

The IBD Guide To Eating Out

© I Be a foodie 2012



 <http://www.facebook.com/ibeafodie>

 <http://www.twitter.com/ibeafodie>

 ibeafodie@gmail.com

 <http://www.ibeafodie.wordpress.com>

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Indian.....	5
Japanese.....	6
Thai.....	8
Chinese.....	9
American.....	11
Mexican/Tex-Mex.....	12
Italian.....	13
Greek.....	14
Vietnamese.....	15
Korean.....	16
Middle Eastern.....	17



Introduction

The average American eats out several times a week, and those with IBD often have a more difficult time choosing IBD-safe foods at restaurants or even finding a restaurant that meets their dietary needs. In creating the guide, we wanted to provide the “average” IBDer with some practical knowledge of many cuisines, and to give tips on how to navigate a menu and order food when dining and exploring various cuisines. We hope the guide will become a tool for you, to help you make smarter choices. We also plan to expand it in the future to include additional information (by no means is this guide an exhaustive review of each cuisine!).

The guide includes a range of grades ranging from A+ to an F for each of the cuisines. We based our grading system on the following 5 factors:

- 1) The food itself
- 2) The variety of food offered that is generally IBD-friendly
- 3) The willingness of the chefs to modify dishes to meet certain needs
- 4) The knowledge of the serving staff
- 5) The nutritional benefits of the cuisine

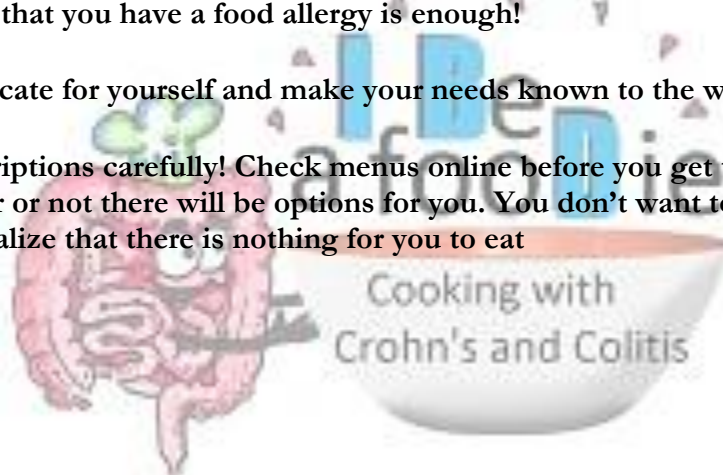
We did not use a sophisticated scoring system with percentages, standard deviations, or anything remotely resembling a math equation. We just used our plain-old noggins to reflect on how each of the five factors contributes to an IBDer’s overall experience at each particular cuisine.

As we always emphasize, IBD is very individualized; what works for some does not work for others. You might want to try to keep a food journal and see if certain foods affect your symptoms to better judge which restaurants and cuisines work for you.

***Disclaimer: Many of these cuisines have been Americanized, and the description provided for each cuisine is the Americanized version. Also, the tips contained in this document are for someone who follows a low residue diet – they cannot be generalized to the entire IBD population. ***

GENERAL RESTAURANT GUIDELINES FOR LIVING WITH IBD AND EATING OUT:

- Watch out for hidden fat. Look for simply steamed or broiled seafood, or grilled chicken
- Ask for all sauces on the side
- Divide the food on your plate in half and eat slowly. Make it a rule to always leave the other half of your food to take home to avoid overeating, which can trigger a flare-up
- Ask the server if you're not sure about an item. Do not be afraid to make special requests. Don't be afraid to tell the server that you have food allergies (when asking for a modification to a dish). For example, when placing an order for sushi without sesame seeds, Marina always tells her waiter that she is allergic to the seeds. By doing so, she avoids further questioning and the waiter will understand the importance of making sure that her dish comes without seeds. You don't want to get into the details of why you really can and cannot eat certain foods when ordering at a restaurant. Saying that you have a food allergy is enough!
- Make sure to advocate for yourself and make your needs known to the waiter
- Check menu descriptions carefully! Check menus online before you get to a restaurant to determine whether or not there will be options for you. You don't want to get to a restaurant, sit down, and then realize that there is nothing for you to eat



