — holding the mayo drops roughly 150 calories right there. Add extra lettuce, tomato, and onion for volume (fiber equals fullness). The combo fries and soda are what I'd skip.*

In-N-Out

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Double-Double "Protein Style"** (wrapped in lettuce instead of a bun), light or no spread.
~33g protein

***My thinking:** "Protein style" is the only secret menu you need — two patties, wrapped in lettuce, is ~33g of protein and skips the bun entirely. I'd order the spread light, and I'd know before I pull up that I'm not adding fries and a shake.*

Arby's

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Classic Roast Beef or Roast Turkey** — a double-meat if I'm hungry, skip the curly fries and shakes. ~23g+ protein

***My thinking:** Roast beef and turkey are leaner picks than most fried fast food, around 23g of protein each. Doubling the meat is the upgrade; the Market Fresh wraps and salads work too. I'd steer clear of the fried sides and the massive milkshakes.*

Popeyes / KFC

DRIVE-THRU

★ **Popeyes Blackened Chicken Tenders** (not fried) or KFC **grilled chicken** / breast with the skin removed. ~22–38g protein

***My thinking:** Popeyes' blackened tenders are the hidden gem — grilled, not battered, about 22g of protein for three at very low calories. At KFC I'd pick grilled where it's offered, or peel the breading off original recipe. For sides, I'd choose green beans over the biscuits and the mashed potatoes with gravy.*

Menus vary by location — not every item is available everywhere. When in doubt: grilled over fried, hold the mayo or spread, and skip the default fries-and-soda combo.

Grab-and-Go, Done Right

The quick, walk-up spots where a few easy notes turn a light meal into a protein powerhouse.

Chipotle

FAST CASUAL

★ **Chicken bowl** — double chicken, brown rice (or half), black beans, fajita veggies, salsa, lettuce. Guac if it's worth it today. **~45–55g protein**

***My thinking:** Chipotle is a protein goldmine, so I'd anchor hard — double chicken adds serious protein for a few dollars. Beans stack more protein and fiber. I'd skip the free chips-and-queso reflex; if I want the guac, that's my chosen "extra" and the chips aren't.*

Subway

FAST CASUAL

★ **Rotisserie chicken or oven-roasted turkey** — ask them to **double the meat**, load every veggie, on wheat, skip the cheese-and-mayo pile. **~35–45g protein (doubled)**

***My thinking:** A standard sub is light on protein, so "double the meat" is my magic phrase — it's the single best upgrade on the menu. Veggies pile on volume and fiber for free. I'd get my flavor from mustard, vinegar, and peppers instead of creamy sauces.*

Panera

FAST CASUAL

★ **A protein bowl or double-protein salad** (chicken or the teriyaki/Mediterranean bowls), broth-based soup instead of a bread bowl. **~30–40g protein**

***My thinking:** Panera can slip in a lot of carbs under a "healthy" label — a bread bowl is 40g of carbs not even counting the soup. I'd choose a protein bowl or add chicken to a salad, pick a broth-based soup, and treat the baguette as an optional extra, not a default.*

The single best move at all three: at any build-your-own counter, say **"double the protein."** It's usually a couple of dollars, it's the biggest upgrade you can make, and it turns a snack-sized order into a meal that actually feeds muscle.

Date Night, Dialed In

The big sit-down favorites — the order I'd go with and the one thought that keeps me on track.

Cheesecake Factory

CASUAL DINING

★ **A SkinnyLicious grilled dish or salad** (ask for extra protein) — loaded with fiber and micronutrients — or grilled salmon/chicken with a double side of veggies. Box half the moment it arrives. **35g+ protein**

***My thinking:** Portions here are enormous — the trick isn't willpower, it's logistics. I'd anchor on a grilled protein, ask for veggies in place of the fries or pasta side, and box half immediately so "stop at satisfied" happens automatically.*

Olive Garden

ITALIAN

★ **Herb-Grilled Salmon or Chicken Margherita** with the side of vegetables. One breadstick, eaten slowly and enjoyed fully. **35–40g protein**

***My thinking:** The endless breadsticks and pasta are a full-on calorie avalanche. I'd go straight to the grilled entrées most people scroll past, swap the pasta side for veggies, and if I want a breadstick I'd have one and enjoy it — not the bottomless basket.*

Texas Roadhouse

STEAKHOUSE

★ **A reasonably sized sirloin** (6–8 oz) or grilled chicken + steamed veggies and a plain baked potato. **40g+ protein**

***My thinking:** A steakhouse is easy mode for protein — I'd just pick a sensible size. I'd take the veggies and baked potato over loaded sides, and I'd let the server take the warm rolls away before they become a mindless 400 calories that fill you up before you've touched your protein.*

Outback Steakhouse

STEAKHOUSE

★ **Victoria's Filet or grilled salmon** with fresh steamed veggies and a side salad. Skip the Bloomin' Onion & bread. **40g+ protein**

***My thinking:** A lean cut of steak or salmon is a protein home run. The Bloomin' Onion alone can run over 1,500 calories before dinner even arrives, so that's an easy no. Steamed veggies and a salad round it out without a heavy, loaded side.*

Menu items and nutrition vary by location and season. The three swaps that work almost everywhere: grilled over fried, sauces on the side, and veggies in place of heavy starches.

