

Heart Healthy

FOOD CHOICES FOR ETHNIC AND REGIONAL EATING

Developed by the AAHFN Patient Education Committee

Many ethnic and regional foods have been a source of comfort and family sharing for years. Sharing a meal with special foods is a part of most cultures and celebrations. Unfortunately, many of these ethnic foods can have hidden salt, fat, and calories. Instead of denying yourself these foods or indulging and then suffering a trip to the doctor or hospital, we have listed below some healthy alternatives and suggestions for preparing and ordering out. You truly can enjoy traditional foods while eating healthier!

In General:

No matter what type of food you are eating, these tips work for all:

- Eat more vegetables and less meat. Use fresh vegetables wherever possible to save on salt.
- If you eat meat, buy the leanest cuts and trim away excess fat and skin before you eat it.
- Skip the sauces and gravies. Most are filled with fat, calories, and salt.

Choose low-fat or fat free alternatives when available such as for cheese, sour cream, and cream.

- Casseroles are often filled with salt and fat. Use low-fat alternatives when possible and skip the cream of mushroom soup. Instead substitute with this easy alternative: Sauté 1 cup sliced mushrooms in 1 Tbs olive oil until softened. Add in 2 Tbs flour and mix in; gradually stir in 1 cup of milk and stir until thickened.
- For dessert, choose ice cream, sherbet, gelatin, or fruit rather than high sodium items such as cakes and pastries.



No Sodium Soy Substitute Sauce

- 3/4 cup garlic vinegar (Make by pouring warmed vinegar over 5 cloves peeled garlic. Let stand overnight, strain and discard garlic.)
- 3 tablespoons dark molasses
- 3 teaspoons onion powder

Combine all the ingredients and pour the mixture into a glass jar. Refrigerate and use as needed. It lasts about a month in the fridge. Warm and shake well before using.



Asian Pacific Food Choices:

One of the easiest substitutes in Asian cooking is to substitute citrus juices (pineapple or orange juice) for more salty alternatives. Be sure to avoid soy sauce (even the low sodium variety) and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Suggestions for healthier food choices:

Traditional Food	Healthier Food Item	Benefits
Spring or egg rolls	Steamed dumplings	Saves fat and sodium. The American Heart Association recommends steamed dumplings as a heart-healthy choice at Chinese restaurants
Fried rice	Steamed rice	Saves half the calories and fat
Sweet and sour dishes	Stir-fried meats and vegetables	Most sweet and sour dishes have meat that is breaded, deep-fried and then covered with a high sugar sauce. Save calories and fat
	Stir-fried vegetables	Crunchy and colorful side dish, rich in potassium; ask to have prepared with minimal low-sodium soy sauce
Soy, fish, or teriyaki sauce	Wasabi, Chinese style mustard, duck sauce, and most sweet chili sauces. Or make your own low sodium sauces (see boxes)	Check the labels for big salt savings
	Fortune Cookies	No salt (and many blessings to come)



Gyoza Sauce

- 1/2 cup rice vinegar
- 1/2 cup Soy Substitute Sauce (from above)
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (crushed)
- 1 garlic clove (minced)
- 1/2 tsp ginger root (minced fresh)
- 1/3 cup green onions (thinly sliced)
- 1 tsp sesame oil

Whisk together the rice vinegar, soy sauce, red pepper flakes, garlic, ginger, green onions, and sesame oil in a bowl; allow to sit 15 minutes before serving. Store in refrigerator up to 1 week.

Caribbean and Soul Food Choices:

Many Caribbean and soul foods contain hidden salt through the brining and curing process of meats, or use of fatty meats such as pork. Instead of buying commercially prepared meats, smoke your own fresh pork shoulders, turkey legs and breasts, and beef briskets. Use hickory or apple wood chips for flavor and a dry, non-salt rub to season the meat.

