

# SUGAR DETOX CREATES CHALLENGES WHEN EATING OUT

I recently spent 10 days doing something heretofore unheard of: I cut sugar from my diet. And not just sweets, but foods that metabolize into sugar — foods like bread, potatoes, beans and cheese.

I did it by following a program laid out by Seaside's Jennifer Visser, owner of The Healthy Hub, who invited the community, free of charge, to join in. In short, the diet — and I hate that word and its flimsy attachments — is a lot like going paleo, but more hardcore. Mostly I was eating two things: meats and vegetables.

I detoxed for two reasons: in hopes of deepening my relationship with and understanding of food, and to gauge potential health benefits. Besides needing to lose 10 pounds — which I did, very quickly — I have a longstanding ailment, plantar fasciitis. A naturopathic doctor (who was also giving me rounds of injections) said my pain could be chalked up, in part, to inflammation. Reducing sugars in my diet, he said, could relieve the intense pain I've felt in my feet every day for the last few years.

The benefits of the eating regimen appeared almost immediately: I was getting more nutrients and eating less. I had more energy and my body was tight and trim. How quickly I dropped the bloat — and a belt loop — was astounding. I slept better. As for my feet, well, they're less painful, and hopefully mending, but I'm loath yet to say, after years of discomfort, that I have healed.

Going sugarless meant a lot more cooking, which was partially great. I was paying more attention to what I consumed — did you know, for instance, that just about every sausage and hot dog at the grocery store contains corn syrup? But there were times I just didn't have the patience to cook. I'd been busy and wanted to be taken care of.

So I went out, dining with dietary restrictions for the first time.

My first meal out was at the Cannon Beach Hardware Store & Public House. After a solid week without leaving the kitchen, being waited on and cooked for felt divine. The Screw & Brew's menu isn't especially shaped for someone eating gluten-, starch- and dairy-free. Plus, I was starving — a salad wasn't going to do it. I thought the grilled chicken sandwich, sans bun and cheese but with bacon, looked mighty fine. But, sadly, all the chicken in the house had already been breaded. There were,

however, some Halibut Burgers (\$16) that had yet to be dusted with panko, and I went for it. I longed for something with a bit of crunch (over the course of the diet I wanted crackers as much as anything).

Instead of fries I had a side salad, which cost an extra \$4. Regular readers know how these steep salad up-charges drive me batty. In this case, at least there were a few accoutrements — like artichoke hearts, cherry tomatoes and garbanzo beans (which I couldn't eat) — making the case for added cost. Still, though.

The fish fillet, white, clean and simply prepared, offered a nice lean protein to the fatty bacon. Essentially, though, the meal became much like the ones I'd been making myself overnight: a big, rip-roaring salad. But again, being cooked for had me feeling like royalty.

My second trip out was to Buoy Beer Co. Immediately, the menu — which featured extra details like asterisks on all the dishes that can be made gluten-free, for instance — made me feel much more comfortable dining with restrictions. I came in dreaming of the succulent, hearty, lean bison burger, but the Shrimp Louie (\$12) caught my eye. I asked the waitress what it would take to be dairy-free, and it was simply about changing the dressing. She recommended the salad highly, and so I went for it, with vinaigrette.

The salad was lovingly constructed, a central mountain of bay shrimp with a crown of microgreens. The tower was so tall I didn't



The Shrimp Louie Salad at Buoy Beer Co. features a central mountain of bay shrimp with a crown of microgreens.



A platter at Tora Sushi offers three slices each of raw tuna, yellowtail, salmon, octopus and lightly seared albacore.

want to topple it. Like a game of Jenga, I hardly knew how to begin. I picked the croutons out, shed a tear for them, and dug in. Moving through the salad was like digging for treasures. I found hidden coves of pungent, oily olives and grilled asparagus, deposits of radish. The tomatoes were the ripest I've have on a plate all winter — one of the rare cases they actually had business being there. A hard-boiled egg was quite thinly sliced, allowing it to go so much further. Though the egg-whites and shrimp had astonishingly similar textures, I appreciated the extra protein.

And while I quite enjoyed both my excursions, I wanted to branch out — not to have another salad.

On a Saturday evening, I found myself in Seaside, and I thought: Mexican would be ideal — just get rid of the tortilla. I went to The Stand, and was flabbergasted to find it closed. What restaurant closes on the weekends?! Just down the street, though, was Tora Sushi. It too could offer me some flavors I wasn't producing at home and would require little alteration.

It turned out no substitution at all was necessary. It just took a bit of digging. I told

the sushi chef I wanted the sashimi platter, but with no rice. He said they actually had such a platter, though it wasn't on the menu. I felt like I'd found the pocket. Better yet, for \$18.95 it came with miso soup and salad. I was actually getting a coursed meal!

The miso was run of the mill, but still: multiple dishes! The second course, a salad, came with a frisky, spring-evoking ginger carrot dressing (that likely had a decent amount of sugar in it). It was poured over a mixture — iceberg lettuce mix and a few stray corn kernels (again, something outside the diet) — unbecoming of the dressing.

The main course offered three almost business card-sized slices each of raw tuna, yellowtail, salmon, octopus and lightly seared albacore. The albacore, dressed with onions and a lemon-soy sauce, was far and away the best. Each section of fish was served atop a colorful garnish of green lettuce, and long, thin strips of white daikon radish, purple cabbage and orange carrots. The look was inviting, though meaningless, even detracting in terms of taste. I preferred the fish by itself. All was well and good enough to enjoy raw, but not astounding enough whereas adding soy sauce and/or wasabi would've been a crime of diluting essence. While not quite breathtaking, the platter was a delightful, hi-octane swerve from my big salads.

And in a way, that's what the whole detox thing was about — trying new things and seeing what works. So instead of a recommendation to try a particular restaurant, consider this week's column a nudge in the direction of the unknown.

## mouth OF THE COLUMBIA COAST WEEKEND'S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

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