INDIAN

Grade: B

Indian cuisine can be tricky for IBDers because everyone reacts differently to different amounts of spicy food and different fats/oils. Indian food includes lots of spices; some of the frequently used spices are chili peppers, cumin, turmeric, fenugreek, ginger, coriander, garlic, and black mustard seed. One popular spice mix is garam masala, a powder that typically includes five or more dried spices. Before ordering a dish, ask the server what spices the dish contains to be sure that you aren't setting yourself up for disaster. Don't be afraid to ask the server questions – they are supposed to know the menu front and back and are there to make sure that you have a positive dining experience.

Most of the Indian food served in the U.S. is North Indian cuisine, which is generally less spicy than South Indian cuisine. North Indian cuisine uses a lot of yogurt, cream, and is often non-vegetarian. Tandoori chicken and naan are typical of North Indian cuisine.¹ Many of the Indian dishes served in the U.S. are creamy/saucy, which can mean lots of oil or butter. Most Indian curries are cooked in vegetable oils, but peanut oil, coconut oil, sesame oil and butter-based ghee are used frequently.

Only a few Indian dishes are dairy, which is helpful because many IBD sufferers are lactose intolerant or have a dairy sensitivity. The most commonly found dairy food is paneer, a fresh curd cheese made by curdling heated milk with lemon juice or other food acid.²

Rice biryanis are usually safe options because they are rice-based, and include spices and sometimes even meat, eggs and vegetables. If the biryani comes with peas or lots of spices, you can ask the server to modify the dish to your liking.

Luckily, there are lots of vegetarian options if you do not eat meat. Palak Paneer (farmer's cheese in a thick curry sauce based on pureed spinach) is a popular vegetarian dish, as well as Aloo Gobi (potatoes and cauliflower).

We love Indian food because of the spice, and often that the food is so well-cooked that it is almost the consistency of baby-food, and therefore is easier to digest. We do make sure that the dishes never come with peas and not to order the whole wheat naan.

Also, be careful with the appetizers when eating Indian food. At many restaurants the server may bring a cracker-like bread while you are waiting for your meal with many different kinds of dips. This flat unleavened bread is known as roti, and it sometimes has whole cumin seeds. If you are sensitive to seeds, avoid the "bread" in its entirety. Your food will be worth the wait.

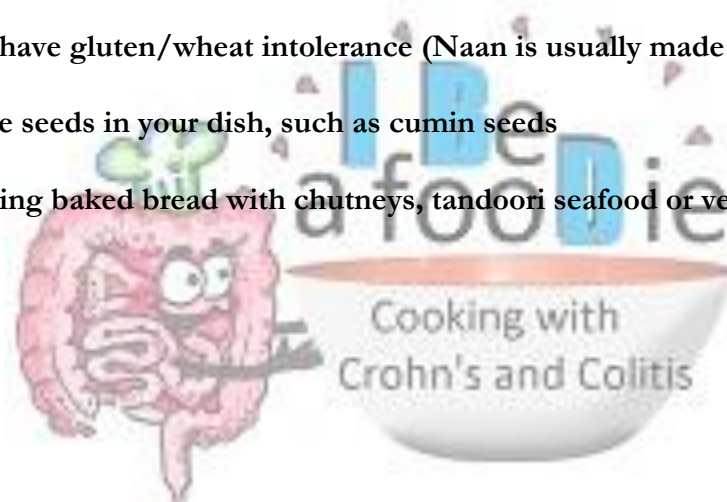
Tips:

- Order the lowest level of spice if spiciness bothers you

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_cuisine

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paneer>

- Be sure to ask the server to make sure there is no cream and little oil in what you order/order dishes that have little to no cream and/or oil
- Do not order dishes with chili peppers, or red and green peppers if these peppers bother you
- Avoid spicy hot curries
- Order dishes with turmeric! Turmeric has been shown to have many anti-inflammatory properties
- Order a dish that does not come with globs of cream/sauce, such as a tandoori chicken (chicken that is marinated in yogurt, seasoned with a tandoori masala spice, other spices, and cooked in a clay oven)
- Do not order deeply fried dishes (eg. samosas)
- Avoid the dishes with legumes (chickpeas and lentils are commonly found in Indian dishes)
- Avoid naan if you have gluten/wheat intolerance (Naan is usually made using wheat flour)
- Be careful of whole seeds in your dish, such as cumin seeds
- Considering ordering baked bread with chutneys, tandoori seafood or vegetarian dishes
- Ask questions!



