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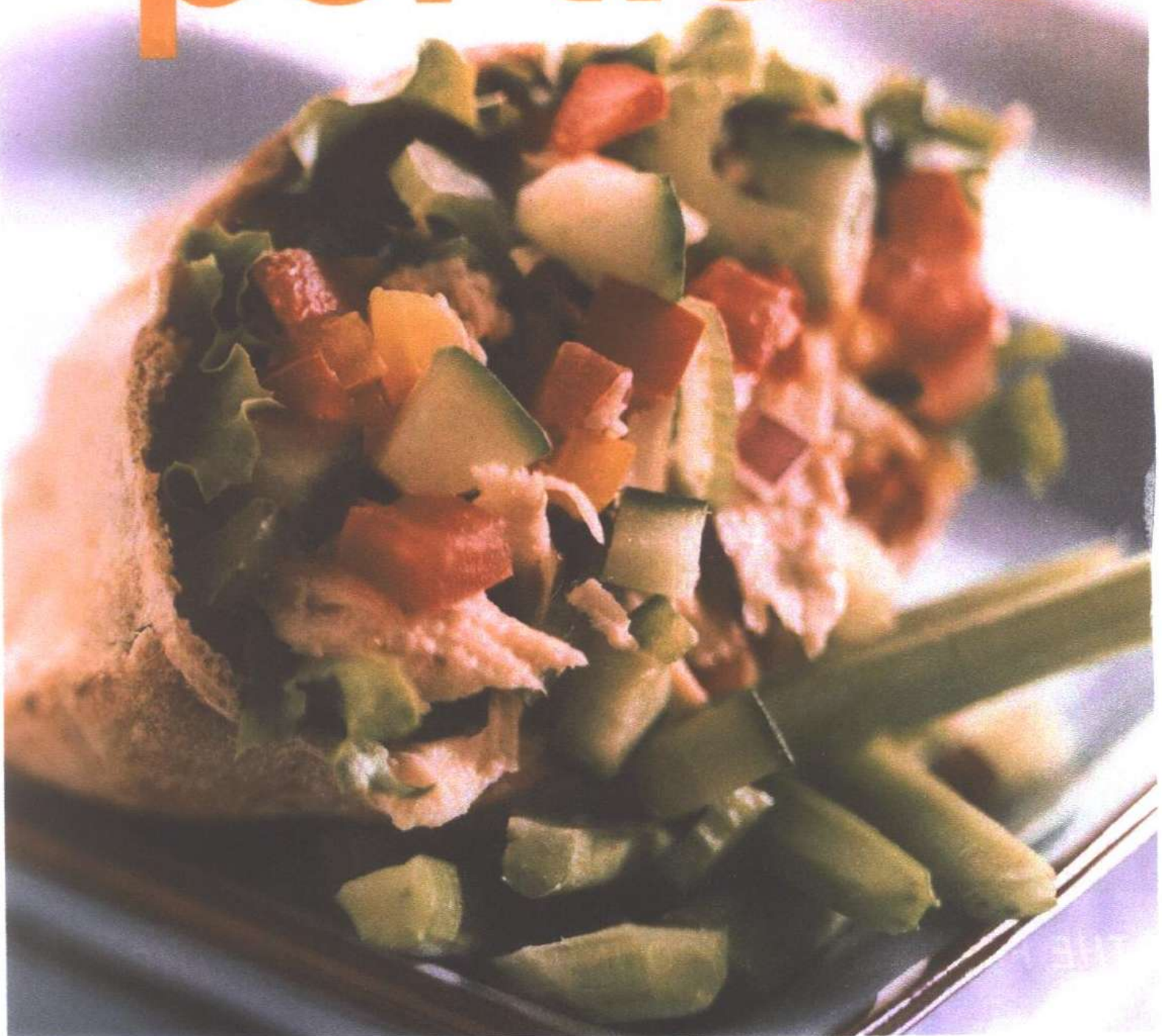
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# pita portions







## Exactly how much should you eat for each meal? If you're tired of measuring and weighing your options, *Oxygen* has an easier way to monitor your food intake.

BY LISA HANNAM

**Y**ou've heard it time and time again: eat five to six meals a day and you'll boost your metabolism and lose weight. But if you're eating at least three meals of 700 to 900 calories a plate, you won't reveal your hidden abs, you'll gain body fat. So what exactly does a healthy portion look like? Well, pretty much whatever you can stuff into half a pita bread pocket.

Pitas aren't just for sandwiches anymore. Barb Taggart, supervisor of clinical dietetics at Community Memorial Hospital in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, says that pitas work for any meal. Stuff your scrambled eggs in a pita. Fill a pita with a salad. Or load it up with a sizzling hot stir-fry.

