I think we could all agree life would not be as exciting if we constantly denied ourselves the foods we wanted. Life is often about finding compromises. It’s all about moderation, variety and balance. It’s okay to indulge in the things you love, even though that might not be considered the “healthiest,” such as burgers and fries, but the goal is to eat balanced meals most of the time. This can sometimes feel like a daunting task when eating out but it’s a matter of being open to trying new things and exploring menus, even at our favorite burger joints like The Habit.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A BALANCED PLATE?

Ideally, a balanced plate would consist of half the plate being vegetables, a fourth to consist of grains, and a fourth to consist of protein. Though it would be fun to eat half a plate of potatoes, this is when variety and moderation comes in. An easy way to ensure a variety of plants, is to “eat the rainbow.” The more colors are on your plate, the more likely it is that you are receiving a variety of benefits from your food.

Grains should be whole grains when possible. Grains include corn, rice (brown or wild rice when possible), whole wheat and quinoa, amongst many others. Protein can be derived from both plant and animal sources. If eating animal protein, opt for lean white meat whenever possible or low-fat dairy products. If eating plant protein, tofu and tempeh are great choices, both considered complete proteins. You can also get protein from eating grains and legumes. Legumes include lentils, beans, peas, chickpeas, edamame and peanuts.

Though this plate set up would be the ideal plate, it’s important not to stress if anything is missing, the goal is to have a balanced plate most of the time.
BUILDING A BALANCED PLATE AT THE HABIT

In the spirit of eating balanced, even when eating out, restaurants like The Habit are great when it comes to variety. Below are a few options to choose from:

**Veggie Burger**
The Veggie Burger consists of a veggie patty, lettuce, tomato, cucumber, onions, sweet mustard and whole wheat bun. This is a great option because the veggie patty is made of various plants, including grains and vegetables. It is only 470 calories, compared to other burgers on the menu which can run up to 940 calories. It also has 28 grams of protein and 8 grams of fiber which is more than the original Charburger. The only downfall is that it contains about half of the sodium which is recommended per day. However, if you plan your other food choices, don’t stress too much about it, remember, it’s all about eating balanced most of the time and compromising!

**Super Food Salad**
If you’re in the mood to eat more vegetables the Super Food Salad is a great option. It consists of baby kale, garden greens, quinoa, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, dried cranberries, feta cheese, grilled chicken breast and a kale pesto vinaigrette. This salad is protein powerhouse with a total of 40 grams of protein. It contains 8 grams of fiber and also is a great source of vitamin A, vitamin C and Iron. If you’re looking to consume a little less sodium, opting out of the feta cheese would bring this salad down 350 mg.

**Charburger + Sweet Potato Fries**
I know some of you must be thinking, “if I am at a burger joint, I want to eat a burger not a salad.” A great option would be the original Charburger with a side of Sweet Potato Fries. The Charburger, which consists of 100% ground beef, lettuce, tomato, caramelized onions, mayonnaise and pickles on a toasted bun, also comes in at 470 calories and packs 20 grams of protein. If you’re feeling extra adventurous, you can ask for it to be served protein style, lettuce wrapped, to bring it down 118 calories and 250 mg of sodium.
French fries in any fried form aren’t exactly a “health” food, but, remember, it’s all about balance. Subbing regular fries with sweet potato fries can be a slightly better option. These fries contain less calories and about half the sodium when compared to the regular fries. Sweet potatoes are also a good source of Vitamin A and C.

Alternatively, order your Charburger with a side salad for the better option in this scenario.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

The idea of eating healthy can sometimes be overwhelming or impossible but the key is to aim to eat balanced plates most of the time. The goal is not to deny the foods you love but to eat in moderation and make sure you eat a variety of foods!