JAPANESE

Grade: A-

Most IBDers can tolerate sushi and sashimi, as long as the sushi does not have raw vegetables or seeds.

When we do eat sushi and/or sashimi, we stick with the seafood dishes that are paired with something non-fibrous, such as shitake mushrooms. There are many omega-3 fatty acids that can be found in sushi, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel, and avocado. The seaweed is not too fibrous either.

Many Japanese dishes are fried, but some are just tempura-fried (lightly fried). In general, the Japanese tend to pan-fry, stir-fry, steam, grill, or boil their dishes, so as long as you avoid the lightly fried dishes you should be okay. Generous amounts of spices are used, so if you are sensitive to lots of seasonings, be careful what you order. If MSG bothers you, avoid the soy sauce, and ask the server what seasonings/ flavorings have MSG.

The heavy emphasis on rice and noodles means this cuisine is often IBD friendly. Noodles are featured in many soup dishes too, and the noodles are often rice, buckwheat, or wheat based. The Japanese also use a lot of IBD friendly veggies that are well-cooked, such as mushrooms and carrots.

Tips:

- Start off with some gyoza! These pot sticker dumplings typically consist of a ground meat and/or veggie filling wrapped into a thinly rolled piece of dough. Gyoza are steamed so nothing raw
- Avoid edamame if fiber bothers you. Yes, edamame is incredibly healthy for a normal person, but the beans are very high in fiber and can be a dangerous food for someone with IBD
- If ordering sushi, remember to ask the server for no seeds! (regular sushi is almost always rolled in sesame seeds)
- Avoid the deep-fried and pan-fried dishes
- Avoid wasabi if spicy foods bother you
- Consider ordering broiled fish, broiled tofu, udon soup or soba noodles
- Ask questions!

THAI

Grade: B+

Thai cuisine is IBD friendly because of the availability of rice and noodle dishes, and because of the abundance of dishes with cooked veggies. Their flavorings tend to come from chili sauces, fresh herbs, and other seasonings. Most non-Thai curries consist of powdered or ground dried spices, whereas the major ingredients of Thai curry are fresh herbs. A simple Thai curry paste consists of dried chilies, shallots and shrimp paste. More complex curries include garlic, galangal, coriander roots, lemon grass, kaffir lime peel and peppercorns.³ Thai food can be highly seasoned, and sometimes spicy. Therefore, always ask the server about the spiciness of a dish before ordering it.

Thai cooks often stir-fry the food in coconut oil (high in saturated fat) so try not to eat an entire noodle or rice dish in one sitting.

Many of the soups are low fiber, such as miso soup. Thai chefs tend to use broth and simmered veggies and/or tofu in their soups, as well as flavorful herbs such as lemongrass.

Tips:

- Order some steamed dumplings as an appetizer!
- Thai restaurants usually indicate a dish's spiciness by the number of hot peppers next to the name of the dish, so pick a mild dish or ask the server if a spicy dish can be made mild
- The fat content can be relatively high in a Thai dish, so ask the server to package ½ the dish before it is brought to your table (you will also go home with leftovers for the next day!)
- Consider ordering Pad Thai noodles, noodle dishes, or steamed seafood
- Ask questions!

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_cuisine

CHINESE

Grade: B+

Chinese cuisine is not as bad as many people make it out to be. It is entirely possible for someone with IBD to walk out of a Chinese restaurant with their GI system intact. To start, the soup options are low-fiber (egg-drop or wonton soup). The entrees are usually served with a side of white rice, a food that is easy for most IBDers to digest, and the entrees do not contain dairy products. In addition, Chinese food rarely uses much tomato, which is listed as one of the foods most likely to cause a Crohn's flare. However, that is where the good news ends. One of the main appetizers are fried spring rolls (avoid these at all costs!). The entrees are often very fatty because of the generous amount of oil used in the meat, noodle, rice, vegetable dishes. Also, if spice bothers you, avoid the dishes that are marked in some way as spicy. In addition, MSG is found in many Chinese foods, which can exacerbate symptoms associated with IBD.

