



Chartered
Institute of
Environmental
Health

THE ESSEX HEALTHYLIFE

'HEALTHY EATING'

GOLD & SILVER AWARDS

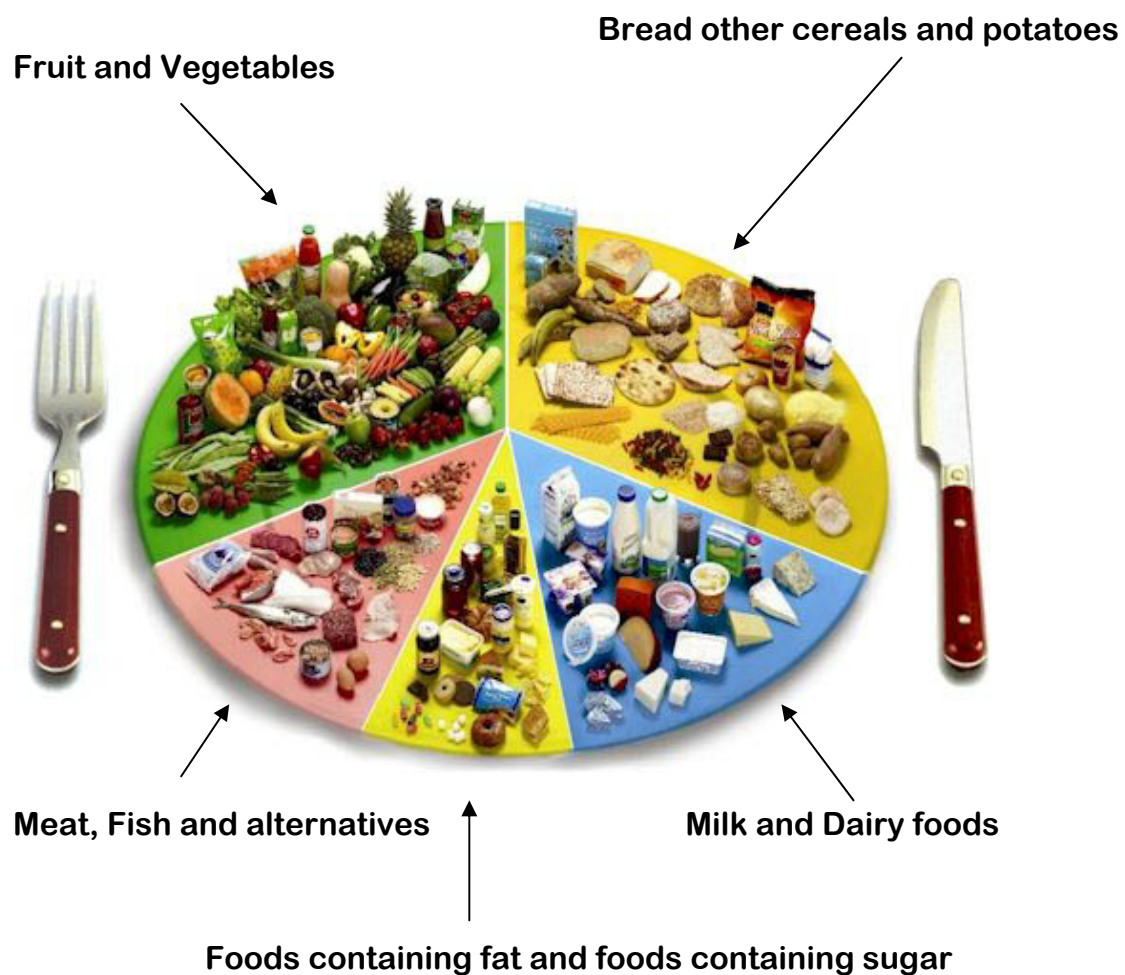
**GUIDANCE NOTES ON HOW TO ACHIEVE A HEALTHIER MENU
AND BECOME PART OF THE HEALTHY EATING AWARDS SCHEME**



CONTENTS

	Page
The Balance of Good Health	3
The importance of Healthy Eating	4
Purpose of this Guidance	4
Starchy foods	5
Fruit and vegetables	7
Meat, fish and protein alternatives	9
Milk and dairy	11
Foods high in fat	12
Foods high in sugar	15
Salt	17
Planning your menu	19
Money saving ideas	20
Healthy options for different times of day	21
Marketing your healthier menu	23

The Balance of Good Health is based on five food groups:



Why is healthy catering important?

