

Women in Ag
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Mary Clare Stalp, R.D., LMNT
Franciscan Care Services
Debra Schroeder, M.S.
UNL Extension in Cuming County

Recipe Makeovers: 5 Ways to Create Healthy Recipes

You love your grandmother's bread pudding. But her recipe calls for 4 cups of whole milk, 1 stick of butter and 4 eggs—ingredients that raise the calorie count and fat content of this dessert. The solution? Redo the recipe by switching or reducing certain ingredients.

Many recipes can tolerate a healthy renovation without affecting the taste or texture of the food. So whether you're trying to stick to a healthy-eating plan or you're following a special diet, use these techniques to make your recipes—including your time-honored family favorites—healthier.



1. Reduce the Amount of Fat, Sugar and Sodium

With most recipes, you can reduce the amount of fat, sugar and sodium without losing the flavor. By cutting fat and sugar, you also cut calories. How much can you leave out without affecting the flavor and consistency of the food? Apply the following general guidelines:

- **FAT:** For baked goods, use half the butter, shortening or oil and replace the other half with unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or prune puree. You can also use commercially prepared fruit-based fat replacers found in the baking aisle of your local grocery store.
- **SUGAR:** Reduce the amount of sugar by one-third to one-half. When you use less sugar, add spices—such as cinnamon, cloves, allspice and nutmeg—or flavorings—such as vanilla extract or almond flavoring—to enhance the sweetness of the food.
- **SODIUM:** Reduce salt by one-half in baked goods that don't require yeast. For foods that require yeast, don't reduce the amount of salt, which is necessary for leavening. Without salt, the foods may become dense and flat. For most main dishes, salads, soups and other foods, however, you can reduce the salt by one-half or eliminate it completely.

Other ingredients may contain sugar, fat and sodium, and you can decrease them as well. For example, if the recipe calls for 1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese, use ½ cup instead. Or use less soy sauce than is indicated to decrease the amount of sodium in the food.

Guidelines for Minimal Sugar and Fat in Recipes

Sugar and fat can have important impact on the food we prepare in terms of tenderness, browning, texture and flavor. Many of us would do well to make our recipes leaner. Here are some suggestions for just how much you can cut back and still have an acceptable product. Of course, some would say that the products are too lean, but adding more spices like cinnamon and cloves help retain flavor. It's a good idea to gradually cut sugar and/or fat in recipes and see your family's reaction.

Products	Minimum Sugar / Result	Minimum Fat / Result
Quick Breads	1 or 2 Tbsps per cup of flour ... tends to dry out, less tender and more tunneling	1 Tbsp per cup of flour ... coarser texture
Cakes	1/2 cup sugar per cup of flour ... more open texture, pale crust, drier	2 Tbsps per cup of flour ... less tender, less moist
Breads	0-1 Tbsp per cup of flour ... less tender and moist	1 Tbsp per cup of flour ... lower keeping quality
Rolls	1 tsp per cup of flour ... less tender and moist browns slowly	1 Tbsp per cup of flour ... lower keeping quality
Cookies	1/3 cup per cup of flour ... less tender, paler and less spreading	1/2 cup per cup of flour ... less tender
Custards/ Puddings	1 1/2 Tbsps per cup of milk ... firmer, shorter cooking time	None

Note on your recipes what modifications you made so you can replicate it in the future

2. Make a Healthy Substitution

Healthy substitutions not only reduce the amount of fat, calories and sodium in your recipes, but also can boost the nutritional content. For example, use whole-wheat pasta in place of enriched pasta. You'll triple the fiber and reduce the number of calories. Prepare a dessert with fat-free milk instead of whole milk to save 63 calories and almost 8 grams of fat per cup.

3. Delete an Ingredient

In some recipes, you can delete an ingredient altogether; likely candidates include items you add out of habit or for appearance, such as frosting, coconut or nuts, which are high in fat and calories. Other possibilities include optional condiments, such as pickles, olives, butter, mayonnaise, syrup, jelly and mustard, which can have large amounts of sodium, sugar, fat and calories.

4. Change the Method of Preparation

Healthy cooking techniques—such as braising, broiling, grilling and steaming—can capture the flavor and nutrients of your food without adding excessive amounts of fat, oil or sodium. If your recipe calls for frying the ingredients in oil or butter, try baking, broiling or poaching the food instead. If the directions say to baste the meat or vegetables in oil or drippings, use wine, fruit juice, vegetable juice or fat-free vegetable broth instead. Using nonstick pans or spraying pans with nonstick cooking spray will further reduce the amount of fat and calories added to your meals.

5. Change the Portion Size

No matter how much you reduce, switch or omit ingredients, some recipes may still be high in sugar, fat or salt. In these cases, reduce the amount of that food you eat. Smaller portions have less fat, calories and sodium and allow you to eat a wider variety of foods during a meal. Eating a variety of foods will ensure that you get all the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber you need.

Putting it All Together

As you look over your recipe, decide what to change and how to change it. Make notes of any alterations, so you can refer to them the next time you prepare the food. You may have to make the recipe a few times, adjusting your alterations, before you get the results you want. But finding the right combination of ingredients—for the desired taste, consistency and nutrients—is well worth the trouble.

