



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

Modifying Recipes for Healthier Results

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Eating healthier doesn't have to mean giving up your favorite recipes. Some special recipes served only on occasion may be better left alone, like your grandmother's special coconut cake. Recipes you make more often might be worth modifying to make them healthier and aligned with your current health goals.

Existing recipes can be modified in a few basic ways:

- Substitute an ingredient
- Reduce or eliminate an ingredient
- Add a nutritious ingredient
- Prepare food using a lower-fat cooking method (e.g., bake, boil, broil, grill, etc.)

Here are tips for modifying your recipes to meet a specific nutrition goal. Please note that modifications to recipes for baked goods often result in a change in texture or shape and may take some experimentation to get right. Modifications to use less fat or salt may change the taste. If you'll be sharing your recipe with others at an event, you may want to test your recipe modification before you go.

Try These Tips

To Reduce Saturated Fat

- Use olive, canola, grapeseed, or avocado oil in place of butter, shortening, fatback, or stick margarine.
- Reduce the fat called for in a recipe by 1/4 to 1/3 (example: reduce 3 teaspoons of oil to one teaspoon of oil).
- Top salads with nuts instead of cheese and/or bacon.
- Drizzle salads with oil and vinegar instead of creamy dressings.
- Substitute plain, fat-free (nonfat) Greek yogurt for half of the mayonnaise in a recipe.
- Use fat-free (nonfat) or low-fat Greek yogurt in place of sour cream.
- Use fat-free (nonfat) or low-fat milk, cheese, evaporated milk, and yogurt in place of full-fat dairy products.
- Season vegetables with herbs, spices, and low-sodium broths in place of butter and cheese.
- Use lean ground turkey or beef (93%–99% lean) or ground chicken in place of typical ground beef (70%–80% lean).

To Reduce Carbohydrate

- Reduce the sugar called for in a recipe by 1/4 to 1/3.
- Make baked goods with vanilla or almond extract, cinnamon, or other warm spices to

enhance flavor and sweetness.

- Try replacing half of your portion of potatoes, rice, or pasta with non-starchy vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, or zucchini squash. Ricing or spiralizing non-starchy vegetables can add bulk to your meal while reducing the amount of carbohydrates you eat.
- Add breading to only one side of oven-fried or air-fried foods rather than breading both sides.
- Top casseroles with a light sprinkle of nuts or seeds instead of breadcrumbs.
- Try low- or no-calorie sweeteners marketed for use in baking; follow all package directions.
- Try spiralized vegetables (such as zucchini, beet, or butternut squash “noodles”) with a smaller portion of pasta.

To Increase Fiber

- Add beans, lentils, and other vegetables to casseroles, salads, omelets, soups, and stews.
- Use whole-grain varieties of flour, pasta, bread, and crackers.
- Try brown rice, quinoa, bulgur, barley, farro, millet, and other whole grains.
- Use whole fruits instead of juice to make toppings and sauces.
- Top cereals and salads with chopped fruits, nuts, and seeds.
- Add whole oats, ground flax seed, or chopped fresh fruit to baked goods.

To Reduce Sodium

- Choose low-sodium and no-salt-added canned foods and frozen vegetables.
- If low-sodium options aren’t available, drain and rinse canned items to remove up to half of the sodium content.
- Use lower-sodium or no-salt-added broths, stocks, bullions, and bases.
- Use more fresh or fresh-frozen foods without added sodium.
- Use lower-sodium varieties of ketchup, soy sauce, and hot sauce.
- Season with herbs, lemon, wine, vinegar, and spices instead of salt.
- Skip salting the cooking water for pasta or vegetables.

Update one recipe a month, and in a year, you'll be eating in a whole new way!

References

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