

SHAPE

Indulge Like A Nutritionist!



By Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD

The other day, someone who doesn't know me very well said, "You probably never eat chocolate." It's funny, because in [my newest book](#) I devoted an entire chapter to [dark chocolate](#) and recommend eating it every single day (which I do myself). But I know what she meant. Sometimes people think that nutritionists don't celebrate food the way chefs do, but when I think about my RD friends, women with whom I've shared many meals (and [glasses of wine](#)), I know that they don't deprive themselves, and neither do I.

In my everyday life, food choices are always about feeling both satisfied and energized after a meal, and sometimes in order to feel satisfied, you just have to have your "can't-live-without" favorites. The key is enjoying them in a way that feels good. In other words, it doesn't feel good to deny yourself and struggle with cravings that linger, and it doesn't feel good to overindulge and wind up stuffed and [sluggish](#). To strike the right balance, it's all about making little adjustments that allow you to have your cake and eat it too.

So I asked some of my nutritionist friends about their favorite indulgences and how they enjoy them in a healthy way. Here's what they said:

"Mine is a "real" chocolate milkshake! I make it myself so I can select 100% organic ingredients, serve it an old-fashioned milkshake glass, and build an extra long walk into my day."

-Jackie Newgent, RD, culinary nutritionist and healthy cooking instructor at the Institute of Culinary Education, New York, N.Y.

"Flourless chocolate cake is my #1 splurge food. If I order it, I'll split it with someone (or the whole table) and forgo the bread. My exercise routine is pretty consistent, so a few bites of decadent cake can be enjoyed, guilt-free."

-Patricia Bannan, MS, RD, author of *Eat Right When Time is Tight*, Los Angeles, Calif.

"Mine would definitely be ice cream. I often order a kids' size and savor every spoonful."

-Mitzi Dulan, RD, owner of Mitzi Dulan's Boot Camp for Women in Kansas City, Mo.

"French fries, but I don't waste my time on so-so ones...only really good ones that I know will satisfy my craving are worth the splurge. I also pretty much always share, preferably with my husband, who eats faster than me - that way I get my fry fix without overdoing it."

-Rachel Meltzer Warren, MS, RD, private practice nutritionist, New York, N.Y.

"Definitely chocolate! I budget by eating a little less carbs at a meal if I'm going to have chocolate for dessert."

-Tara Gidus, MS, RD, author of *Pregnancy Cooking and Nutrition for Dummies*, Orlando, Fla.

For me it's also French fries, but like Rachel I'm very particular – they have to be hand cut from fresh, whole potatoes, preferably with the skin on, cooked in a pure oil, like olive or peanut. Since fries are starchy and cooked in plant based fat, I don't eat other grains or fats with them, and I always pair them with veggies and lean protein, like grilled [veggie and tofu kabobs](#). The balanced combo gives me what I call the 'Goldilocks effect' - it's just right.

So yup, nutritionists do splurge, but they don't [obsess](#) – instead of seeing food as 'all or nothing' or 'black and white' or it's about finding the 'some' or 'sometimes' and 'gray,' which it's a much healthier and sane place to be (and a much easier way to control your weight)!

What's your favorite splurge and how do you enjoy it in a healthy way? Tweet me at [@cynthiasass](#) and [@Shape Magazine](#).



[Cynthia Sass](#) is a registered dietitian with master's degrees in both nutrition science and public health. Frequently seen on national TV she's a SHAPE contributing editor and nutrition consultant to the New York Rangers and Tampa Bay Rays. Her latest New York Times best seller is [Cinch! Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds and Lose Inches](#).

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