Suggestions for healthier food choices:

Traditional Food	Healthier Food Item	Benefits
Greens with pork fat	Greens with home-smoked turkey wing	Saves salt and fat
Traditional macaroni and cheese	Make with evaporated fat-free milk and low fat cheese. Add onions for flavor instead of salt	Saves fat, calories, and salt
Fried chicken, pork chops or fish	Bake lean cuts of meat with skin/ fat removed. Before baking, dip in egg whites and fat-free evaporated milk. Cover in cornflakes, plain (low sodium) dry bread crumbs and spices like oregano	Saves fat and calories
Traditional red beans and rice	Substitute the home-smoked lean meat for traditional pork or sausage	Saves fat, calories, and salt



Latino/Hispanic Food Choices:

Traditional Latino food can be very healthy but many Americans have magnified the serving sizes and unhealthy attributes. Return to the roots of Hispanic cooking and capitalize more on the fresh vegetables, use of dried beans, and minimal amounts of cheese.

Suggestions for healthier food choices:

Traditional Food	Healthier Food Item	Benefits
Flour tortillas	Corn tortillas	Saves fat and calories
Beef	Buffalo	Saves fat and calories
Meat and bean burrito	Veggie wrap with whole wheat tortillas, vegetables sautéed in canola oil, avocado, low-sodium black beans, non-fat sour cream and fresh salsa	Saves fat, calories, and salt
Most Goya seasonings	Make your own blend of seasonings using the recipe above as a starting point for your taste. Make enough to store in a recycled spice container	Saves sodium, adds flavor
Meats	Low-sodium beans or Caribbean Rice and Peas made with your own Spicy Seasoning below. Substitute low fat coconut milk for the full fat variety	Saves fat, calories, and salt, plus is high in protein



Low Sodium Spicy Seasoning

- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1-1/2 teaspoons paprika
- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Mix spices together in a small jar or bowl.





Italian Food Choices:

As with Traditional Latino foods, traditional Italian or Mediterranean cooking can be very healthy. Use fresh vegetables, flavored olive oils, and a little strong-flavored hard cheese like Parmesan or Romano to heighten flavors with very little salt.

Suggestions for healthier food choices:

Traditional Food	Healthier Food Item	Benefits
Jars of tomato/ pasta sauce	Make your own using this easy recipe: Sauté onions, fresh garlic, red or green peppers, mushrooms, and lean ground beef in olive oil. When cooked, drain excess fat and add in 2 cans of low sodium tomato puree, sauce, or diced/ crushed tomatoes depending upon your taste and 3-4 Tbs of low sodium tomato paste. Season with 1-2 Tbs each of dried oregano, basil, and parsley. A little sweetness is the secret to taking away the tomato bite so add in either ¼ to ½ cup of orange juice, grape juice or red wine. Add ½ tsp of crushed red pepper flakes, ¼ cup of grated Parmesan or Romano Cheese, and simmer. Serve over any pasta	Lower salt and fat
Pasta cooked in salt water	It is not necessary to add salt to get water to boil. Add a small amount of olive oil (1 tsp) to your boiling water when adding the noodles to keep them from sticking	Saves salt
Traditional lasagna and stuffed shells	In your favorite recipe, substitute Low Fat No Salt added Cottage Cheese for the Ricotta; Use the Tomato Sauce recipe listed above; and use Low Sodium Mozzarella Cheese. Add more flavor by sprinkling with crushed fresh mint and parsley leaves before baking	Lowers fat and salt
Tiramisu, cannoli or ricotta cheesecake	Biscotti or Cucidati (Italian Fig Cookies): Check out recipes on-line for these lower sodium and fat but delicious cookies http://www.food.com/recipe/cucidati-italian-fig-cookies-82939 or http://allrecipes.com/recipe/cucidati-ii/	Great flavor, sneaks in a little fruit and fiber

For more ideas on low sodium eating and other living with heart failure tips, check out
<http://aahfnpatienteducation.com/>