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HUFFPOST HEALTHY LIVING

How Nutrition Pros Cheat -- And Get Away With It

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Can you cheat on your diet and still [lose weight](#) or maintain a healthy weight? Nutrition professionals say "yes," and we frequently cheat, ourselves.

One of the major less-than-healthy habits I've seen among overweight clients is an all-or-nothing diet mentality. They swear off certain foods and have lots of rules about what they can and can't eat. They don't allow room for error -- if they slip up, they give up!

In reality, we all love certain foods that aren't particularly healthy. I love Swedish Fish (yes, I just admitted that!), and given pretty much any chance to eat 'em, I will. However, I've found ways to fit in my sugary fish fix without derailing my diet: I buy a small amount on the weekends and eat them on weekends only.

Here's what 10 other top nutrition pros indulge on and how they fit these less-than-healthy treats in their diet, guilt-free!

[Katherine Brooking, MS, RD](#), co-author of *The Real Skinny: Appetite for Health's 101 Fat Habits & Slim Solutions*:

What: "Skinny Cow Dreamy Clusters or Homemade Chocolate Pudding"

How Often: "Two to three times a week."

How It Fits: "I [exercise](#) every day and walk everywhere, but the Dreamy Cluster have only 120 calories per pouch and I make my chocolate pudding with skim milk, so I really don't have to do anything special to enjoy them."

[Patricia Bannan, MS, RD](#), author of *Eat Right when Time is Tight*:

What: "My favorite cheat food is high-quality dark chocolate. When it comes to dessert, I will go for anything chocolate."

How Often: "I'll have a few pieces of dark chocolate (about half an ounce) a couple times a week and will share a chocolate dessert when eating out about once a month."

How it Fits: "I exercise a few times a week (boot camp, spinning and yoga), so I think it all balances out."

[Amy Jamieson-Petonic, RD](#), Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Spokesperson:

What: "Frozen yogurt."

How Often: "Once or twice a month."

How It Fits: "I go for a small size and I don't put topping on it. I do practice moderation and I avoid the idea of deprivation."

[Regina Ragone, MS, RD, Food Director](#), [Family Circle Magazine](#):

What: "Really great bread -- Italian, French or any kind of artisan raisin nut bread."

How Often: "I used to think that I didn't have to restrict bread, but I realized if I eat it too much, I gain weight. I indulge every few weeks and I don't really compensate. I feel like I watch myself most of the time so if I want to indulge I won't really "pay" for it."

How It Fits: "I try to walk as much as I can during the day and exercise regularly and I try to not [overeat](#)."

Melinda Johnson, MS, RD, lecturer/director, Didactic Program in Dietetics at Arizona State University; registered dietitian and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

What: "While I don't really have an absolute favorite treat, I do like my sweets! So, I would consider a gooey brownie or a cookie dough ice cream a favorite treat. However, I also sometimes really love something salty and crunchy, like flavored tortilla chips."

How Often? "I try to live by the 90:10 ratio -- that is, if about 90 percent of the foods I eat in a day are relatively healthy, I can "treat" myself with about 10 percent. I try to save my 10 percent for something I really enjoy."

How It Fits: "I like to maintain balance in my eating, so I tend to naturally veer back towards a healthier option at the next eating occasion, just to balance things out. I also make sure I stop and enjoy my food, especially when it is an indulgence -- that way, I am satisfied with much less, simply because I'm paying attention to how good it tastes."

[Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD](#), author of *S.A.S! Yourself Slim: Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds and Lose Inches*:

What: "French fries, but I'm picky -- to be worth it, they have to be fresh, whole, hand-cut potatoes (preferably skin-on), cooked in peanut or olive oil."

How often: "Maybe once a month."

How It Fits: "Since French fries are basically starch and fat, I don't eat other starches or fat at the same meal. Instead I'll pair them with non-starchy veggies and lean protein to create some balance. This kind of combo leaves me feeling satisfied, but not stuffed or sluggish afterwards."

[Elisa Zied, MS, RDN, CDN](#), registered dietitian and author:

What: "Burger and fries."

How Often: "I'll have this every couple of months."

How It Fits: "I don't eat a full order. Instead, I'll have half of the burger and half of the fries. I enjoy them guilt-free and make sure to scale back on fatty and salty foods for a day or two. For example, I'll eat Shredded Wheat for breakfast and have more fruits and veggies during the day."

[Jackie Newgent, RDN](#), culinary nutritionist and author of *1,000 Low-Calorie Recipes*:

What: "Homemade, organic chocolate milkshake."

How Often: "Two times a month."

How It Fits: "I plan for it by wearing my pedometer and walking at least 10,000 steps specifically before I indulge."

Jessica Crandall, MS, RD, registered dietitian nutritionist and national spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

What: "Ice cream."

How Often: "As long as it fits within my calorie budget, I have no reservations."

How It Fits: "I maintain a pretty intense exercise regime so it's easy for me to enjoy these types of healthy indulgences."

[Keri Gans, MS, RDN, CDN](#), author, *The Small Change Diet*:

What: "French fries."

How Often: "I eat them two to three times a month."

How It Fits: "I eat them for dinner with scrambled egg whites made with tomato and broccoli and I'll skip whole wheat toast."

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