### toss your bread & wraps

Today when you order a sandwich from the local deli, the bread is inches thick and the filling pours out the sides. With the latest food industry trends, it's no wonder your sandwich has grown. One study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that most marketplace portions exceeded federal standard sizes by as much as eight times. And portion sizes listed on some labels are smaller than what the package actually holds. So the low-fat calorie content is only true if you eat small amounts. With all these

growing portions, Americans have increased their daily caloric intake by 340 calories since 1970, say Tufts University researchers.

So exactly what are you eating when you order a sandwich? A roast turkey and bacon sandwich with ranch dressing contains 830 calories, 38 grams of fat and 2,260 milligrams of sodium, which is 94 percent of your daily value. And if you think a wrap is a better option, think again. The same filling in a wrap only saves you 120 calories, but, get this, adds on another gram of fat and 160 milligrams of sodium – clearly not a better choice.

"With bread you put two pieces of bread minimally – with the pocket, you just use one pocket and you don't put as much inside of it," says Taggart, who

worked with pita-makers Kangaroo Brands in creating *The Pocket Diet* (2004), which includes 45 pita recipes. "The pocket lends itself to a more reasonable portion." She suggests opting for whole wheat pita bread for additional fiber.

### filling warning

"Of course you can put a lot of high-fat foods in a pita," says Taggart. She warns that you can go overboard on condiments: "Use light mayonnaise or fat-free sour cream. And mustard is great in place of butter, mayonnaise or salad dressing." Taggart suggests using a quarter cup of tuna and a tablespoon of light mayonnaise for a tuna salad pita. "Make sure your ingredients are healthy and low-fat."

## DAILY PITA MEAL PLAN

MEAL	CALORIES
<b>BREAKFAST:</b> Ham and cheese in ½ pita	220
<b>SNACK:</b> Low-fat yogurt or fruit	100
<b>LUNCH:</b> Tuna or chicken salad in a whole pita	500
<b>SNACK:</b> Fruits, nuts or raw veggies	130
<b>DINNER:</b> 4 to 5 oz meat or fish, serving of complex carbs, serving of vegetables	450
<b>SNACK:</b> Fruit, nuts, yogurt or reduced-fat ice cream	100
<b>BEVERAGES:</b> Juice, skim milk, water	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,700</b>

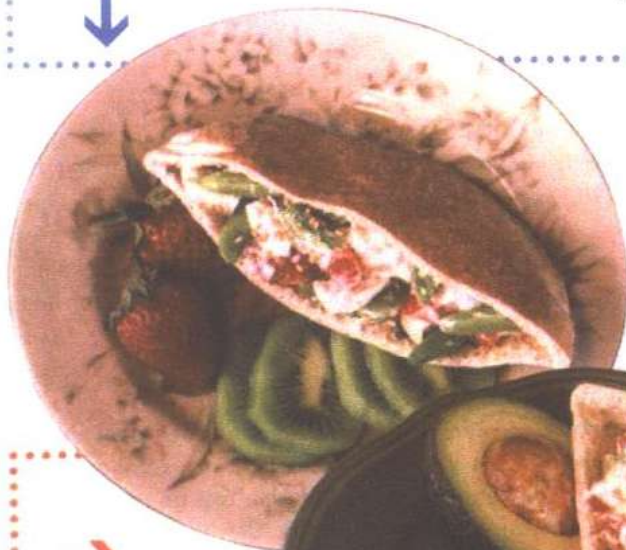


## chicken sesame pockets

Makes 6 servings.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 skinless chicken breasts, cooked and diced  
4 tbsp low-fat mayonnaise  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
½ tbsp ground ginger  
½ cup slivered almonds  
2 tbsp sesame seeds  
½ cup pea pods or snow peas  
½ cup red bell pepper, diced  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
3 pitas



### INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 450°F. Chop chicken into bite-size pieces and bake until fully cooked, set aside. In a medium-size bowl, mix mayonnaise, soy sauce, ginger, almonds and sesame seeds. Mix well. Stir in the chicken pieces, pea pods and red pepper. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cut pitas in half and split open so they can be stuffed. Spoon mixture into pitas and serve.

### NUTRIENTS PER SERVING:

Calories: 154  
Protein: 17 g  
Carbohydrates: 6 g  
Fat: 7 g



## tabouleh pita

Makes 8 servings.

### INGREDIENTS:

4 pitas  
1 cup bulgur-medium (cracked wheat)  
2 cups water  
juice of 1 lemon, freshly squeezed  
¼ cup olive oil  
3 medium tomatoes, diced  
3 scallions, diced  
2 medium cucumbers, peeled and diced  
1 large green bell pepper, diced  
1 cup finely chopped parsley

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Cut pitas in half and split open. Soak bulgur in water in a medium bowl for 15 minutes, then drain. In a separate small bowl, mix lemon juice with olive oil. Add lemon juice mixture to bulgur. Add tomatoes, scallions, cucumbers, bell pepper and parsley. Mix well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Spoon mixture into pitas and serve.

