



## Excuse Me! What Am I Ordering?

by Lori Hartwell



Eating out is one of life's little pleasures. All the over-hyped food on the menu is designed to tempt you, right? When you

are on a special diet, eating out can be challenging—that is, if you are aiming to stay on your diet!

The tempting titles that adorn the menus turn your willpower to Jello! Like Tony Roma's special barbecue ribs boasting that tantalizing famous barbecue sauce of theirs. Or an Olive Garden culinary special, Chicken Scampi. Yum! I can

just taste the chicken breast tenders sautéed with bell peppers, roasted garlic, and onions in a garlic cream sauce served over angel hair pasta. And then they fill you up with all that hot bread and butter they bring to your table before your meal even arrives.

But wait! Salt, potassium, and phosphorus are critical to our health management as people with CKD, and we need to be mindful of what is in our food or we pay a big price. Calories, trans fat, cholesterol, and carbohydrates are hiding everywhere, and we have to know what we are actually eating.

When I eat out, I have a set of standard questions that I ask my server. One of my favorite questions is "what is one of your favorite items on the menu?" Immediately, I can tell if the server knows anything about the food they are serving. Their answer will guide me—if I trust their opinion. I can further my interrogation by asking them how the food is prepared. How much salt does the chef or cook add and do they marinate the meat or vegetable in any type of sauce?

Once I make my selection I am not afraid to ask for substitutions or for dressings or sauces on the side. I am a stickler for my meat being well done.

For many years, I was afraid to send a meal back. After all, I didn't want to be a bother. Does that sound familiar? One of my good friends who is a vegetarian

Salt, potassium and phosphorus are critical to our health management as people with CKD

taught me that this was not only not good for my health but it was also not good for the restaurant! Restaurants rely on repeat business and if my meal is not a savory experience, I may not return or recommend them to a friend. That is bad for business.

I remember the first time I sent a meal back. It was so salty that I chugged a glass of water to quench my thirst after just one bite. I summoned the server with an "Excuse

me!" As she approached the table I politely asked her if she would mind changing my order to something less salty. Of course I had to explain that it was because I have kidney disease and my ankles swell up like water balloons.

She responded that her Mom had the same problem with several diet restric-

tions of her own. She was happy to help me get a meal that would not cause me discomfort.

So next time you are dining out, don't be afraid to say, "Excuse me. What am I ordering?"

Chronically Yours,  
Lori Hartwell  
President & Founder  
of the Renal Support Network



**weKAN Live & Give** is a publication of the Renal Support Network, a patient-run nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify and meet the non-medical needs of those affected by chronic kidney disease.

**weKAN Patient Activists** serve to mobilize, educate, motivate, and empower fellow chronic kidney disease survivors to advocate for themselves and for one another. Together we *can* make a difference.

### Newsletter Staff

#### Editor-in-Chief

Lori Hartwell

#### Managing Editor; Layout & Design

Jodie Younse

#### Editorial Coordinator

Kathe LeBeau

#### Distribution

Renal Support Network

### Contact Information

#### Renal Support Network

866-903-1728 Toll Free  
9 AM-5 PM Pacific Time

#### Submissions, Newsletter Business

info@RSNhope.org, or mail to RSN

#### Address Changes & Distribution

Live & Give Distribution Dept.  
Renal Support Network  
1311 N. Maryland Ave.  
Glendale, CA 91207  
info@RSNhope.org

#### Web Version (PDF files & archives)

www.RSNhope.org

© 2008 by Renal Support Network  
All Rights Reserved  
EIN#95-4672679