If you are not feeling well, you should not feel safe ordering a dish that has lots of vegetables because Chinese cooks usually only slightly steam their vegetables, which are much more nutritious than well-cooked vegetables, but this can cause problems because the fibers are not as easy to digest.

Tips:

- Ask the server to package half of your dish even before it arrives so that you are not tempted to consume your entire meal
- Ask that very little oil be used in your dish
- Many Chinese restaurants have a special menu section with “healthy choices” that are steamed and have no oil added – these options should be an automatic draw from people with IBD
- If ordering appetizers, order a steamed option
- Stick with white rice rather than brown rice or fried rice (unless you can tolerate brown rice)
- Ask the server if the veggies can be cooked longer to insure that they are soft, ask for less oil
- Rather than ordering fried-food dishes, look for tempura fried (lightly fried)
- Ask for less spice if spice bothers you
- Avoid cruciferous veggie dishes, such as beef and broccoli
- Moo shi, a popular Chinese dish, is probably not tolerated by many IBDers (it is usually made with some combination of cooked cabbage, bok choy, snow peas, and celery, all of which have a lot of roughage)

- Ask if your dish is prepared using MSG
- Consider ordering Dim Sum, steamed vegetable or seafood dumplings, or stir-fried seafood
- Ask questions!



AMERICAN

Grade: C+

American cooking is the fusion of multiple ethnic or regional approaches into completely new cooking styles. When you think of traditional American dishes, the first things that probably come to mind include chicken wings, mac ‘n’ cheese, French fries, barbecue, grilled cheese, burgers, and hotdogs. For the purposes of this restaurant guide, we will refer to a traditional American restaurant that serves everything from burgers to a wedge salad to crab cakes.

Much of American food is high in fat due to the plentiful use of meats, cheeses, oils, and sauces. A regular old burger will often contain 6-8 oz. of ground beef with cheddar cheese, and some kind of sauce, not to mention a side of onion rings, French fries, or coleslaw. One of the biggest culprits is the size of the serving, such as a 16 oz. ribeye steak, an inordinate amount of beef for such a fatty cut of meat. American restaurants often like to make their chicken or seafood “crusted,” otherwise known as fried in breadcrumbs or fried in some other crumb mixture. Even the salads often contain bacon, some kind of cheese, croutons (bread crumbs drenched in oil), and a fatty dressing (avoid Caesar dressing at all costs!).

Tips:

- Start off with a non-creamy soup, such as chicken noodle or minestrone
- Look for steamed or stir-fried dishes, or sandwiches that have a lean protein and some cooked vegetables
- If you can tolerate salad, order a salad that is paired with a protein
- If your dish comes with french-fries ask the waiter if you can substitute them for a baked potato or a cooked vegetable – believe me, your guts will thank you later!
- Be careful with the desserts – cheesecake, ice cream sundaes, apple pie and the other traditional “American” desserts tend to be incredibly fatty. If ordering dessert is unavoidable, share with someone else so you don’t end up consuming the entire dish

MEXICAN/TEX-MEX

Grade: C-

Mexican and Tex-Mex cuisines are characterized by their heavy use of melted cheese, corn, meat (particularly beef), tomatoes, beans, and spices, in addition to tortillas. Chili con carne and fajitas are actually Tex-Mex inventions. A common feature of Tex-Mex is the combination plate, with several of the above on one large platter. Serving tortilla chips and a hot sauce or salsa as an appetizer is common in Tex-Mex restaurants. There are lots of spices used, and chili peppers and jalapenos are used sometimes for additional spice.

In terms of IBD-friendliness, Mexican/Tex-mex is not the friendliest cuisine. The fat content from the cheese and beef, the generous amounts of spice, the beans, the corn, the salsa, and the corn tortillas are a disaster for someone with IBD. To compound the problem, the portions are massive, especially in a combination platter. To top it off, the vegetables that are used (red and green peppers, onions, and corn) are vegetables that are often difficult to digest for some (corn especially), and sometimes the peppers and onions that come with fajitas are not well-cooked enough. Corn is technically a grain, but is used in cooking as a vegetable or starch. The Mexican rice (or white rice in some instances) is one of the few IBD-friendly ingredients.