More Tables, Still on Track

Four more crowd favorites — proof you can order confidently anywhere your friends want to go.

Applebee's

CASUAL DINING

★ **A grilled chicken or Cedar-grilled salmon** from the lighter-fare menu, with extra steamed veggies. **35g+ protein**

***My thinking:** Applebee's actually flags its lighter grilled plates, so the work is half done. I'd anchor on the grilled protein, ask for double veggies instead of fries, and skip the fried appetizer sampler that's easy to graze on before the meal.*

Chili's

CASUAL DINING

★ **Fajitas with extra chicken, steak, or shrimp** (skip most tortillas) or the margarita grilled chicken. **40g+ protein**

***My thinking:** Fajitas are a protein dream — I'd ask for extra protein and pile my plate with the peppers, onions, and toppings instead of filling up on three tortillas. The skillet keeps it hot and fun, and I'd decide on the chips-and-queso before it shows up, not after.*

Red Lobster

SEAFOOD

★ **Wood-grilled salmon, shrimp, or a seafood trio** — broiled or grilled, not fried — with broccoli or a salad. **35–45g protein**

***My thinking:** Seafood is lean, high-protein, and easy to love — I'd just make sure it's grilled or broiled, not battered and fried. The Cheddar Bay biscuits are the real trap here; I'd decide on one up front, or let the basket go entirely.*

Buffalo Wild Wings

SPORTS BAR

★ **Traditional (bone-in) wings with a dry rub**, or grilled chicken — carrots & celery over fries. **35g+ protein**

***My thinking:** Traditional wings are grilled-then-baked and higher in protein than the breaded boneless "wings," which are really fried nuggets. I'd pick a dry rub or sauce on the side, take the veggie sticks over fries, and pace the beers with water.*

Portions at sit-down chains run large — boxing half at the start is one of the simplest, most reliable moves in this whole guide.

The Cuisine Cheat Sheet

No matter what kind of restaurant you walk into — here's where the protein lives and what to ease off.

Mexican

REACH FOR

Fajitas (extra protein), grilled chicken or carne asada, black beans, fresh salsa & pico, a bowl over a burrito.

EASE OFF

Bottomless chips, cheese-smothered combo platters, fried chimichangas, sugary margaritas.

Italian

REACH FOR

Grilled chicken, fish, or shrimp; chicken piccata; a protein with a side of pasta; salad with grilled protein added.

EASE OFF

The bread basket, cream/Alfredo sauces, giant pasta mains, breaded-and-fried parm dishes.

Sushi & Japanese

REACH FOR

Sashimi, edamame, seared salmon or tuna, teriyaki or hibachi chicken/steak, miso soup, seaweed salad.

EASE OFF

Tempura and "crunchy" fried rolls, spicy-mayo drizzles, heaps of white rice, sugary sauces.

Steakhouse

REACH FOR

A reasonably sized filet or sirloin, grilled fish, shrimp cocktail to start, steamed veggies, plain baked potato.

EASE OFF

Bread service, loaded/au gratin sides, creamed spinach swimming in butter, oversized cuts.

Thai & Other Asian

REACH FOR

Larb, grilled satay, tom yum soup, steamed or stir-fried protein with lots of veggies, brown rice on the side.

EASE OFF

Pad thai and noodle mountains, coconut-cream curries in big portions, crispy fried apps, mango sticky rice (unless it's your chosen treat).

American & Pub

REACH FOR

Grilled chicken, a burger patty (lettuce-wrapped or open-faced), grilled fish, big salads with protein, a side of veggies.

EASE OFF

Baskets of fries and wings as a "starter," milkshake-thick sauces, buns you didn't actually want.

The universal three swaps: grilled instead of fried, sauce & dressing on the side, and vegetables in place of the heavy starch. Say those three things anywhere and you're most of the way home.

The Glass in Your Hand

Where the calories hide — and how to enjoy a drink without undoing the meal.

Drinks are the most common blind spot at a restaurant, because we count what's on the plate and forget what's in the glass. A little strategy here lets you keep the ritual — the coffee, the cocktail — without the hidden cost.

