

If you long for your favorite recipes, but don't believe they have a place in your weight loss program, you may want to reconsider. With just a few changes, you can reduce the calories, fat, sugar and sodium, and increase the fiber in many recipes without significantly affecting the flavor. This module will show you how to modify your recipes and prepare dishes with good health and good taste intact.

The Basics

You can modify recipes by changing the ingredients or the way the food is prepared. Keep these basic guidelines in mind:

First determine your goal(s). Is it to cut calories only? Do you also want less sodium or more fiber? Once you know your goal, identify the ingredients you can change to achieve the results you want.

Reduce, replace, or eliminate ingredients so that the recipe fits your goal. For example, reduce cooking oil by one Tbsp and save 135 calories; replace oil with broth or water when sautéing to cut back on fat and calories; eliminate salt in cooking water when making pasta or rice to reduce the sodium content.

Make one change at a time. Some ingredients have functional purposes, like eggs or sugar in baking. Gradually changing one ingredient at a time can help you see which changes will work and how they'll affect the texture and flavor of recipes. If a change works, note it on your recipe card so you'll have it for future reference.

Change the way the food is prepared. For example, skim the fat that solidifies on cooled stews and soups; oven-bake potatoes rather than fry them; don't add salt to food until after it's cooked and you've tasted it first.

Cooking for Health

Here are some suggestions for making recipes more nutritious, yet still delicious:

To cut calories and fat:

- Substitute reduced-fat or fat-free products for higher-fat ingredients in recipes. For example, use lower-fat mayonnaise, margarine, and salad dressings; light cream cheese; and part-skim cheese instead of their full-fat counterparts. *(See recipe substitution chart on the back for more ideas.)*
- Cook with lean meats (round or loin) or packaged meats labeled lean or extra lean. Remove the skin from poultry before cooking, or keep it on to retain moistness during cooking and discard it before eating.
- Use lower-fat ingredients in mixed dishes. For example, use extra-lean ground beef in casseroles, fat-free milk in pudding mixes, and reduced-fat margarine in macaroni and cheese.
- Coat pans with a small amount of oil, then wipe with a paper towel. Better yet, use a nonstick skillet with cooking spray instead of oil. Or place oil in a mister and spray it on the pan instead of pouring oil directly in the pan.
- Sauté vegetables in broth, wine, tomato juice or fruit juice instead of oil or fat. Marinate meats, poultry or fish in a similar fashion, and add herbs or spices to the marinade for additional flavor.

- In cakes, muffins and brownies, try substituting an equal amount of applesauce, mashed ripe bananas, or pureed prunes or raisins for half or more of the oil, butter or margarine in recipes.
- Use 1/4 to 1/3 less fat (margarine, butter or oil) in dessert recipes. In general, one-two Tbsp of fat per cup of flour is sufficient to make great tasting muffins, quick breads, cakes and cookies.

To cut down on sugar:

- Try reducing the sugar in baked goods by 1/4 to 1/3. In general, use one-two Tbsp sugar per cup of flour in quick breads and muffins, one tsp sugar per cup of flour in yeast breads, and 1/2 cup sugar per cup of flour in cakes. (Cakes prepared with less sugar may not turn out well.)
- Enhance the sweetness of recipes by using calorie-free extracts, like vanilla and almond, or sweet-tasting spices, like cinnamon, allspice, or nutmeg. Or try sugar substitutes, like aspartame or saccharin, but know that some recipes, especially baked goods, may not turn out the same as they would if made with sugar. Since aspartame is not heat stable, add it after cooking.
- Instead of frosting on cake, use powdered sugar and cinnamon to cut down on sugar, fat and calories.

To cut down on sodium:

- Taste food before salting. Try herbs and spices or garlic and onions instead of salt.
- Use less salt. Except for recipes containing yeast, you can cut back on half to all the salt in recipes.
- Use fresh or frozen vegetables rather than canned. Or drain the liquid in canned vegetables or beans and use tap water for reheating.

To boost fiber and nutrients:

- Add extra vegetables to soups, stews, salads, sandwiches, and pasta dishes. Try stir-fried vegetables with tofu. Substitute beans for meat or add beans to casseroles, chili, and soups.
- When making baked goods, substitute whole wheat flour for half of the white flour.

Recipe Suggestions

Instead of...	Use...
Whole milk	Fat-free, 1% or 2% milk
Sour cream	Nonfat yogurt, or light sour cream, or fat-free sour cream
Cream	Evaporated fat-free milk
Cream soup	Broth-based or fat-free milk-based soup
Whipped cream	Whipped evaporated fat-free milk sweetened with sugar substitute, or reduced-calorie whipped topping
Ground beef	Extra lean ground beef, or lean ground chicken or turkey
1 whole egg	2 egg whites, or 1/4 cup cholesterol-free liquid egg substitute
1 ounce baking chocolate	3 Tbsp cocoa powder plus one (1) Tbsp oil (this reduces saturated fat)