

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #46: Vacation Eating

Hi! Are you ready for a vacation?? I am, but the next one I have planned isn't until September and I'm so excited about it. I'm going to Dallas for a mastermind with my favorite teacher Brooke a huge group of coaches which is going to be beyond amazing I know it, and then I'm flying over to my old stopping grounds in LA to see my friends who I miss and love so much. It's gonna be awesome! Can't wait.

Do you have any vacations coming up? Are you making sure to plan some time away from the grind for yourself? So important.

Vacations are great, but for some people, once they start thinking about eating during them they start to freak out. Food will be different, circumstances will be different, plans aren't always as easy to make, other people are more involved in decisions.

If you have a good structure for how you eat at home, you might worry about not having your structure or routine.

If you don't have a good structure at home, then you probably have a ton of brain chatter when you're not on vacation about eating so with so many more factors to consider the chatter might become even crazier.

So before you even go, there's anxiety building up and worry and nervousness and fear about what's going to happen. Doesn't make for a pleasant experience leading up to it and this is the time when the anticipation is supposed to be exciting! Then, bring all those feelings along with you and your vacation is saturated with negative feelings. Not so pleasurable.

The first thing I think is important to look at here is what your idea of a vacation is.

I actually looked it up to see what the definition is, because that's always fun to see, and it said it's an extended period of recreation, especially one spent away from home or traveling.

Sounds accurate to me.

But I think so many of us make it mean so much more.

Things like that all rules are out the window, that it's an opportunity to not pay attention to or care about your eating, that you have to eat all the food to have fun and get the full experience. You're just going to let loose and have fun doing whatever you want.

So, let's take a look at these.

Whatever eating rules you have for yourself, why throw them all out the window? My guess is because you don't like them.

You have rules for yourself that you follow on the regular and you feel obligated to them and now that you're going on vacation, you're giving yourself a pass because on vacation you don't want to feel tied down.

Having food rules for yourself isn't a problem. It's really just a way you decide to eat. We all have them whether we realize it or not. We decide what we will and won't eat and how often we're going to eat. If you ask anyone about what and how they eat they'll most likely have an answer for you and those are their rules. It could even be that their rule is that there aren't any rules and they choose to just eat everything, nothing is off limits, and they just eat sporadically whenever they feel like it. It's still the way they choose to eat. It's still their own personal rules for themselves.

So take a look at yours. If you don't like them, you're going to resent them and use any opportunity you can as an excuse to not follow them. Got a vacation? No rules then. Got a celebration? No rules then either. Those are relaxation times and if your rules are the opposite of relaxing then you're not going to want to hold on to them.

Same thing for not wanting to care about or pay attention to what you're eating. Maybe in your day to day life you're paying too much attention. If you're someone who uses a calorie counting app and does math all day every day then yeah, on vacation you want a break from that. But, because you're so tied to those numbers and the calculations, then you have no idea how to eat without them and it freaks you out to try and eat just based on your hunger and fullness.

That was me for such a long time. I didn't want to keep track on vacation, but I was terrified of how much I would eat if I didn't add up my calories.

I remember telling my college roommate during the first time I ever lost significant weight, that if I didn't keep track of my calories then I'd overeat. Not a good belief to have! Thank god I no longer believe that one.

Then, if you're not a calculator, but your idea of paying attention and caring is really worrying, stressing, depriving, then again, yeah, I wouldn't want to feel those on vacation either. If that's what paying attention and caring means to you, and if that's what you think it takes, then you're for sure going to let it all go.

There is sometimes also this scarcity mindset that happens when you're going somewhere you don't go to often, have never been to, or you think this might be the only time you ever go. You *have* to get the, whatever food is popular in the area or what it's known for.

Like you might say you just cannot go to NYC without getting a slice of pizza or Italy without getting pasta, or without getting a scoop of ice cream from your favorite place in that area.

Your vacation won't be entirely fulfilling unless that food is a part of it.

Now, there's nothing wrong with wanting to eat certain foods that are special to the area. I already know of at least one restaurant that I will be eating at in LA when I go, and in case you're wondering it's called Hugo's in Studio City and it's special to me because I used to work there many years ago. It's nostalgic for me and I'll most likely know some of the people who work there so I get to see them.

But here's what I want to say about this. If I didn't go there, I could still have an amazing time because I'm not going to LA for the food, I'm going to see my friends and spend time with them. Is it enjoyable to go out to eat and be in a restaurant atmosphere? Of course it is. But I'm not centering my stay around it and actually haven't put any thought into where I'm going to eat other than Hugo's and maybe one more place that is also nostalgic for me.

I was talking about this with a client recently and she was talking about her concerns about an upcoming trip and how there's going to be good food and drinks there. What was so interesting though as she thought more about it, was that the food where she was going wasn't even any better than the food where she lives. She has fun memories of times when she was at the place with the food with family, but it wasn't even the food that was so good...it was the experience overall.

This then brings up the question, of whether food actually makes the vacation more enjoyable. Or are you just thinking it does because it happens to be there during the fun times? Something to consider.

I'd take a moment to consider how much emphasis you're putting on food for your vacation. How important are you making it? Is it what you're looking forward to most?

Going back to the definition, where vacation is a period of recreation, is eating your recreation?

And I mean in regular life too. Is eating your favorite activity to engage in?