The combination of hard-shelled tacos (a fried tortilla), diced tomatoes, onions, hot sauce and cheese can make for a disastrous meal for someone with IBD.

Tips:

- If corn bothers you, as tempting as it may be, don't eat the tortilla chips
- If tomatoes bother you, pass on the salsa
- Avoid corn tortillas and hard shell tacos – ask for flour tortillas
- Avoid the combination platters
- Ask your server to make your dish mild if the spices bother you
- Ask the server to package half of your dish even before it arrives so that you are not tempted to consume your entire meal
- Avoid dishes that have lots of meat and cheese (some burritos, some fajitas, etc)
- Avoid corn chips to begin with because they might be fried
- Ask questions!

ITALIAN

Grade: B

Italian cuisine has been heavily Americanized, and has become known for its mass amounts of topping and quantity. The staples include dry pasta, tomato sauce, and olive oil. Many individuals with IBD cannot tolerate tomato sauce because of the acidity.

Common dishes include lasagna, spaghetti with meatballs, eggplant parmesan, chicken or veal parmesan, pizza, calzones, and sausage and peppers. In general, Italian food is not overly offensive to someone with IBD (unless they avoid tomato sauce), and Italian offers a huge amount of choices. The vegetables in the main dishes are usually well-cooked too. However, the proportions are often over-sized, and some of the sauces, such as Alfredo sauce (cream, butter, and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese) are very fatty, which can cause irritation. The large amount of pasta, pizza, or dough from calzones/strombolis can also lead to over-eating. Italians are often heavy-handed with cheese too, meaning the fat content in the dishes can be very high.

Tips:

- Ask the server to package half of your dish even before it arrives so that you are not tempted to consume your entire meal. This is especially important for dishes that involve pasta or pizza
- If you order pizza, you can remove some of the extra grease/fat by dabbing the pizza with napkins
- If you can tolerate tomato sauce, choose marinara (tomato sauce without the meat) or Bolognese sauce (tomato based sauce mixed with ground meat)
- Order fish or chicken – Lots of Italian places go beyond the basic pasta and pizza. If they offer salmon with vegetables or a tuna fish sandwich, order what is going to aggravate your intestines the least
- If you order pizza, try wiping off some of the extra grease/fat that is on top of the pizza using a napkin
- Some pasta dishes are drenched in oil (usually olive oil), so just be careful about the amount that you consume
- If you order a dish with vegetables (eg. Pasta Primavera), make sure that the vegetables are cooked enough
- Ask questions!

GREEK

Grade: A-

Greek cuisine makes wide use of olive oil, vegetables and herbs, grains and bread, wine, fish, and various meats, including lamb, poultry, and pork. In addition, the Greeks use a lot of olives, cheese, eggplant, and yogurt, as well as phyllo pastry. Right off the bat, it is obvious that this cuisine is going to be relatively friendly for someone with IBD because of the (often moderate) use of olive oil and certain fish, both of which have omega-3's, which have been shown to be anti-inflammatory.

There are lots of low fiber options at Greek restaurants. While it is very traditional to start with a Greek salad (lettuce, raw red onion, feta cheese, and olives and therefore not so IBD-friendly), many of the appetizers aka meze are IBD-friendly. Some examples include spanakopita (usually spinach, feta cheese, onions, egg and seasoning wrapped in phyllo pastry in the form of a pie), souvlaki (small pieces of meat and sometimes vegetables grilled on a skewer), and grape leaves (grapevine leaves stuffed with rice and vegetables and/or meat). The appetizers are often phyllo dough stuffed with feta cheese, herbs, and some type of vegetable, such as cooked spinach or mushrooms.

The Greeks tend to roast, bake, sauté, or cook their foods on a spit, and so their cooking techniques do not impart lots of unhealthy fats. They do not use very fibrous vegetables either— they focus on potatoes, eggplant, zucchini, spinach, mushrooms, and a few other vegetables. Their entrees often feature some type of protein (shrimp, leg of lamb, chicken) cooked in olive oil, and include feta cheese, herbs, and/or some auxiliary ingredient, such as pine nuts.⁴ Their national dish, Moussaka (Greek Moussaka) is layers of sliced potato, eggplant, zucchini, and ground beef topped with a béchamel sauce.