With more and more food being prepared and eaten outside the home, you are in a position of influence. If you work in a school or college, staff canteen or local sandwich bar, you may well be serving the same customers every day, so you will be serving up a significant portion of their diets. This means you can really make a difference.

Many health risks can be dramatically reduced by choosing a healthier lifestyle including plenty of physical activity and a healthy diet. You might not be able to get people moving, but you are in a position to give your customers the chance to choose healthier food and to do it without compromising on taste.

Today, more and more consumers are looking for healthier options. And, by serving healthier options you could be improving the health of your customers and saving yourself some money. For example, you could increase the amount of cost-effective starchy foods you serve, such as rice or pasta, and reduce the amount of sauce, which can be more expensive. This will be good for your customers and good for you.

How will these Guidance Notes help me?

They will set out what makes up a balanced diet. Healthy eating is about getting the balance right. In practice this means having a variety of foods, basing meals on starchy foods and eating at least five portions of fruit and veg a day. It also means having moderate amounts of meat, fish and alternatives; having moderate amounts of milk and dairy foods; having small or only occasional amounts of foods high in fat, especially saturated fat, or foods and drinks high in sugar, or foods high in salt. There are sections in this guidance on

- Starchy foods
- Fruit and vegetables
- Meat, fish and alternative sources of protein
- Milk and dairy
- Foods high in fat and foods and drinks high in sugar
- Salt

In each section this guidance will advise on

- i) Why it is important
- ii) What we are asking you to do and
- iii) How you can achieve these aims

Starchy foods

Why is it important?

Starchy foods contain carbohydrate mainly in the form of starch, which provides energy. Examples include bread, potatoes, and cereals such as rice, pasta, breakfast cereals and couscous. Starchy foods also contain some protein, minerals, vitamins and fibre.

Fibre helps the digestive system function properly and helps prevent bowel disorders such as constipation. Most people don't eat enough fibre. On average we only eat two thirds of the fibre we should eat every day.

The healthiest choices are wholegrain foods, such as wholemeal bread or brown rice, because these also help protect us against the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Starchy foods should make up about a third of total diet. So try to increase the amount of starchy foods you serve, by including at least one starchy food with each meal, for example, serving bread with soup, rice with chilli and so on.

What are we asking you to do?

You **must** follow the guidance in this section. These conditions apply to all meals across the menu and you should follow them at all times.

Foods and ingredients

- You must make starchy carbohydrates such as pasta, rice and potatoes available as an accompaniment to all main meals.
- When you serve chips, you should make healthier starchy alternatives available, for example, boiled or jacket potatoes, rice and pasta.
- Wholemeal or other high-fibre varieties of bread and rolls must always be available.
- Bread must be available as an accompaniment to soup, salads and main meals.
- If you serve breakfast cereals, unsweetened, higher fibre cereals must be available, for example, porridge, bran flakes, shredded wheat or muesli.

How can you achieve these aims?

Here are some examples of healthy ways of using starchy foods.

Rice – offer boiled or steamed as a healthy alternative to fried. You can make paella, risotto, pilaffs and kedgeree.

Pasta – serve big portions of all types but don't use much oil.

Breads – let your customers add their own butter or low-fat spreads. If you're serving sandwiches, offer thicker slices of bread and rolls and include low-fat fillings. Include wholegrain, granary and seedy varieties of bread or toast.

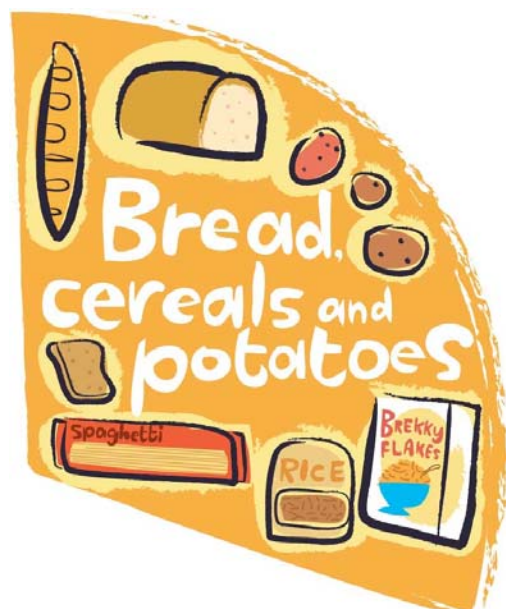
Other healthy bread choices include:

- speciality breads such as olive and sun-dried tomato, bread wedges served with soup, chapattis with Indian food, pitta breads with Mediterranean food, flour tortillas with Mexican food, bagels and crispbreads

Potatoes, yams, cassava – leave the skins on potatoes where possible because the skin contains fibre. If you peel potatoes – or when you peel yams or cassava – don't peel too deeply because not only is this wasteful, but you will be losing some of the nutrients too. Baked and boiled are the healthiest options – if possible let customers add their own spread. If you fry them, remember that the larger the pieces the less fat they absorb, they also absorb less fat if you fry them at a high enough temperature (155-225°C; 310-435°F).

If you make chips, remember that straight chips absorb less fat than crinkle-cut. Pre-blanch chips in a steamer, always drain well and change the oil regularly otherwise it will affect the flavour of the food cooked in it. For a healthier option than frying, cook chips by steaming, brushing with oil and oven baking.

Flour – wholemeal flour is the healthiest option, but not always a popular choice. You could use a mixture of white and wholemeal.



Fruit and Vegetables

Why is it important?

You probably know that we should be eating at least five portions of a variety of fruit and veg each day.

But did you know that:

- fresh, frozen, juiced, canned and dried fruit or veg all count
- a portion of fruit or veg is about 80g. This means people should be having at least 400g of fruit and veg every day
- potatoes don't count, because they're included in the starchy foods group
- juice only counts as one portion however much someone drinks
- beans and pulses count as a maximum of one portion a day

But why are lots of fruit and veg needed? Many different studies have shown that populations with a high intake of fruit and veg have a lower incidence of heart disease, some cancers and other health problems.

Fruit and veg provide the body with vitamins, minerals, fibre and carbohydrate, mainly in the form of sugars.

Serve plenty of fruit and veg and remember these can be fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced. Serve them at every meal in some form and offer them as snacks if this is appropriate to your business.

The aim for everyone should be to have at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day.

What are we asking you to do?

You **must** always follow the guidelines in this section.

- Fresh fruit must be clearly available.
- You must offer vegetables or salad as an accompaniment to all plated meals and snacks, for example, sandwiches and baked potatoes.
- You must provide at least two types of vegetables, pulses or beans as an accompaniment to hot meals (not including potatoes).
- If you use tinned fruit, it must be canned in juice rather than syrup.
If you serve desserts, fruit-based desserts which are low in fat must be available.

You should also do the following **whenever possible**.

- Cook vegetables in as little water as possible and for the shortest amount of time, to keep in vitamins.
- Consider alternative cooking methods to boiling such as steaming, microwaving and stirfrying.
- You should include vegetables, beans and pulses in dishes whenever possible.
- Serve vegetables and salad without sauces or dressings whenever possible.

How can you achieve these aims?

There are lots of ways of increasing the amount of fruit and veg you offer. You can:

- add more veg and pulses to dishes such as stir-fries, casseroles and stews
- include plenty of veg with meals
- offer colourful salads (with low-fat dressing) as part of the meal
- use a variety of fresh and dried fruit and vegetables for snacks
- offer fruit and vegetables as starters – for example vegetable soups, grapefruit salad, tricolore salads, Parma ham and melon, asparagus tips, crudités and dips
- offer a variety of fresh fruit (aim for at least five types, so a regular customer can choose a different one each day) and offer fruit-based dishes for dessert
- offer fruit juices and fruit smoothies to drink

Remember that the vitamins and minerals in fruit and veg can be lost easily. Some vitamins are water-soluble, others are lost when cooked at very high temperature such as by pressure steaming. And they may disappear altogether if food is kept warm for too long.

So here are some **practical tips** for maximising the goodness, flavour and texture of fruit and vegetables:

- store and cook for as short a time as possible and prepare as late as possible
- don't leave them sitting in water for long periods because the vitamins can be lost into the water
- use the minimum amount of water for cooking
- try to steam or microwave rather than boiling
- if you do boil, use as little water as possible and boil up the water before adding the fruit or veg
- stir-frying vegetables in a small amount of oil helps keep their texture and 'seals' in the vitamins



Meat and fish and protein alternatives

Why is it important?

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses are all rich sources of protein. The body needs protein to grow and for body tissues to repair themselves.

These foods also provide B vitamins, which help release the energy from food so it is available for the body to use.

One of the B vitamins contained in meat, fish and eggs is vitamin B12. The body needs vitamin B12 because, for example, it helps make red blood cells and keeps the nervous system healthy.

Vitamin B12 is not found in foods originating from plants, unless they are fortified. It is important to bear this in mind when catering for vegetarians. Fortification is the addition of one or more vitamins or minerals to a food.

Liver is the richest source of vitamin B12. Liver is also a rich source of vitamin A. Pregnant women should avoid eating liver because it contains a lot of vitamin A.

Protein-rich foods also contain minerals such as:

- **iron**, which helps to build healthy blood and prevent anaemia
- **zinc**, which helps with wound healing
- **magnesium**, which helps the body use energy

What are we asking you to do?

You only need to provide moderate amounts of foods rich in protein. These include:

Meat
Fish
Eggs
Pulses
Nuts
Soya products such as beancurd and tofu
Milk and dairy foods

How can you achieve these aims?

Meat - For a healthier choice, cut down on the amount of fat by doing the following:

- use leaner meats
- trim off fat
- remove the skin and fat from poultry before cooking or serving
- drain fat from mince or sautéed braising/stewing meat

You can also reduce the amount of fat in meat dishes by:

- baking, grilling, roasting or poaching
- adding the minimum amount of fat and always racking and draining

- replacing some meat with pulses to add extra fibre and protein and less fat
- reduce the amount of meat slightly and serve with more veg and starchy food
- use alternatives to meat such as tofu, soya, Quorn™ or pulses

Pulses - Pulses are low in fat, good value and a rich source of protein, carbohydrate and fibre. As well as being a good source of protein for vegetarians, they can also make a tasty alternative for meat-eaters. They count as a portion of fruit and veg and they are cheap and healthy, so why not add some pulses to your soups and stews?

Fish - Eating oily fish can help protect against coronary heart disease because fish such as mackerel, sardines, salmon and trout (canned or fresh) are good sources of a special type of fat beneficial to health. They're also good sources of vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium. Note that canned tuna, while still a good source of protein, is not counted as an oily fish because the canning process removes the beneficial oils.

Offer more fish choices, if appropriate to your business, and try to include some oily fish every week. People should be eating fish at least twice a week, and this includes fresh, frozen and canned. Each week, one of these portions should be of oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring, pilchard, sardines, trout or fresh tuna (canned tuna doesn't count as an oily fish because the canning process reduces the levels of beneficial oils).

White fish is a good low-fat choice, but try not to add a high-fat sauce, and offer grilled and steamed options.



Milk and Dairy

Why is it important?

Milk and dairy foods make an important contribution to the diet. They provide protein and:

- are rich in calcium, which is needed for healthy bones and teeth
- provide B vitamins, especially vitamin B2, also called riboflavin, which has a number of important functions, including helping the body turn the food we eat into energy
- Vitamin A, Retinol, is found only in foods from animal origin. (Carotenes - which the body can convert to vitamin A are found in orange fruit and vegetables like apricots, carrots and sweet potatoes, and also dark green vegetables like spinach and cabbage).

What are we asking you to do?

Use lower-fat versions of milk and dairy foods in cooking and make them available for customers to choose. Lower-fat versions are a much healthier option and contain as much calcium as full-fat versions.

How can you achieve these aims?

Here are some suggestions:

- Switch to semi-skimmed or skimmed milk
- Use a strong tasting cheese such as Parmesan or mature Cheddar so you can use smaller amounts for example when you are making sauces
- Offer lower fat cheeses in sandwiches, salads and on cheese boards – such as Brie, Camembert, cottage cheese, Edam, Emmental, feta, mozzarella and low-fat soft cheeses.
- Hard cheeses can be grated for sandwiches and salads, to reduce the amount you need
replace some cheese sauces with a bechamel sauce
- replace some or all of the cream in cooking with low-fat plain yoghurt, quark, or very low fat (0.2%) fromage frais. But watch this doesn't change the look, taste or feel of the dish too much.
- When you use plain yoghurt to replace cream in savoury dishes such as soups and sauces, add arrowroot or cornflour to help stop mixtures from separating
- salad dressings – use some low-fat plain yoghurt or fromage frais in mayonnaise or serve lower calorie dressings

Foods high in fat

Why is it important?

Most people would benefit from eating less saturated fat, which is the type of fat found in meat and milk -fat, lard, butter, hard margarine, cheese, pastries, pies and cakes. Eating too much fat in general may promote weight gain and saturated fat can encourage heart disease and increase the risk of other common illnesses.

Different types of fat are made up of differing proportions of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat. In addition, some fats, and products made with these fats, contain Trans fats.

As caterers we need to cut down on the amount of fat used in recipes, especially saturated and Trans fats. We need to eat some fat for good health, but we are eating too much of it. Fat contains more energy than any other nutrient: twice as much as the same amount of carbohydrate or protein.

Too much fat isn't just a factor in obesity. Saturated and Trans fats may raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, and this increases the risk of heart disease. The good news is that unsaturated (monounsaturated or polyunsaturated) fat actually reduces cholesterol levels. As a caterer you should actively reduce the amount of fat and high fat products that you use, particularly those high in saturated fats such as lard and butter, and use lower fat alternatives as often as possible or foods rich in unsaturated fats such as vegetable oils (which include rapeseed, sunflower seed and olive oil) oily fish, avocados, nuts and seeds. And try to limit your use of hard margarines (hydrogenated fats) because these may contain high levels of Trans fats. Check the labels as manufacturers are now making non- hydrogenated hard fats

As a guide when you're looking at labels:

20g or more of fat per 100g food is a LOT of fat

3g or less of fat per 100g is a LITTLE fat.

What are we asking you to do?

Keep the level of fats and oils (in particular saturated fats) to a minimum in the food served, think about the way in which food is prepared and think carefully about the ingredients that you use. You need to actively and continuously reduce the amount of fat or oil you use in preparing food, to help make sure that the amount of fat present in the food that you serve is kept to a minimum. Try to replace saturates with unsaturated. This is because, while saturated and Trans fats may raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, unsaturated fat can actually lower it.

How can you achieve these aims?

IN THE KITCHEN

You **must** always follow the guidelines in this section.

Catering practice and cooking methods

- If you need to use oil, use only small amounts (except for deep-fat frying).
- If you are using oil, use only polyunsaturated or monounsaturated varieties, for example, sunflower oil, olive oil or rapeseed oil.
- When frying, heat oil to the correct temperature and change it regularly.
- Drain excess fat from food before serving.
- Trim excess fat from meat before serving.
- Remove skin from poultry before cooking (except when roasting).
- Skim fat from the surface of gravy.

Foods and ingredients

- If you are using oil, use polyunsaturated or monounsaturated varieties for example, sunflower oil or olive oil.
- Use leaner cuts of meat.
- Use lower-fat milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed).
- Use lower-fat spreads or unsaturated margarines in sandwiches.
- Use lower-fat varieties of mayonnaise, and in small amounts.
- If you serve chips, use thick-cut or steak-cut varieties.

FRONT OF HOUSE

- Lower-fat milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed) must be available by the glass, for hot drinks and for cereals.
- You must provide lower-fat spreads or unsaturated margarines as an alternative to butter.
- If you serve yoghurts, low-fat varieties must be available.
- If you serve salad dressings, lower-fat varieties must be available.

You are also recommended to follow the guidance below **whenever possible**.

IN THE KITCHEN

Catering practice and cooking methods

- Use cooking methods such as grilling, steaming and stir-frying instead of shallow- and deep-frying and roasting with added fat.
- Use non-stick frying pans where possible because you won't need to use as much fat

- Oven-bake products instead of frying them, for example, breaded chicken or fish products, chips and so on.
- Use unsaturated margarines or oils instead of butter in cooking.
- Serve vegetables and salads without dressing or butter. You should serve dressings separately.
- When roasting, use a rack or trivet so that food doesn't stay in the fat
- Think if it is really necessary before using butter – 52% saturated fat – to enrich a dish, or for tossing pasta, etc. Try olive oil instead – this is only 14% saturated fat
- When roasting, use a rack or trivet so that food doesn't stay in the fat
- Skim the fat off gravy and sauces
- Serve accompaniments separately, for example, gravy, dressings, dessert toppings and so on.
- Avoid using roux-based sauces. Thicken sauces using alternatives such as cornflour or arrowroot. Use puréed vegetables to make soups and sauces.
- For thickening curries, for example, instead of ghee, use potatoes or low-fat plain yoghurt
- Dry fry or dry roast spices
- When you are making pastry, use 'white' shortening, which is higher in unsaturated fat than butter or lard.

Foods and ingredients

- Encourage suppliers to offer lower fat alternatives
- Serve dishes containing oil-rich fish such as salmon, mackerel or sardines.
- Use lower-fat varieties of cheese.
- Substitute cream with lower-fat alternatives, for example, low-fat yoghurt, fromage frais or very low-fat crème fraîche.
- Use lower-fat versions of products if they are available.
- Replace creamed coconut – which is 59% saturated fat – with coconut milk – which is less than 1% saturated fat

Foods high in sugar

Why is it important?

Sugar is great for sweetening dishes and is known as a non-starchy carbohydrate. But it supplies energy and no other nutrients – and it's bad for teeth especially if eaten or drunk between meals. This isn't just white sugar but includes brown sugar, syrups and honey. So try to use less.

Fruit, vegetables and milk contain natural sugars, but we don't need to cut down on these types of sugars. Instead we should cut down on food containing added sugars, for example, fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolates, desserts and so on. In whole fruit, the natural sugars are contained in the structure of the fruit, and so they are less likely to cause tooth decay. However, this sugar is released when the fruit is juiced, and once released these sugars can damage teeth, especially if fruit juice is drunk often.

We also know that children who have lots of sugary drinks are more likely to put on weight than children who don't have so many.

Offer sugar-free or lower sugar alternatives. Use fresh or dried fruit or fruit juice to sweeten where you can.

What are we asking you to do?

You must follow the guidelines in this section.

- If you serve soft drinks, you must provide reduced-sugar or sugar-free alternatives to soft drinks (less than 0.5 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres (ml)).
- Flavoured waters must be low in sugar or sugar-free (less than 0.5 grams of sugar per 100 millilitres (ml)).
- Unsweetened varieties of fruit juices must be available.
- Canned fruit must be in natural juice, not syrup.
- If you serve yoghurts which contain fruit in syrup, you must also provide yoghurts which are lower in sugar.

You should also do the following whenever possible.

- Use as little sugar as possible when preparing dishes.

How can you achieve these aims?

Desserts

Here are some tips and suggestions for making desserts healthier:

- Offer some choices that don't contain lard, suet, butter or margarine
- Fruit fillings are a healthier choice than cream or chocolate

- Fresh fruit is a tasty and a very healthy option. You could use tinned fruit in juice as a base and add a variety of fresh fruit to make a fruit salad
- As well as providing cream with desserts, offer some healthier alternatives such as low-fat plain yoghurt, fromage frais, quark or ice cream, and serve them separately
- Offer single cream, which contains less than half the fat of double cream and less than a third the fat of clotted cream
- You could include a variety of sorbets
- Remember that chocolate, cakes, pastries, biscuits and puddings tend to be high in fat
- If you serve cakes, watch the portion sizes and try to avoid serving too large a portion
- Rather than the creamed method for making puddings, use a fatless whisked sponge method
- When you use plain yoghurt to replace cream, add arrowroot or cornflour to help stop mixtures from separating



Salt

Why is it important?

Salt contains sodium. Too much sodium in the diet can increase the risk of developing high blood pressure, which in turn increases the risk of stroke and heart disease.

People in the UK tend to eat much more salt than they need. In fact, the relatively high salt diets we have in this country may be part of the reason why blood pressure tends to increase with age.

What are we asking you to do?

You **must** always follow the guidelines in this section.

IN THE KITCHEN

Catering practice and cooking methods

- Use salt sparingly when preparing and seasoning dishes, and when cooking potatoes, rice, vegetables and pasta.
- Do not add salt to dishes prepared using cooking sauces, stocks and so on.
- If you are using vegetables canned in brine or salt water, you must rinse them thoroughly before use.

You are also recommended to follow the guidance below **whenever possible**.

IN THE KITCHEN

Catering practice and cooking methods

- Use salt sparingly.
- Avoid adding salt when cooking potatoes, rice, pasta and vegetables.
- Use other flavourings such as herbs, spices, garlic or lemon juice.
- If you are using canned vegetables, choose brands with no added salt.
- Use lower-salt varieties of products where available.

FRONT OF HOUSE

- Remove salt containers from tables and put them on the counter or side table instead

How can I achieve these aims?

You can help to limit the salt in your customer's diet by:

- choosing ingredients low in salt
- asking your supplier for foods or ingredients low in salt
- not adding too much salt during cooking

On average, adults should aim to keep their salt intake to less than 6g per day (equivalent to about 2.5g sodium). Most of the salt we eat comes from bought food products, so when you are choosing products, compare similar ones to find those with lower amounts of salt/sodium.

As a guide when you're looking at labels:

0.5g sodium or more per 100g food is a LOT of sodium

0.1g sodium per 100g is a LITTLE sodium

If you prepare foods for children, you should be aware of the salt targets for children and choose lower salt ingredients or limit as much as possible the amount of salt you add to the foods you

Fortunately, there are lots of alternatives to salt that can make your food tasty and interesting, such as fresh, frozen or dried herbs and spices, onions, peppers, lemons, limes, vinegars and tomato paste. Try some different combinations.

Watch out for stock cubes or stock paste and any ready-prepared pickles, sauces or packet soups you use because these are often very high in salt. Remember that smoked foods and processed meats are also high in salt so avoid offering these too frequently.

If you are concerned about your regular customers' reaction if you reduce the amount of salt you use, why not do it gradually over, say, six months so that their taste buds get used to the difference.

Planning your menu

Small changes can make a big impact.

You can make the biggest impact on improving your customers' health – while keeping your sales up – by making small changes throughout your menu. The alternative is to develop some new healthy specials. Or you might want to do a bit of both.

When you're planning your menus, a simple and effective way to make them healthier is by changing the proportions.

Meals should be based on starchy foods. So make these the main part of the meal. They should make up about a third of the total diet.

There are lots of starchy foods to choose from, such as:

Bread, for example wheat, rye, maize (corn), chapatis, naan

Rice, for example white, brown, wild

Noodles

Pasta

Bulgar wheat

Maize meal, for example polenta, grits, tortillas

Pearl barley

Buckwheat

Potatoes

Cassava

Couscous

Oatmeal

Millet flour

Quinoa

Breakfast cereals

Yams

Serve bigger portions of these – and more fruit or vegetables. For example, use more pasta and veg and less meat sauce in your lasagne and make pizzas with a thicker base.

Wholegrain varieties are the healthiest choice because they are higher in fibre and contain more of several nutrients, but these aren't always popular choices.

Here are some practical suggestions for making meals healthier. You could use:

- extra vegetables, salads and bread with main dishes
- more pasta and less sauce in pasta dishes
- more rice and less curry or stir fry
- thicker bread for sandwiches
- more potato and less meat in shepherd's pie

And remember to give your customers the option of whether or not to add butter, mayonnaise or other dressings.

Money saving ideas

Making your food healthier is not only good for your customers' health, but can also save you money.

Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

- Serve bigger portions of the cheaper starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes, and smaller portions of the more expensive sauce
- Bulk out your meat stews, casseroles or sauces with vegetables and/or pulses
- Use smaller amounts of cheese for example when you are making sauces by choosing mature cheese such as Cheddar, or strong tasting cheese such as Parmesan
- Hard cheeses can be grated for sandwiches and salads, to reduce the amount you need
- Introduce oily fish recipes onto your menu. For example you could serve mackerel or sardines
- Always use seasonal vegetables and fruit. These are packed with vitamins and minerals but are also at their cheapest when they're in season. This is a simple way to change your menu regularly, which will also help keep your customers interested
- Use fats and oils sparingly
- Choose vegetable or rapeseed oil, because these are cheap and nutritious
- Use non-stick frying pans where possible so you won't need to use as much fat
- Dry fry or dry roast spices without any fat
- Switch to semi-skimmed milk rather than full fat. You could also offer customers the option of skimmed milk. Use skimmed milk in recipes – it's cheaper, lasts longer and is lower in fat
- Offer your customers the option of adding butter, low-fat spreads, mayonnaise, salad dressings, dessert toppings and gravy, rather than adding these automatically

Choosing healthy options for:

Breakfasts

Here are some suggestions for you to give your customers a healthy start to the day:

- unsweetened, lower sodium varieties of breakfast cereals
- skimmed or semi-skimmed milk
- low-fat yoghurt
- dried fruit (as a compote or to add to breakfast cereals)
- tinned fruit in fruit juice
- fresh fruit salad or pieces of fruit
- some nuts and seeds to sprinkle
- toasted teacakes
- scones
- bagels
- fruit buns
- crumpets
- raisin bread

And remember to serve spreads separately.

For a traditional, but healthier, hot breakfast, you can offer:

- baked beans (choose reduced sugar and salt varieties)
- poached/boiled eggs
- grilled lean bacon /sausage, grilled oily fish eg. kippers
- grilled tomatoes and mushrooms cooked without fat
- all served up with thick crusty bread

Snacks

Here are some healthy snack ideas you could offer:

- fresh fruit
- crudités and dips
- pasta salads
- currant buns without icing
- scones
- fruit bread
- crumpets and English muffins
- bread sticks
- plain popcorn
- unsalted nuts and dried fruit
- biscuits with less fat and sugar such as ginger biscuits
- low-fat yoghurts or fromage frais
- frozen yoghurts

Drinks

Try to offer alternatives to high-sugar fizzy drinks and other soft drinks because these sorts of drinks are associated with dental problems.

Drinks containing sugar increase the risk of dental decay particularly if they are drunk between meals. Having soft drinks often during the day – and this includes sugar-free varieties – can lead to erosion of tooth enamel because of the acids in the fruit extracts or that have been added to make the drink fizzy.

Here are some alternatives you could offer:

mineral water
low-sugar drinks
fruit juices

lower-fat milk
yoghurt drinks
fruit smoothies

When you offer tea and coffee, remember to provide lower-fat milk.

Marketing your healthier menu

You'll need to know your customers before working out how to pitch your healthier menu. Some people will be delighted by your efforts and will want to hear it straight. Others may be put off by terms such as 'healthy' or 'low fat'.

Despite the growing interest in healthier eating, when people eat out they still want tasty food that is value for money. This means you will need to work out the best way of pitching your messages – and this depends on what type of business you run and who your customers are.

If you only offer a limited number of dishes, then it's a good idea to make small changes across the board to make the whole menu healthier.

You might want to introduce and put on display a 'healthier catering policy' or a general statement explaining your aims and/or what changes you have made. Remember to make it clear that these will benefit your customers and won't compromise on taste.

If your establishment offers a large choice of dishes, it can work well to introduce a few healthier options while leaving the regular dishes as they are. But be careful about labelling these new dishes as 'healthier options' because this can sometimes put people off.

Instead, you could advertise the options as 'dish of the day', or promote them on their novelty value. Healthier options can be cheaper, so you might want to make use of this as a price incentive.

Try highlighting the healthier alternatives alongside other items in the menu, rather than putting them in a special section. This way your customers are sure to see them.

Here are some suggestions for theme days that you might want to try:

- **Italian theme** – offer a variety of pasta, lower-fat tomato-based vegetable sauces, range of breads such as ciabatta, olive or tomato, thick-based pizzas and Italian bean salads
- **Indian theme** – offer boiled rice, chapattis, lentil and vegetable dishes, dry-fried spices and dishes thickened with yoghurt
- **Thai or Chinese theme** – offer boiled noodles or rice, stir-fries, vegetable curries, pineapple and lychees in fruit juice for dessert
- **Scottish theme** – offer a Tartan breakfast including Arbroath Smokies or smoked salmon, porridge and berries
- **Events/festival themes** – offer strawberries for Wimbledon; pumpkin soup or stews at Halloween; braised leeks or leek soup for St David's day

- **Healthy meal deals** – offer, for example, a combination of main meal with bread, fruit juice and a piece of fresh fruit, cheaper than buying the items separately. Or include a roll in the price for the soup

Here are some other promotional methods you might want to try:

- Offer some healthy items free or half price with a popular dish, such as free/half-price fruit with a sandwich or free toast with breakfast cereal
- Seasonal specials on fruit desserts
- Special promotions – serving different speciality bread, pasta or exotic fruit or vegetables