

Food preparation and cooking tips for food providers

These guidelines will help you make freshly prepared food and recipes healthier



Increase the fibre

- Include vegetables and/or fruit in recipes as much as possible (eg. sandwich fillings, soups, quiches, pizza, pasta, rice, noodles, muffins and loaves).
- Include beans and legumes in dishes to add bulk and flavour.
- Choose whole grain, multi-grain or wholemeal breads and brown rice.
- For baking, use wholemeal flour or a combination of wholemeal and white flour, or incorporate whole grains such as oats, bran and seeds.



Reduce the salt

- Instead of using salt, try adding lemon, vinegar, herbs and/or spices to flavour your dishes.
- If using salty ingredients such as olives, cheese, processed meats or Asian sauces in a recipe, do not add salt.
- Where possible, use low-salt ingredients (eg. those that are labelled 'low salt', 'no added salt' or 'salt reduced').
- Avoid regularly using processed meat (eg. ham, bacon, sausage, corned beef, smoked chicken, luncheon, salami). If using, limit the portion and choose products with a Health Star Rating of 3.5 or above.



Reduce the sugar

Dessert

- If desserts are offered, include fruit in recipes. Ensure there is no more than 10g (2.5 teaspoons) added sugars* per serve.

Drinks

- Avoid selling any sugar-sweetened drinks (eg. soft drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks and sports drinks).
- Where possible, use fruit for sweetness instead of adding sugar (eg. still or sparkling water flavoured with fresh fruit pieces).

Sweet baked products

- No or minimal icing on baked products.
- Instead of icing, use sliced fruit, nuts, seeds and yoghurt for toppings.
- Avoid using confectionery within or as a topping on baked products.
- Include fruit in recipes as a sweetener to reduce added sugars*.
- Limit the portion size of sweet baked products. [See Guidance for more details.](#)

*Added sugars include sugar, brown sugar, honey, syrup, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrates.



Reduce the saturated fat

Meat

- Use lean meat or trim the visible fat off the meat.
- Use cooking techniques that do not add extra fat or oil, such as roasting, grilling, baking and poaching. After cooking, skim the fat off the surface or drain.
- Limit the use of processed meats that are high in fat and salt, such as bacon, sausage and salami.

Milk, cheese and yoghurt

- Use low- or reduced-fat milk as the default option.
- Provide/use reduced-fat versions of cheese, yoghurt, sour cream and cream cheese.
- Use cheese that is naturally lower in fat, such as cottage, Edam, mozzarella, ricotta and lite varieties of hard cheese, like cheddar. Alternatively, use a smaller amount of stronger-flavoured cheese (e.g. parmesan or tasty cheese).
- When using coconut cream, opt for reduced-fat varieties or dilute the regular products before use.
- Offer natural, unsweetened yoghurt as the default garnish instead of cream or sour cream.

Spreads

- Use margarine or plant-based alternatives instead of butter. Alternatives include avocado, hummus, nut or seed butter and low-fat spreadable cheeses (eg. cottage cheese).

Pastry items

- Use filo pastry instead of short or puff pastry.
- Otherwise, limit the size of pastry items. [See Guidance for more details.](#)

Deep-fried food

- Replace deep-fried food with healthier alternatives. For example, chips, wedges, crumbed fish, chicken, spring rolls, or samosas can be baked in the oven instead of deep-fried. