



Eating healthily offshore

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The galley presents unique challenges: limited control over what's served, shift work affecting meal times, and boredom eating. Here's how to navigate it successfully.

THE OFFSHORE CHALLENGES

What makes it difficult

- **Always available:** Food is there 24/7, making it easy to snack
- **Limited choice:** You eat what's served, can't always choose healthier options
- **Portion sizes:** Caterers often serve large portions for hungry workers
- **High-calorie comfort food:** Fried food, pastries, puddings are common
- **Shift patterns:** Irregular meal times can disrupt eating patterns
- **Boredom and routine:** Easy to eat just because it's there

STRATEGIES THAT WORK

1. Survey before you serve

- Walk through the entire buffet/servery before putting anything on your plate.

- Identify the best protein option
- Spot the vegetables
- Make a plan before you start filling your plate

2. Build your plate strategically

- Half the plate: Vegetables or salad
- Quarter of the plate: Protein (chicken, fish, beef, eggs)
- Quarter of the plate: Carbs (potatoes, rice, pasta)
- This gives you balanced nutrition without needing to weigh or measure

3. Set a no-return policy

- Decide: one plate, no seconds
- Fill your plate once and walk away
- If you're still hungry after 20 minutes, grab fruit or yogurt

4. Master the timing

- Stick to proper meal times even on 12-hour shifts
- Eat breakfast, lunch, dinner – not constant grazing
- Don't eat just because it's shift changeover and everyone else is

5. Handle the night shift challenge

- Plan your main meal before your shift starts

- Pack healthy snacks from the mess (fruit, boiled eggs)
- Avoid heavy meals at 2am – your body doesn't process them well
- Protein + vegetables for night meals, not carb-heavy options

WHAT TO CHOOSE:

Breakfast

Best choices:

- Scrambled or poached eggs
- Grilled bacon (not fried) or sausage (limit to 2)
- Grilled tomatoes and mushrooms
- Beans (good protein and fibre)
- Porridge with fruit
- Wholemeal toast (1-2 slices)

Limit or avoid:

- Fried bread, hash browns
- Multiple sausages
- Pastries, croissants, muffins
- Loading up your plate 'because it's available'

Lunch and dinner

Best choices:

- Grilled or baked chicken, fish, or lean meat
- Roast meat (trim visible fat)
- Jacket potato with beans or tuna

- Boiled or mashed potatoes (go easy on butter)
- Rice (not fried)
- All vegetables and salad
- Soups (broth-based, not creamy)

Limit or avoid:

- Fried anything (chicken, fish, chips)
- Pies, sausage rolls, pastries
- Heavy gravies and creamy sauces
- Roast potatoes and chips (high in oil)
- Seconds and thirds

Desserts and snacks

Best choices:

- Fresh fruit
- Yogurt (plain or low-sugar)
- Fruit salad
- Jelly (if available)

Limit to once per trip or avoid:

- Cakes, biscuits, chocolate bars
- Puddings with custard or cream
- Ice cream

DEALING WITH SPECIFIC OFFSHORE SITUATIONS

When the food isn't great

- Focus on the basics: protein + vegetables + reasonable carbs
- Build the best meal you can from what's available
- Don't use 'bad food' as an excuse to overeat
- Bring protein bars or shakes as backup

When everyone else is eating badly

- You don't need to match what others eat
- Be the one who makes better choices – lead by example
- You'll be the one losing weight, having more energy

Managing boredom eating

- Recognise when you're eating out of boredom, not hunger
- Find other things to do in downtime (gym, reading, phone calls home)
- Don't go to the mess just because you're passing
- Stick to your planned meal times

The 'last day' trap

Many offshore workers blow their healthy eating plan on the last day of rotation, thinking 'I've been good, I deserve it' or 'I'll start fresh when I get home.'

Don't do this:

- One massive cheat day can undo 5-6 days of healthy eating progress
- It sets you up for more poor choices when you get home
- You'll feel sluggish and bloated for the trip home

Instead:

- Finish the rotation strong
- Celebrate your success properly once home with a planned treat meal

Final tips

1. **You can't out-train a bad diet.** Even if you're physically active offshore, poor food choices will stall your progress.
2. **One meal won't ruin you,** but one meal every day will. Occasional indulgences are fine. Daily poor choices aren't.
3. **Consistency offshore = success onshore.** What you do during your rotation matters just as much as what you do at home.
4. **You're in control.** Even with limited options, you choose what goes on your plate and how much.
5. **Think long-term.** Every good choice adds up. Every rotation you stay on track gets you closer to your goal.

Remember:

You don't need perfect options to make progress.
You just need to make better choices more often.

Your offshore meal planning template		
Use this as your default plan each rotation:		
Meal	What to choose	What to limit
Breakfast	Eggs, grilled bacon (2), beans, tomatoes, 1-2 toast	Fried items, pastries, multiple rounds
Lunch	Protein (palm-sized), half plate veg/salad, small portion carbs	Fried food, heavy sauces, seconds
Dinner	Protein (palm-sized), half plate veg/salad, small portion carbs	Fried food, pies, large portions
Dessert	Fruit, yogurt, fruit salad	Cakes, puddings with custard, daily treats
Snacks	Fruit, protein bar brought from home	Constant grazing, crisps, biscuits, chocolate