Food with friends

Tips for dining out during your recovery journey



Food with friends

When you're in recovery from an eating disorder, saying 'yes' to going out for food with friends might feel like a very big step.

We really encourage you to give it a go, if you feel ready. Spending time with your friends, not being bossed around by your eating disorder, living your life – for many, this is what recovery is all about.

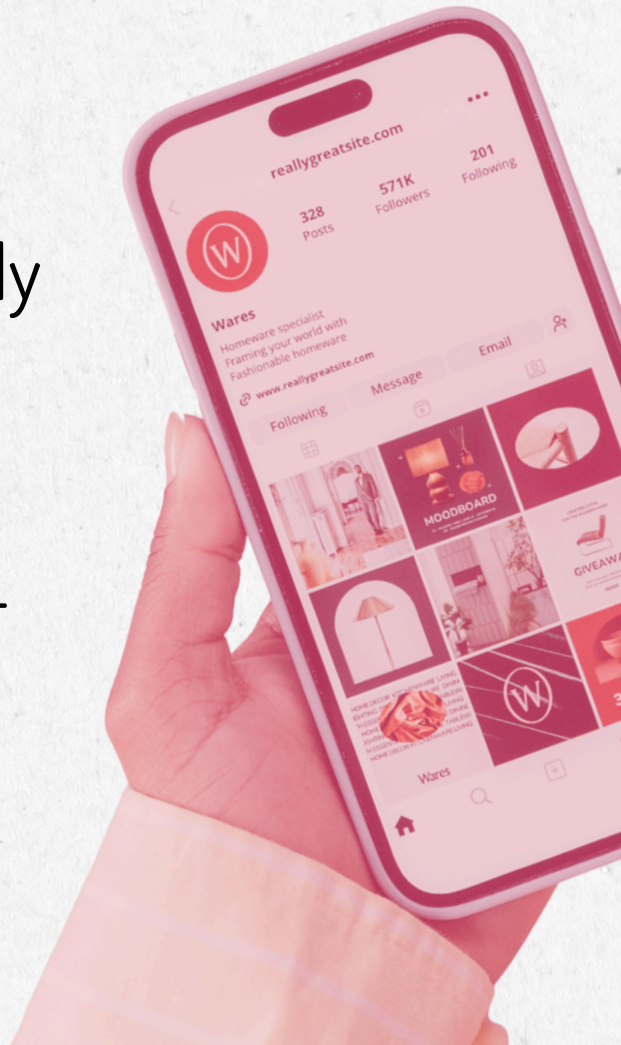


Planning

It can be very stressful sitting in a restaurant and not knowing what to pick from the menu.

If you can, read the menus in advance. You can look them up online or ask a friend to pick up a copy from the venue.

If you're ready, pick something you actually really want to try. But if that's too overwhelming, you can also have in mind a safety food – something you know you can order and eat.



On the menu

Large, chain restaurants / cafes are required by law to put calories on their menus. This can make dining out much harder for people recovering from an eating disorder.

- Choose a smaller, local restaurant, as they may not be required to show the calories on their menu.
- Or, ask ahead of time to be given a menu without calories (restaurants should have one).
- Ask a friend to read the options to you, so you don't have to look.



Support makes all the difference

You can let your friends know if this might be a challenging experience for you. You don't have to tell everyone, and you don't have to tell them everything, but do tell a trusted friend that you would like their support.

Tell them what you might find helpful, such as offering encouragement, or distraction, a check-in or activity for afterwards.



After the meal

If you feel uncomfortable after eating, try getting some fresh air or going for a gentle walk. Walking helps digestion, and this helps ease feelings of bloated-ness.

Remind yourself that this is a temporary feeling and look for distractions that might help you. Listen to music or a podcast, play a game with a friend, watch a video on your phone together.