Gyro pitas are popular, which include roasted meat that has been cooked on a vertical spit. The sandwich usually comes with some tzatziki sauce stuffed inside, which is made of yogurt mixed with cucumbers, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, and parsley.⁵ The cucumbers are usually small enough to cause little problems for IBD sufferers.

Tips:

- Avoid high-fat dishes that include meat and cheese
- Pick a fish dish with a side of cooked veggies
- Desserts often have crushed nuts (eg. Baklava) – avoid these desserts if you cannot tolerate nuts
- Enjoy some good wine if you can tolerate alcohol!
- Ask questions!

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_cuisine

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TzatzikiVietnamese>

VIETNAMESE

Grade: A-

Vietnamese cuisine is colloquially known as the ‘light cuisine’ of Asia. The cuisine’s primary staples include rice, noodles, seafood, meat, fruits and vegetables, and fish sauce. In addition, the Vietnamese use a diverse range of herbs to flavor their dishes, including lemongrass, mint, coriander, ginger, and Thai basil leaves. There is a heavy emphasis placed on fresh vegetables and herbs, and these ingredients are seen in most dishes. Their primary dishes are soups, stir-fries, and seasoned grilled foods served on, or with, rice or noodles. For the most part, rice and noodles serve as the base of most dishes, and some combination of vegetables, meat, seafood, or tofu is added.

Depending on the type of dish one orders, the vegetables will most likely be raw, boiled, or stir-fried. If you avoid raw vegetables, stay away from the rice paper rolls (a common appetizer) because they are filled with raw vegetables. You can instead order the crispy spring rolls because they have cooked vegetables, but be careful because they are fried.

Pho is a very popular soup served in traditional Vietnamese restaurants. It is a noodle soup with a rich, clear broth made from a long boiling of meat and spices. Pho is typically served with some combination of spring onions, meat, noodles, and some other vegetables and herbs. This soup is a perfect comfort food for those with IBD because it is highly modifiable and can be chock full of IBD-friendly ingredients, such as rice noodles and tofu.

Vietnamese cuisine is very IBD-friendly. The heavy use of white rice and noodles (easy-to-digest carbohydrates), the minimal use of added fats, and the generous use of herbs just seems to soothe the GI tract (especially ginger!). In addition, the healthy cooking techniques and the abundance of easily digestible cooked vegetables make this cuisine a great option for someone with IBD.

Tips:

- **Order Pho!** All of the ingredients are well-cooked. Just remember to ask the waiter to omit any type of vegetable that you cannot eat
- **Order a nutritionally balanced plate of noodles or rice, with a protein source and some mixed vegetables**
- **Be aware of language barriers when trying to ask questions about certain dishes. It may be easier to say that you are allergic to a certain food, just to make it easier on the restaurant staff**
- **Ask questions!**

KOREAN

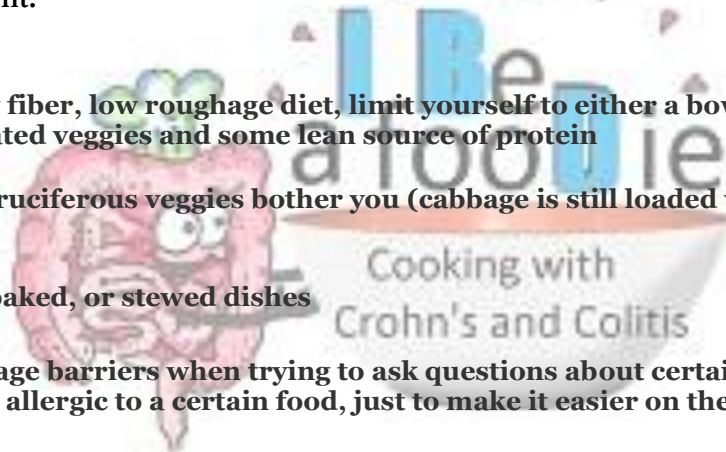
Grade: B+

As Marnina and I learned during our venture into Korean cuisine, rice and/or noodles, vegetables, and meat make up the traditional Korean meal. Commonly used ingredients include sesame oil, soy sauce, salt, garlic, ginger, and pepper. Meats or tofu are sometimes added to these dishes. The basic seasonings make for a relatively salty and spicy meal.

The main dishes are made from grains such as bap (a bowl of rice), juk (porridge), and guksu (noodles). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_cuisine#Dishes). Soups and stews, kimchi, noodles, and banchan (side dishes), are seen throughout Korean cuisine. Broth is a vital element in Asian cuisine, and Koreans often use long-simmered beef broth in their soups. Kimchi is commonly used, which is fermented and pickled cabbage. Traditional Korean meals are noted for the number of banchans that accompany steam-cooked short-grain rice. From our casual observation, Korean dishes are prepared using numerous different cooking techniques; it is possible to find anything from steamed to grilled to fried that can meet the needs of an IBD patient.

Tips:

- For those on a low fiber, low roughage diet, limit yourself to either a bowl of rice or noodles with well-cooked tolerated veggies and some lean source of protein
- Avoid cabbage if cruciferous veggies bother you (cabbage is still loaded with fiber even after being cooked)
- Opt for steamed, baked, or stewed dishes
- Be aware of language barriers when trying to ask questions about certain dishes. It may be easier to say that you are allergic to a certain food, just to make it easier on the restaurant staff
- Ask questions!



MIDDLE EASTERN

Grade: B++

Middle Eastern cuisine is a broad term that encompasses a range of cooking styles from a number of different countries - Syrian, Moroccan, Israeli and the list goes on and on. The staples are fresh fruits and vegetables, certain grains and red meats, and beans. Lots of fresh herbs and spices are used to enhance the tastes of the main ingredients. Common herbs and spices include mint, lemon, garlic, and rosemary. Middle Eastern cuisine is simply prepared with flavors blending together to form a complex taste.

The grains are mainly rice, kasha, bulgur, and couscous. Bread is a universal staple in the region and it is eaten in one form or another, the most common being pita (our personal favorite!).

Commonly used vegetables include onions, tomato, eggplant, okra, spinach, cabbage, and carrots. Tomato is the most ubiquitous ingredient in Middle Eastern cuisine. It is used fresh in a variety of salads, cooked in almost every stew and broth, and grilled with kebab. Beans are crucial to the diet of the region too, and they are the primary ingredient in falafel, which are beans pureed with spices and herbs, and then fried. Hummus is a staple food too, and it is made from chickpeas and tahini (sesame paste).

Meze is common throughout the Middle East. It consists of a number of small dishes: cheese, nuts, various salads and dips, such as tabbouleh (bulgur, chopped parsley, tomato, and olive oil) hummus, pickles, and also more substantial items, such as grilled meats and kibbeh.

Tips:

- A Middle Eastern diet tends to be high in protein (chicken, fish, beef) which is incredibly beneficial to someone with IBD. Take advantage of the protein!
- Avoid bulgur, lentils and kasha if fiber bothers you, and opt for rice and/or couscous as the base grain for your dish
- Enjoy the wonderfully flavored red meat in schwarma, kibbeh, and/or kebab, but do not overdo it! Red meat's high fat content makes it hard to digest, and can lead to indigestion and stomach pain. Sometimes, you can find chicken or turkey schwarma (which should sit better), so be sure to ask for clarification in a restaurant
- Middle Eastern food tends to be "healthy." It generally utilizes large amounts of raw vegetables, sesame seeds, dates and chickpeas. All of these foods would be considered "healthy" for a normal individual. As you may or may not know, living with IBD often means avoiding a lot of what is typically healthy. Just be wary of these raw ingredients when eating Middle Eastern food
- Enjoy falafel in small quantities – the high fiber content in chickpeas and the oil used to fry the falafel can be a dangerous combination!

- Middle Eastern food tends to include lots of different types of salads. Make sure to tell the server exactly which salads you want and that you **CANNOT** eat specific ones
- Desserts often have crushed nuts (eg. Baklava) – avoid these desserts if you cannot tolerate nuts
- Ask questions!

