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TOP QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANT CHOICES FOR SWIMMERS

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Last year I posted information on healthy choices at fast food restaurants. While many think healthy eating and dining out are not compatible, there are more healthy options than ever before at restaurants.

Many of you wrote to me and wanted more healthy options at several quick service restaurants. The top restaurants you asked about were: Olive Garden, Chipotle, Panda Express and Panera Bread.

To be sure, there are many high calorie, high fat and high sodium choices at all of these restaurants.

Another challenge is the “all you can eat” options, so portion sizes are important.

To stay updated on the healthy choices, don't forget that most quick service restaurants have informative websites with posted menus that highlight the better-for-you choices. The choices highlighted below meet the needs of active swimmers: quality carbs and protein, and rich in vitamins and minerals. Beverage choice? Water, of course!

1. Olive Garden: If you are in the mood for an appetizer, try the stuffed mushrooms or Portobello & goat cheese flatbread. For those breadsticks, dip in marinara instead of Alfredo sauce. There many healthy entrees, including garlic rosemary chicken, Venetian apricot chicken, herb-grilled salmon, linguine ala marinara (add grilled chicken or shrimp to boost the protein), lasagna classico, spaghetti with meat sauce, or cheese ravioli with marinara. All of these dishes provide protein and carbs to refuel a swimmer without blowing an entire day (or days) worth of calories. For more on nutrition of all menu items check out their [website](#).
2. Chipotle: They tout that they serve “food with integrity,” but it can still be high in fat and calories depending on the choices you make. Stick to fresh tomato, roasted chili-corn, and red or green tomatillo chili salsa for chips or entrees to add a vitamin-mineral-rich topping. Try a burrito bowl with chicken or steak and add black or pinto beans along with fajita veggies for a hearty meal. If you like tacos, pick the crispy or soft corn tortillas. Have fun with their [nutrition calculator](#).
3. Panda Express: Quick, delicious and fast Chinese food is possible by choosing from the “Wok Smart” menu. Hot and sour soup, Golden Treasure shrimp, broccoli beef, Kobari beef, black pepper chicken, mushroom chicken, and string bean chicken are all good choices. Opt for steamed or brown rice instead of fried rice. For more info go to their [website](#).
4. Panera Bread: What swimmer doesn't want power? Panera has a whole “power” line from breakfast sandwiches (like “Power breakfast egg bowl with steak”) to lunch and dinner items. Power steak lettuce wraps and Mediterranean roasted turkey are nice additions to other healthy choices on their menu. All of the nutrition information can be found [here](#).

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