Splurge a little and lose

Here’s how to end your day with a special treat—without packing on the pounds.

By Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, LDN

Plan ahead for treats:
Use our tricks to satisfy your craving for a hot fudge sundae without sabotaging your diet.

The secret to enjoying your favorite indulgence without sacrificing your waistline? Make your calories count. Try our tricks (on page 100) that’ll save calories for something you crave. The government’s dietary guidelines build in room for such treats: Uncle Sam calls them “discretionary” calories; we like to call them “I Deserve It!” calories. So pick your pleasure.
Your splurge plan: With this 1,800-calorie-a-day menu, you'll get the nutrition you need, plus your favorite 200-calorie splurge—and lose half a pound a week.

Breakfast
1 cup whole-grain cereal, 1 cup skim milk, 1 banana, 1 cup coffee

Are cream and sugar really worth the calories? Try skipping them in your coffee.
Save 30 calories

Lunch
2 slices whole-grain bread, 4 ounces sliced turkey, 1 slice low-fat mozzarella cheese, 1 tomato slice, lettuce

When it's time to put a spread on your bread, use mustard instead of mayo.
Save 67 calories

Afternoon snack
1 cup plain low-fat yogurt, ½ cup fresh blueberries, 1 ounce almonds

Stir fresh berries into plain low-fat yogurt instead of buying blueberry-flavored.
Save 46 calories

Dinner
½ cup black beans, ¼ cup corn, ¼ cup chopped green bell pepper, ½ cup steamed brown rice, 2 tablespoons salsa, ¼ avocado

Choose brown rice instead of white rice, and pass on the cheese.
Save 62 calories

Our favorite ways to enjoy the 205 "I Deserve It!" calories you've saved:

Ice Cream With Fudge Sauce
Top ½ cup chocolate fudge chunk ice cream (such as Edy's) with 1 tablespoon dark chocolate sauce (such as Dove).
190 calories

Italian Treat
Top 1 (½-inch-thick) slice French baguette with 1 tablespoon tomato-and-basil bruschetta topping (such as Classico); enjoy with 5 ounces of your favorite white wine.
212 calories

Cheese Plate
Have 1 ounce brie, ½ cup grapes, and 15 pistachios.
192 calories

Truffle Trio
Have 3 chocolate truffles (about ½ ounce each).
190 calories

Pomegranate Cocktail
Mix 10 ounces pomegranate soda (such as Izze) with a jigger (1½ ounces) of vodka.
197 calories

Total calories without changes: 1,797; Total calories using the Splurge Plan: 1,592