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Avoid belly bloat: Foods that make you look and feel fat

When planning for a fun get-together with friends everything goes through your mind, from your wardrobe to jewelry and make-up. What many of us don't plan for, however, is our meals – and eating the wrong foods before an event can sabotage your beauty plan. Certain foods can give your gut an instant bloat that looks and feels awful, but fortunately, there's an easy solution and it doesn't involve skipping meals! **So the next time you need to squeeze into your LBD check out these go-to meals from certified nutritionist and personal trainer Franci Cohen that are guaranteed to help you avoid a bulging belly.**

For a girl's night out: Don't be afraid to have a large meal beforehand (large meaning more than just a PB&J). If you are planning for an active night, whether dancing, bowling or party hopping, you will need the fuel. Cohen has created the perfect meal for this situation:

- 1 grilled chicken breast (approx 4 oz)
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice and lentils
- 1 cup steamed string beans

This combo will fill you up without weighing you down, and will give you the energy you need to dance the night away!

For a dinner- date: You're wearing a stunning new BCBG dress that already had to be zipped up by your roommate. When you're at the restaurant with your guy refrain from ordering a salad to make it *look* like you're being healthy. All the veggies in the salad will actually cause your stomach to bloat more. Cohen advises that a fish dish with one side of grilled veggies is the way to go! "Wild Salmon is jam-packed with heart healthy vitamins and omega 3 fatty acids. If Salmon is not an option, mackerel, sea bass and lemon sole are all good options as well. As for the veggies, try to steer clear of cruciferous veggies (such as cauliflower, broccoli) that can cause bloating. Instead opt for grilled zucchini, asparagus, or carrots - which will keep your tummy tamed!"

For a day at the beach: It's finally getting warm out and you can take that bathing suit out of hiding. If you're going to the beach you need a healthy, energizing meal to get you through the morning but you don't want it to show in your stomach. You're probably thinking that the easiest thing to eat before you head out is some Special K with skim milk. It's low in calories after all, right? It doesn't matter how low-cal it is, the dairy and multi-grains will expand in your intestines, causing your gut to stick out. Instead of cereal, Cohen has an awesome recipe for oatmeal pancakes:

- 1/2 cup raw oats
- 3 egg whites
- 1/2 apple

- dash of cinnamon

Throw all the ingredients in a blender to create the pancake mix. This high fiber non-fat breakfast choice offers whole grain fiber plus additional fiber from the apple, and protein from the egg whites. It's a great filling way to start the day, and will not create any abdominal gas or bloating, so you can go bikini-bare with ease!

For an afternoon luncheon: Eating a well-balanced lunch is essential for boosting energy and productivity; giving you power over that mid-day slump and keeping your metabolism active. A lot of times people want to skip lunch in hopes of losing weight and grab an energy drink to keep them going. This is so bad! The carbonation from an energy drink will make you more bloated than a light lunch. Cohen says, "For a mid-day luncheon, your best bet is a salad chock-full of fresh veggies and greens, and topped with a piece of grilled fish, low-fat tuna salad, or fresh turkey breast slices. Throw a few walnuts or almonds on top and dress with a low fat/low sugar dressing, to finish off your delicious salad creation!"

For traveling days: These days airports are getting bigger and so are the food courts. It's tempting to give in to the convenience of fast travel food, but the combination of a high-sodium smorgasbord and air travel equals *avery* bloated body from head to toe. You absolutely must resist because there are better options. Eat before you leave for the airport. Cohen suggests packing your carry-on with fruits, veggies, and granola bars. Believe it or not these are available at kiosks. Also, avoid the beverage service on board. Stick to water, you will have a happier flight and feel revived upon arriving at your destination!