Starbucks & Coffee Shops

COFFEE

★ **Nonfat or protein-milk latte, americano, or cold brew** with a splash of milk — and the **Egg White & Roasted Red Pepper Bites** for a real protein snack. **Bites ~12g protein, ~170 cal**

***My thinking:** A plain latte or americano is nearly free, calorie-wise. The sugar bombs are the flavored, whipped, syrup-heavy drinks — those are dessert, so I'd treat them like one. The egg bites turn a coffee run into a genuine protein hit.*

The alcohol reality, minus the lecture.

No guilt trip — just a few things worth knowing: alcohol makes fat loss harder, makes building muscle harder, disrupts your sleep, and piles on calories with zero nutrition. That doesn't mean never — it just means with intention.

- 1 **Pick lean pours.** A glass of wine, champagne, or a spirit with soda and lime runs roughly 100–120 calories. Sugary margaritas, daiquiris, and creamy drinks can hit 300–500+ each.
- 2 **Decide your number before the first sip.** "I'm having one, and I'll sip it slowly" is a decision made in goals mode. Ordering round by round lets the last drink make the next decision for you.
- 3 **Bookend with water.** A glass of water between drinks paces you, keeps you hydrated, and keeps the count honest.
- 4 **Protein first, alcohol second.** Eat your protein-anchored meal before or alongside — you'll feel the drink less and be far less likely to raid the bread basket.

You can absolutely enjoy a drink without drifting from your goals — it just has to be intentional and controlled.

Take a Walk

The five-minute habit that keeps working long after you leave the table.

The meal isn't your last move of the night. A short walk afterward — even five or ten minutes — pays off in more ways than most people ever realize.

- 1 **Sends fuel to your muscles.** Walking after you eat puts some of the carbs from your meal to work — they head straight into your muscles for energy to power the walk, instead of the excess getting stored as fat.
- 2 **Easier digestion.** Gentle movement helps everything move along, so you feel light and comfortable instead of heavy and overly full.
- 3 **More steps, more movement.** Those extra minutes add to your daily activity (your NEAT) — the steady, all-day calorie burn that adds up to far more than most people expect.
- 4 **More of the best part.** A stroll stretches out the fun, social side of the evening — fresh air, good conversation, and a little more time with the people you're with.

If a meal doesn't go as planned

Sometimes it won't — you'll overdo it, or order something you wish you hadn't, or walk away feeling like you were "bad." Let it go. One meal off track can't erase your progress any more than one perfect meal creates it. **You didn't ruin anything. You're a strong woman who had a nice meal — and tomorrow you build again.**

Before You Walk In

The whole playbook on one page. Glance at this while you're getting ready to head out.

Run these moves, in order

- ☐ **Eat before I eat.** A protein snack before I head out.
- ☐ **Decide before I'm hungry.** Check the menu online before I arrive.
- ☐ **Anchor the plate.** Find my 30–40g of protein first.
- ☐ **Add color, swap the density.** Load the veggies; lighten the starch.
- ☐ **Spend my extras with intention.** Pick the one or two treats worth it.
- ☐ **Walk it off.** At least a 5-minute walk after the meal.

Three sentences that work anywhere

“Can I get that grilled instead of fried?” • “Dressing and sauce on the side, please.” • “Could I swap the fries for veggies or a side salad?”

And when it *is* a special occasion — a birthday, an anniversary, the once-in-a-while meal you've genuinely been looking forward to — decide that ahead of time, order exactly what you want, eat it slowly, and enjoy every bite without a shred of guilt. One deliberate meal never undid anyone's progress. What actually shapes your results is how you eat at the everyday meals — not the rare celebration.

*Staying on track while eating out is a skill — one you build through practice.
The more you run the play, the more natural it feels, until ordering in a way
that's aligned with your goals becomes your default.*

***Eating out isn't a detour from
your goals. It's a chance to
practice them.***

You now have a process you can run at any table, in any restaurant, for the rest of your life — without white-knuckling it, and without giving up the meals you love.

That's not a diet. That's freedom with a plan.

Try it once this week. Pick the restaurant, anchor your protein, choose your extras with intention — and notice how good it feels to leave satisfied and proud.

You've got this.

Ready to put the whole picture together — protein, strength training, and the habits that turn "on track" into effortless? That's exactly what my program

Your Metabolic Reboot is built to do.

Get it at rachelfelber.com/book

Want a plan built just for you? In **The Strategy Session**, we map out your personal strength & nutrition strategy in a 1:1 video consult — so you know exactly what to do next. [Book your Strategy Session](#)

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