### NUTRIENTS PER SERVING:

Calories: 109  
Protein: 3 g  
Carbohydrates: 12 g  
Fat: 7 g



## avocado, tomato & yogurt pita

Makes 2 servings.

### INGREDIENTS:

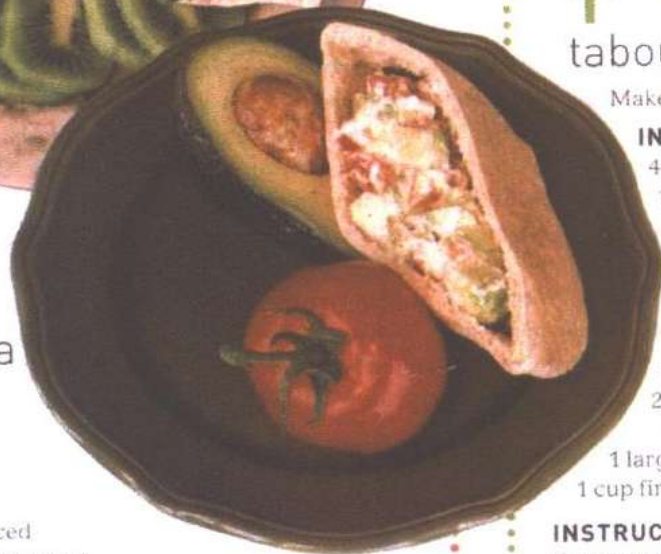
1 pita  
1 avocado, diced  
1 small tomato, diced  
2 tbsp low-fat plain yogurt  
Seasoning salt, to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Cut pita down the center and split pita halves so they can be stuffed. Mix together the avocado, tomato and yogurt in a small bowl. Add seasoning to taste. With a spoon, fill the pita – it is now ready to eat.

### NUTRIENTS PER SERVING:

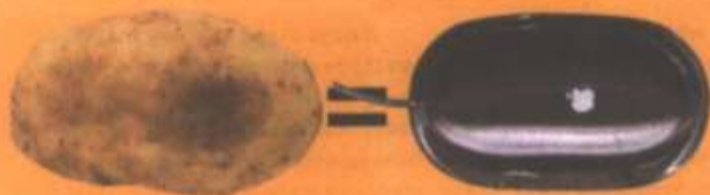
Calories: 172  
Protein: 3 g  
Carbohydrates: 10 g  
Fat: 15 g



## PICTURE YOUR PORTIONS

It's not as if we all have time to weigh everything we eat. For an easier, no-fuss way to measure your meals, the American Dietetic Association recommends visualizing your portions.

FOOD	VISUAL SIZE COMPARISON
Cooked meat, fish or poultry	A deck of cards
Fruit	A baseball
1.5 oz. of cheese	3 dominoes
Baked potato	A computer mouse
1 cup of pasta	A tennis ball
Serving of fruit, veggies or yogurt	A small handful



## CONTROL WHAT YOU EAT

To figure out how many calories you should eat each day, you need to consider how active you are. So on days when you're more active, add on a few calories. And for those days behind your desk at work, drop a few. Here's a guide to help you figure out how much you should eat.

### FORMULA:

Weight in pounds X multiplier (see chart below) = calories burned that day

ACTIVITY LEVEL	MULTIPLIER
Sedentary (basal metabolic rate)	x 10
Lightly active	x 12
Moderate exercise	x 14
Moderate and heavy exercise	x 16
Heavy exercise	x 18



## chicken fajita pockets

Makes 6 servings.


### INGREDIENTS:

- 3 pitas
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 3 skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tsp fajita seasoning
- 1 green bell pepper, sliced into long strips
- 1 medium onion, sliced

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Cut pitas down the center and split open to be stuffed. Heat oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat for 1 minute. Season whole chicken breasts with fajita seasoning and cook in the skillet. Sauté until brown, approximately 3 to 4 minutes for each side. Remove chicken from pan and slice into 1/2-inch by 1-inch strips. Toss peppers and onions into pan and cook until tender. Return chicken to pan and stir with peppers and onion for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat, fill pocket and serve.

### NUTRIENTS PER SERVING:

- Calories: 125
- Protein: 18 g
- Carbohydrates: 3 g
- Fat: 4 g 

*Recipes adapted from The Pocket Diet, published by Kangaroo Brands (www.kangaroobrands.com)*