

Recipe Makeovers: 5 Ways to Create Healthy Recipes

Use these techniques to reduce the fat, calories and sodium (salt) in your favorite recipes.

You love your grandmother's bread pudding. But her recipe calls for 4 cups of whole milk, 1 stick of butter and 4 eggs — ingredients that raise the calorie count and fat content of this dessert. The solution? Redo the recipe by switching or reducing certain ingredients.

With many recipes, you can make healthy changes without affecting the taste or texture of the food. So whether you're trying to stick to a healthy eating plan or you're following a special diet, use these changes to make your recipes, including family favorites, healthier.

1. Lower the amount of fat, sugar and sodium

With most recipes, you can lower the amount of fat, sugar and sodium without losing the flavor. By cutting fat and sugar, you also cut calories. How much can you leave out without affecting the taste and texture of the food? Use the following general guidelines:

- **Fat.** For baked goods, use half the butter, shortening or oil and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or prune puree. You can also use prepared fruit-based fat replacers found in the baking aisle of your local grocery store.
- **Sugar.** Reduce the amount of sugar by one-third to one-half. When you use less sugar, add spices such as cinnamon, cloves, allspice and nutmeg or flavorings such as vanilla extract or almond flavoring to increase the sweetness of the food.
- **Sodium.** Reduce salt by one-half in baked goods that don't require yeast. For foods that require yeast, don't reduce the amount of salt, which is necessary for the dough to rise. Without salt, the foods may become dense and flat. For most main dishes, salads, soups and other foods, however, you can reduce the salt by one-half or eliminate it completely.

Other ingredients may contain sugar, fat and sodium, and you can decrease them as well. For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, use 1/2 cup instead. Or use less soy sauce to decrease the amount of sodium in the food.

2. Make a healthy substitution

Healthy substitutions not only reduce the amount of fat, calories and sodium in your recipes, but also can boost the nutritional content. For example, use whole-wheat pasta in place of enriched

pasta. You'll get three times the fiber and lower the number of calories. Prepare a dessert with fat-free milk instead of whole milk to save 63 calories and almost 8 grams of fat per cup.

3. Remove an ingredient

In some recipes, you can remove an ingredient completely; good choices include items you add out of habit or for appearance, such as frosting, coconut or nuts, which are high in fat and calories. Other possibilities include pickles, olives, relish, ketchup, butter, mayonnaise, syrup, jelly and mustard, which can have large amounts of sodium, sugar, fat and calories.

4. Change how you cook the food

Healthy cooking methods — such as braising, broiling, grilling and steaming — can help your food hold on to its flavor and nutrition without adding extra fat, oil or sodium. If your recipe calls for frying the ingredients in oil or butter, try baking, broiling or poaching the food instead. If the directions say to baste the meat or vegetables in oil or drippings, use wine, fruit juice, vegetable juice or fat-free vegetable broth instead. Using nonstick pans, or spray pans with nonstick cooking spray, to further lower the amount of fat and calories added to your meals.

5. Change the portion size

No matter how much you reduce, change or take out ingredients, some recipes may still be high in sugar, fat or salt. In these cases, reduce the amount of that food you eat. Smaller portions have less fat, calories and sodium and allow you to eat a wider variety of foods during a meal. Eating a variety of foods will mean that you get all the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber you need.

Putting it all together

As you look over your recipe, decide what to change and how to change it. Make notes of any changes, so you can refer to them the next time you prepare the food. You may have to make the recipe a few times, trying different changes, before the dish turns out the way you want it to. But finding the right combination of ingredients, while making your favorites dishes healthier, is worth the trouble!

Adapted from the Mayo Clinic site at www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes