

Recipe Swaps: Common Substitutions for Making Recipes Healthier

You can change your favorite recipes to make them healthier and still taste good. Simple swaps can reduce calories, sugar, fat and salt and increase fiber. Changing preparation methods can also make recipes healthier.

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide science-based advice on what to eat and drink to consume a healthy diet¹. The Guidelines recommend limiting foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Making these changes can lower your risk of or help you manage diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and obesity.

SUGAR and NON-NUTRITIVE SWEETENERS

Sugar contains calories and provides flavor, increases moisture, tenderness, and browning in baked goods. Non-nutritive sweeteners contain few or no calories but can be substituted for sugar in baking and still offer a sweet taste with lower calories. The eight non-nutritive sweeteners currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are: aspartame, acesulfame potassium, monk fruit extract, neotame, saccharin, stevia, sucralose, and advantame². If you want to use these in recipes, visit the manufacturer's website to view the sweetener conversion charts for sugar.

FATS

Fat also provides flavor and a rich taste to food. However, using less, not eliminating it, can greatly reduce the calories. Swapping out butter and cream for plant-based

fats like olive oil, canola oil, and avocados make recipes heart-healthier. Using lower-fat dairy products like milk, yogurt, cheese and sour cream in your recipes can reduce the fat and calories, too.

SALT

Salt flavors food and acts as a preservative in many canned and dried foods used in recipes. Buy lower-sodium versions of these foods to reduce the salt in your recipes. Be creative in your kitchen and swap out the salt for fresh or dried herbs. These new additions will add a punch of flavor to your recipe.

FIBER

Fiber adds bulk to our diet and helps maintain healthy bowels. You can swap out white flour, pastas, and rice in recipes for whole grain options. Whole wheat flour and pastas or brown rice increase the fiber in your recipes and can add a burst of flavor.



Let's Swap!

SUGAR Instead of this:	Swap this:
Sugar	Reduce sugar by 1/3 to 1/2 in cookie, pie filling, sweetbread and cake recipes
Sugar	Non-nutritive sweeteners: 1 cup sucralose for 1 cup of sugar ³
Sugar	Applesauce and other fruit purees
Sugar	Spices such as cinnamon, cloves, allspice, and nutmeg or flavorings like vanilla or almond extract or flavoring to enhance the sweetness
Regular jam or jelly	Sugar-free or reduced sugar jam or jelly

FATS Instead of this:	Swap this:
Margarine, oil, or butter	Low-fat or fat-free margarine, vegetable oil spray, use nonstick pans
80% ground beef	90% ground beef, ground turkey or chicken breast
Whole egg	Two egg whites, ¼ cup egg substitute
Whole milk or heavy cream	Canned evaporated fat-free milk
Sour cream	Plain, nonfat Greek yogurt, or low-fat sour cream, (nonfat sour cream may be too watery)
Regular cheese	Fat-free or low-fat cheese (less than two grams of fat per ounce)

SALT Instead of this:	Swap this:
Salt	Reduce the amount of salt in the recipe by one half
	Salt substitutes (may contain potassium). *If you need to limit potassium, check with your healthcare provider before using them
Flavoring packets with salt	Fresh or dried herbs and spices (garlic powder, red pepper flakes, curry powder, oregano)
Regular soups & sauces	Low-sodium soups, sauces and gravies
Regular canned or frozen vegetables	Low-sodium or no-salt-added canned or frozen vegetables

FIBER Instead of this:	Swap this:
White flour	Whole wheat flour (swap full amount, or ½ the amount in the recipe)
Regular pasta	Whole wheat pasta
Sugary cereal	Oatmeal, whole grain dry cereals, bran flakes
White rice	Brown rice
Regular pasta & rice	Quinoa (high-protein grain)

Sample Recipe Modifications

Check out these recipe modifications to reduce fat, sodium, and calories and add fiber. Try some of these swaps in your favorite recipes too!

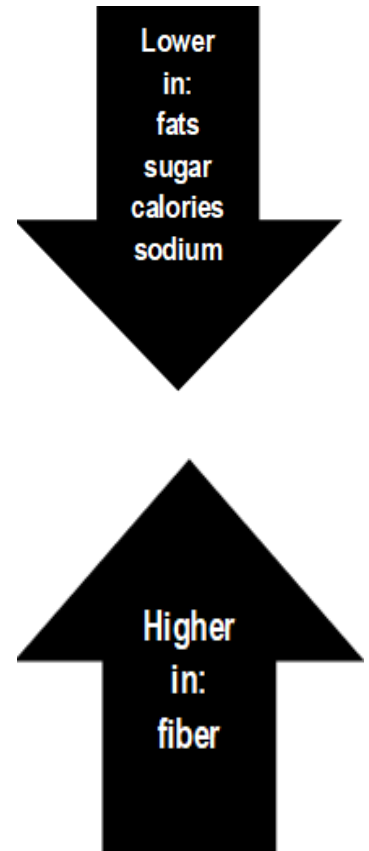
Crockpot Macaroni and Cheese

*Aunt Cathy's Crock Pot® Macaroni & Cheese
2013 University of Delaware
4-H Favorite Foods Contest
Blue ribbon winner, Tyler Melson*



Photo credit: C. Bush

Original Recipe 6- 1 cup servings	Modification ⁴
1 lb. elbow macaroni (cooked)	1 lb. whole grain elbow macaroni (cooked)
½ cup margarine	½ cup alternative light butter spread
2 eggs, beaten	¼ cup liquid egg substitute
12 oz. can evaporated milk	12 oz. can fat-free evaporated milk
10.5 oz. can cheddar cheese soup	10.75 oz. low-fat, low-sodium cheddar cheese soup
1 cup whole milk	1 cup skim milk
4 cups shredded cheddar cheese (reserve 1 cup for topping)	1 cup shredded cheddar cheese + 1 cup part-skim mozzarella cheese (reserve ½ cup for topping)
Nutrition Facts	Nutrition Facts
Calories 857 per serving	Calories 550 per serving
Protein 34g	Protein 23g
Carbohydrates 69g	Carbohydrates 66g
Added Sugars 12g	Added Sugars 9g
Fat 49g	Fat 32g
Saturated Fat 24g	Saturated Fat 9g
Fiber 3g	Fiber 8g
Sodium 1,056mg	Sodium 606mg



Hamburger Casserole



Photo credit: B. Jackey

Original Recipe 8- 1 cup servings		Modification ⁴	
1 lb. ground beef 70% lean		1 lb. ground turkey	
10 oz. can condensed tomato soup		6 oz. can tomato paste and 14 oz. can diced tomatoes (no salt)	
½ lb. fresh mushrooms		½ lb. fresh mushrooms	
¾ cup light cream		¾ cup fat-free evaporated milk	
8 oz. cheddar cheese, shredded		8 oz. low-fat cheddar cheese, shredded	
1 small onion, chopped		1 small onion, chopped	
1 tsp. garlic salt		1 tsp. garlic powder	
1 lb. macaroni, small shells, cooked		1 lb. macaroni, small whole wheat shells or elbows, cooked	
Nutrition Facts		Nutrition Facts	
Calories	528 per serving	Calories	402 per serving
Protein	29g	Protein	35g
Carbohydrates	52g	Carb	50g
Added Sugars	3g	Added Sugars	0g
Fat	22g	Fat	9g
Sat. Fat	12g	Sat. Fat	3g
Fiber	3g	Fiber	7g
Sodium	597mg	Sodium	344mg



⁴Low-fat milk and cheese (1% or 2%) can also be substituted for regular milk and cheese; however, the amount of fat you consume will be somewhat higher than fat-free items.

Preparation

Try these tips.

- Instead of frying in oil or butter, try baking, broiling, poaching, grilling or steaming. Your food can still be flavorful without adding extra calories.
- Instead of basting in oil or drippings, swap out wine, fruit juice, vegetable juice, or fat-free vegetable broth.
- Trim visible fat from red meats. Remove poultry skin before cooking.
- Use non-stick cookware to reduce the amount of oil needed for cooking.



References

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3. Splenda.com (nd). Splenda® original sweeteners. <https://www.splenda.com/products/original-sweeteners/>
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