Director of study on healthy airline food options suggests eating before flight, carrying snacks on board

By Kate Silver

Every flight should be more of a pleasure than a chore. And yet, at 35,000 feet, even a short, four-hour flight can be a test of willpower. But have you ever thought about how your body metabolizes food at that altitude? What if there were a way to choose what you eat before you take off to optimize your health and well-being during your flight? Thanks to new studies and research, it’s possible to make informed choices about your food before you board the plane.

“People have choices about what they eat on that flight,” says Platkin, director of the Food Law and Nutrition Program at the Tufts University Henry M. Jackson School of Medicine. “They have choices about what they eat in their airline, but they don’t have choices about what they eat on that flight,” he says.

Each airline is given a “health score” on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. This score is based on the availability of healthy options, nutritional information, and the average calorie content of meals. The highest score goes to Delta, followed by JetBlue and Hawaiian Airlines. The lowest scores go to Spirit Airlines, Allegiant Air, and United Airlines.

“It’s still an improvement from the past, but there’s still room for improvement,” Platkin says. “I’m still looking for a healthy choice for everyone on board.”

Delta

Delta has a “hero” that is available on all flights. It’s a protein salad with mixed greens, cherry tomatoes, and a vinaigrette dressing. The salad is served with a choice of dressing: balsamic, champagne, or honey mustard. The salad is complemented with a side of whole-grain breadsticks.

JetBlue Airways

JetBlue has a ““You Pick” option, which allows passengers to choose from a selection of healthy options. The options include a salad, a sandwich, or a wrap. The “You Pick” option is available on all flights.

Hawaiian Airlines

Hawaiian has a “Healthier Choice” option, which includes a salad or a sandwich. The options are available on all flights.

Spirit Airlines

Spirit has a “Smart Start” option, which includes a salad or a sandwich. The options are available on all flights.

United Airlines

United has a “Healthy Choice” option, which includes a salad or a sandwich. The options are available on all flights.

Allegiant Air

Allegiant has a “You Pick” option, which allows passengers to choose from a selection of healthy options. The options include a salad, a sandwich, or a wrap. The “You Pick” option is available on all flights.

To learn more about the studies and research on healthy airline food options, visit dietdetective.com/annual-airline-food-investigation-2018-17.

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