

Restaurant & Hidden-Carb Cheat Sheet

A practical pause before you order.

1. Start with the protein

Ask for a plainly prepared, unbreaded protein. Confirm marinades and glazes.

2. Name what comes off

Bun, tortilla, rice, noodles, bread, and breaded toppings all need an explicit check.

3. Choose the side

Ask about plain vegetables or a simple salad. Check whether substitutions cost extra.

4. Keep sauce separate

Ask for dressing, ketchup, gravy, and sweet sauces on the side. Count the portion you actually use.

5. Verify the whole order

Use the current official nutrition information for your exact combination. If it cannot be verified, leave the number unknown and choose a simpler order.

These are ordering prompts, not verified carb counts. Restaurant ingredients and portions vary. The free guides at under20carbs.com/restaurants link to official sources.

Four scripts for real life

Burger counter

“A burger without the bun, please. No sweet sauce. Lettuce on the side; I will choose my own dressing.”
Check cheese, pickles, onions and condiments.

Bowl or salad counter

“Protein and greens, no rice or tortilla strips. Sauce separately.” Beans, corn, toppings, and marinades still need checking.

Breakfast stop

“Plain eggs, please, without toast or potatoes.” Ask whether egg mixtures, meats, or sauces have added ingredients.

Sit-down meal

“Plain grilled protein and vegetables, without the glaze. What is in the seasoning and sauce?” Verify breading, butter sauces, and side preparation.

The hidden-carb pause

Drinks Sweetened coffee, juice, cocktails, and milk portions.

Sauces Dressing, barbecue sauce, ketchup, gravy, and marinades.

Serving size Two scoops or a large cup may mean several labeled servings.

“Keto” or “sugar-free” Read the whole label. Marketing words do not establish a carb count.

Count the portion you eat

Use your chosen carb-counting method consistently. This worksheet uses total carbohydrate minus dietary fiber; it does not subtract sugar alcohols. Label conventions differ by country. If your clinician gave you a method, use that instead.

Made-up label example: 30 g serving, 6 g total carbohydrate and 2 g fiber. A 45 g portion is 1.5 servings. $(6 - 2) \times 1.5 = 6$ g net carbs. This is a math example, not nutrition data for a real food.

Date / personal daily target

Breakfast: food, portion, total carbs, fiber, net

Lunch: food, portion, total carbs, fiber, net

Dinner: food, portion, total carbs, fiber, net

Snacks, sauces and drinks

Daily total / remaining budget

Do not enter zero when you cannot verify a food. Mark it unknown and check the label, official menu, or an appropriate food database.

Keep a simple backup

Choose a protein Eggs, plain chicken, or canned fish that suits your needs.

Add produce Lettuce, cucumber, broccoli, or another vegetable you can portion.

Portion extras Cheese, nuts, dressings, and sauces need their own check.

Pack before the rush Keep cold foods at 40 F or below. Use an insulated bag with ice packs; refrigerate on arrival.

Quick shopping check

Protein I will actually use

Vegetables for the next two days

A measured sauce or dressing

Containers and a way to keep lunch cold

Keep perishable foods out of the refrigerator for no more than 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F. Use cooked refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days. Reheat leftovers to 165 F.

Safety references: [USDA leftovers guidance](#) and [FoodSafety.gov cooking chart](#). Reviewed September 9, 2026.

Educational planning resource, not medical advice. This is not a personalized or nutritionally complete diet prescription. If you are pregnant, have diabetes, kidney disease or an eating-disorder history, or take glucose or blood-pressure medication, consult a qualified professional before a major carb change. No guaranteed carb total, ketosis, or weight-loss result.

Want your whole week organized? Preview the Busy-Week Kit at under20carbs.com/busy-week-kit.