So much of the fears, concerns, and thought patterns about vacation eating stem from how you live your day to day life.

Your daily eating might not be what you want it to be, meaning it's restrictive in a way you don't really like, so you look to your vacation as an excuse to let go of it.

The way you think about your daily eating causes stress and worry so again, you look to your vacation as an excuse to not stress or worry.

You create scarcity with your regular eating by saying you're never going to eat a certain food again or don't allow yourself certain foods like ever, and that way of thinking doesn't just disappear when you go on vacation.

And if food is your fun, your relaxation, your pleasure in regular life, it would make sense that it would be on vacation too. It's your go-to. It's something you enjoy and vacation offers more and a variety of opportunities to try different things. It takes your eating hobby to the next level like if someone loved

U.S. history and got to go Washington D.C. and be around all kinds of amazing historical monuments and sites. They're taking their greatest interest and hobby and centering their trip around it and indulging in all of it, just like you may if food is yours.

So if you want to ease your concerns about your vacation eating, start with working on your non-vacation eating. You don't just become a different person when you get in the car or on a plane, you're taking your mind with you and it's in your mind where all the problems lie.

Start eating in a way that you don't need a vacation from. Eat in a sustainable way that you like that falls in line with your goals meaning that if you genuinely want a healthy diet and don't want to gain weight, experiment with eating structures that allow for that. Eat in a way that doesn't leave you dying for something that actually tastes good by the end of the week or end of the day. There's so much delicious, healthy, nutritious food out there. Go eat the ones you like and try some new ones just for fun. Play with combinations of flavors, foods, herbs, and spices. It doesn't have to be gourmet or complicated, simple and tasty is great.

Also, figure out why you're feeling so stressed or worried about what you eat. Is it because you're not planning? Is it because you don't know what to eat? Is it because you get confused about what you want? Decisions ahead of time will help you immensely here. Think about it way before, when you're not feeling urges or cravings or stress. Making decisions when you're emotionally charged can be difficult. Don't wait until then.

I know you might then tell me that you can't plan when you're on vacation because of other people, or you just never know, or whatever the reason is and I hear you. But you may be able to do more planning than you think. Sometimes you do know where you're going to eat and you can decide ahead of time what you're going to have. Sometimes you know how many meals you're going to have, or that you want to have, and you can at least know that. You can decide if you're going to eat snacks or not, whether it be when someone you're with makes a spontaneous decision or you just happen upon a street vendor, you can still decide ahead of time whether you're going to engage in any of that. You make whatever decisions you can and you practice sticking to them.

You can also decide which local foods are must for you, decide you're going to eat them, and be done with it. No freaking out about eating them, no guilt, because then it takes away some of the enjoyment you get when you eat them and that's the whole point isn't it? That cronut sure isn't for fueling your body, it's only for pleasure so you best be enjoying the crap out of it without feeling guilt. You make your decisions and you like them.

And going off of that, I'd stop and consider what really is a must for your vacation as far as special to the area foods and what isn't. If something isn't, then you can decide you're just not going to have it and be done with it.

Then there's that other piece where food is your recreation. Girl, you gotta expand your life. You gotta find pleasure elsewhere because if food is your #1, or only source of pleasure, then it's going to be really difficult for you to have less of it.

Overall, I think the most important thing for you to consider when it comes to making decisions about how and what you're going to eat on vacation, is how you want to feel.

If you allow yourself to eat junk the whole time you're there, you're going to feel like junk. Plain and

simple. You're going to be tired and maybe a little moody and not so present or focused, and that does not make for a good time. This is especially important if you're going somewhere that's going to be active, even if it's just a lot of walking like if you're going to Disney, a new city, or an outside adventure of some kind. How do you want to fuel yourself during this trip? How much joy food is too much that it turns into unhappiness?

Do you want to completely splurge and go off the rails or do the best you can? That's a question you need to answer before you go and remind yourself of your answer to that question every day. And know that you can totally splurge if you want to. That option is available and I'm not about to tell you not to. You can do what you want. But own that decision if it's the one you choose to make and you're then not allowed to get mad at yourself about anything you eat. I mean, that's really a rule in general, don't get mad at yourself, but especially if you're the one who decided that it's no holds barred.

If you make your goal to do the best you can, don't lose sight of it.

Make small goals to adhere to each day that will help you to achieve it.

Think about the obstacles you might face and how you're going to overcome them.

And also think about whether food will actually make the experience better and how eating might not make it better. It's interesting to ponder. Can you enjoy yourself without eating all the foods?

Vacation prep starts now. Even if you don't have one planned, you're still preparing yourself anyway just by working on your regular eating.

There doesn't have to be two modes – regular life mode and vacation mode, they can be the same thing, or at least pretty dang close.

Decide before you go how you want to handle it. Don't freak out and let questions about what's going to happen swirl around in your mind. Answer those questions and come up with plans.

Then take a mantra, a useful thought along for the ride with you. Your thoughts always matter most, so what are you going to think on purpose about your eating or about your goal of this vacation while you're there?

This all doesn't have to be a big question mark about what will happen. What and how you eat is not completely out of your control. Make as many decisions ahead of time as you can, have your useful thought handy, and don't you dare get mad at yourself about anything.

Regular life eating and vacation eating don't have to be any different. Start with making your regular life the way you want it to be, the way that you don't need an extreme vacation from. Now go create the day to day eating life that you want. Bye bye.