Find Inspiration

If you're feeling stuck, find some examples of healthy recipes to get some ideas of how you can modify your recipes. Look at the ingredient list to see what you can substitute. Also look at the cooking method used as another possible change. Here are some Web sites where you can find healthy recipes:

Diabetes.org/myfoodadvisor Dlife.com Cookinglight.com

Recipe Makeover – Apple Crisp

Managing your diabetes requires you to make healthier food choices. But that doesn't mean that you still can't enjoy your favorites. With this makeover, you can serve Apple Crisp as a sweet ending to a holiday meal—and still fit it into your healthy diet.

The Makeover

The recipe's short ingredients list makes it fairly simple to prepare, even with the two added ingredients in the new recipe. The lightened version shaves off 100 calories per serving without compromising the flavor. Half of the all-purpose flour was replaced with old-fashioned oatmeal to add whole grains, fiber and nutrients. A smaller amount of *trans*-fat-free margarine was used in place of the butter to reduce the fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, *trans* fat and calories. Half of the sugar was replaced with Splenda to reduce the carbohydrate and calorie content while keeping the sweetness. Adding extra cinnamon enhanced the sweet apple flavor. The slightly smaller portion size, which further reduced the calories, probably won't be noticed.

Original Apple Crisp

9 apples, peeled & sliced
1 cup sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup butter

Yield: 12 servings (2/3 cup)
Exchanges: 3 carbohydrates, 2 fats
Analysis: 270 calories, 41 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein, 12 g fat, 7 g saturated fat, 30 mg cholesterol, 2 g fiber, 80 mg sodium

Modified Recipes

9 medium apples, peeled & sliced
1/4 cup plus 1/4 Splenda, No Calorie Sweetener,
granular (on apples)
1/4 cup Splenda plus 1/4 cup sugar (topping)
2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 cup trans-fat-free margarine
3/4 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup old fashioned oatmeal

Yield: 15 servings (1/2 cup)
Exchanges: 2 carbohydrates, 1 fat
Analysis: 170 calories, 26 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 7 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 1 g cholesterol, 2 g fiber, 80 mg sodium

Directions: Preheat oven to 375°. Toss apples with 1/4 cup Splenda, 1/4 cup sugar and cinnamon. Transfer apple mixture into a 9"x13" baking pan. Beat margarine and add the remaining 1/4 cup Splenda and 1/4 cup sugar along with the flour and oatmeal. Blend until well mixed. Evenly distribute flour mixture over the apples. Bake for 35-40 minutes on the top rack of the oven until topping is lightly browned and apples are soft. Bake for 35 minutes.

Sausage & Rice Stuffing

Regular Recipe:

6 oz long grain wild rice mix
1/4 cup butter
1 cup diced onion
1 cup chopped celery
1 lb mild or hot pork sausage, cooked & crumbled
1 (6 oz) box stuffing croutons
2 oz mushroom pieces & stems
2 eggs, beaten
3 cups chicken broth
1/2 cup chopped pecans
1/4 teaspoon seasoned pepper

Cook rice according to package directions. Melt butter. Sauté onion and celery in butter. Combine remaining ingredients. Put in prepared 9"x13" pan. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes. Serves 8-10. Bake separate from turkey.

Serving size - 1/2 cup, calories - 269, total fat - 17 g, saturated fat - 7 g, cholesterol - 87 mg, sodium - 780 mg, total carbohydrates - 21 g, protein - 7.2 g

Adapted from * Nutritional Value of Foods and commercial labels.

Modified Recipe:

6 oz long grain wild rice mix
(use 1/2 seasoning packet)
1 cup diced onion
1 cup chopped celery
1/2 lb. mild or hot pork sausage, cooked & crumbled
6 oz home dried bread crumbs
2 oz mushroom pieces & stems
4 egg whites, slightly beaten
3 cups chicken broth made with reduced sodium bouillon
1/4 teaspoon seasoned pepper

Cook rice according to package directions using 1/2 seasoning packet. Sauté onion and celery in skillet treated with cooking spray. Combine remaining ingredients. Put in prepared 9"x13" pan. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes. Serves 8-10. Bake separate from turkey.

Serving size - 1/2 cup, calories - 150, total fat - 7.5 g, saturated fat - 2.2 g, cholesterol 22.3 mg, sodium - 322.6 mg, carbohydrates - 21.3 g, protein 5.2 g

Cream Puff Dessert

Regular Recipe:

1 stick margarine
1 cup water
1 cup flour
4 eggs
2 sm pkgs (or 1 lg) instant vanilla pudding
3 cups milk
1 (8 oz) cream cheese
Cool Whip
Chocolate or Caramel Syrup

Boil water and margarine together until melted. Add flour; mix well. Cool slightly. Add eggs, one at a time. Spread in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 400 for 30 minutes. Cool. Combine pudding, milk and cream cheese with mixer. Mix well and pour over cooled crust. Let set until firm. Spread Cool Whip over pudding layer.

Modified Recipe:

1 stick low-fat margarine
1 cup water
1 cup flour
8 egg whites
2 sm pkgs (or 1 lg) instant
sugar free (fat free) vanilla pudding
3 cups skim milk
1 (8 oz) no-fat cream cheese
Whipped dairy topping (fat free)

Boil water and margarine together until melted. Add flour; mix well. Cool slightly. Add egg whites, one at a time. Spread in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes. Cool. Combine pudding, milk and cream cheese with mixer. Mix well and pour over cooled crust. Let set until firm. Spread whipped dairy topping over pudding layer.

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