



Modifying Recipes without Sacrificing Taste

There are two basic ways to make your own recipes healthier: 1) *change how you are cooking something* or 2) *change an ingredient*. Cooking techniques that will lower the fat include: baking, broiling (on a rack to allow fat to drip away from the meat), roasting, stewing, using a crock pot, boiling or grilling.

Making an ingredient change is a little more complicated, since only certain ingredients can be changed without ruining the recipe. There are three ways to change an ingredient: *reduce the amount, get rid of it completely, or use something else in its place*.

SUGAR

First try cutting the amount of sugar by one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) to one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$), and substituting brown sugar or honey for white sugar. Brown sugar and honey taste sweeter than white sugar, so less is needed. When cutting sugar in recipes, add a little extra flavor to your recipe with spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, or cloves, and extracts such as vanilla, almond or lemon. Raisins, dates, ripe bananas or applesauce add a natural sweetness to recipes. Be careful when adding extras, while extra spices will not add calories, too much extra fruit can take away the advantage gained by reducing the sugar in the first place.

FAT

Decreasing the amount of fat can be as simple as eliminating added fat, decreasing the amount of fat called for in a recipe, or sautéing in a nonstick skillet using vegetable cooking spray. Reduce the amount of fat in baked goods by one-fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$) to one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$), and use monounsaturated fats (canola or peanut oil) for saturated ones.

When fat is decreased, you may need to add a liquid such as water, fruit juice, or skim milk to make up for some of the moisture loss. Be careful substituting reduced-calorie margarine for regular margarine in baked goods; the water that's whipped into reduced-calorie margarine may cause soggy. Substitute fat-free mayonnaise or reduced-calorie mayonnaise for regular mayonnaise.

MILK

When a recipe calls for ice cream or whole milk, substitute skim milk. *And if the recipe doesn't look creamy enough, try adding nonfat dry milk powder*. Soups, sauces and gravies in particular benefit from the addition of nonfat dry milk powder.

CHEESE

When cooking with cheese, use the following tips for decreasing the amount used:

- Shred or grate cheese to make it go further.
- Decrease the amount of cheese used by one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) to one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$), and substitute a strong-flavored cheese to achieve a full flavor.
- Choose nonfat or low-fat cottage cheese and part-skim ricotta cheese.
- Used reduced-fat Monterey Jack or Swiss cheeses for their higher-fat counterparts.
- Choose light or fat-free cream cheese products for use in recipes.

SOUR CREAM & YOGURT

Use nonfat sour cream as a substitute for its higher fat counterpart, or try plain nonfat yogurt or low-fat sour cream. Use the following recommendations for best results when cooking with yogurt:

- When adding yogurt to other ingredients, fold rather than stir it in to prevent thinning.
- Bring yogurt to room temperature before adding to hot foods, blend in a little of the hot food to the yogurt first to prevent curdling, then add the blended yogurt to the hot food.
- When cooking with yogurt, keep temperature low and time short to prevent separation.

EGGS

By substituting two egg whites or one-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) cup egg substitute for a whole egg, the cholesterol and fat content of baked goods can be lowered. *When substituting egg whites and egg substitutes, be sure to cook them slowly over low heat*; they are lower in fat than whole eggs and can be tough and dry if cooked over high heat or for too long.

MEAT

Choose lean cuts and trim all visible fat, or substitute fish or poultry to decrease fat. One of the biggest complaints about lean cuts of meat is that they are tough and dry. Because lean meat cooks more quickly than higher-fat meat, it is often overcooked. Some suggestions for cooking lean meats are:

- Use a meat thermometer when cooking lean meats to prevent overcooking.
- Marinate lean meats in an acid-based marinade to make them more tender, like those that contain lemon or lime juice, vinegar or tomato products.
- Braise (brown at high temperature for a short period) large cuts of meat to seal in juices, then cook in a small amount of water over a longer period to tenderize.

POULTRY

Skinning chicken and turkey eliminates almost half the fat but often contributes to dryness. To prevent dryness, reduce the heat and cook until done (check with meat thermometer). Substituting white meat for dark meat will further lower the amount of fat and cholesterol in recipes.

FISH & SHELLFISH

Except for a few types of fish that are higher in fat, fish is naturally lower in fat. Try oven frying instead of deep fat frying. Substituting fish for other meats also contributes another valuable fat to the diet, the omega-3 fatty acids. These can be very beneficial to the cardiovascular system and are recommended to be a part of the diet at least one to two times per week.

STARCHES

Eaten in their natural state, grains, breads and pastas are some of the healthiest foods you can eat. They should be cooked with little or no added fat. Be careful when adding meat, sauces and gravies to these foods as this is where much of the fat may be in starch dishes. Choose commercial breads and rolls made with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils or margarine.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Eaten in their natural state, fruits and vegetables are some of the lowest fat foods available. Steaming, sautéing, and stir-frying are the best cooking methods for vegetables because they require a minimum of fat while preserving most of the good nutrients.