



# Dear Diary: Keeping a Food Journal

*Prepared By Amber O'Neal*

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Being disciplined about what you eat is one of the keys to looking and feeling your best, and keeping a food diary can help you develop a more realistic view of how much (or how little) you are eating. It will also allow you to identify triggers that typically cause overeating (i.e. Late-afternoon Munchies, Primetime Pigouts, etc.).

Keeping a food diary can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. If you don't have access to a computer during the day, the first step is creating a form like **this** that allows you to consistently track your intake – even when you're away from the computer.

**(1) GOOD:** Enter info into a free online program like **FitDay™** & get a readout of the nutritional value of your meals. Great resource since it's free, but the food entry process is time consuming on this site, and the reports are just OK.

**(2) BETTER:** Enter info into a paid online program like **My Food Diary™**. For only \$9 per month, you get professional-looking charts & reports and the ability to see what you would weigh in 3 months if every day were like today. How cool is that?

**(3) BEST:** Share your diary with a Registered Dietician (RD). Online tools are inexpensive and handy, but 'you get what you pay for,' and nothing beats individualized evaluations from someone who is specifically trained in the area of nutrition.

## **Helpful Hints:**

1. Don't change your eating habits while you're keeping your food diary.
2. Tell the truth. There's nothing to be gained by trying to look good in the diary.
3. Record what you eat on all days for at least 1 week – longer if possible.
4. Write down everything that you eat AND drink. Even small things like a handful of popcorn, a piece of candy, or a glass of juice can add up over time.
5. Keep your food diary with you so that you don't have to rely on your memory at the end of the day.
6. Be very specific about what you ate. Include all condiments (cheese, mayo, salad dressing, etc.).
7. Get familiar with serving sizes so that you can accurately determine how much you actually ate. For example, if you look on the package, you will see that 1 Otis Spunkmeyer muffin is actually 2 servings. When is the last time you only had ½ a muffin?

*These tips were brought to you by Amber O'Neal, Certified Personal Trainer and Owner of Café Physique, a fitness and nutrition company specializing in studio and in-home personal training, yoga & pilates and nutrition counseling in Metro Atlanta. For more information, please visit [www.CafePhysique.com](http://www.CafePhysique.com).*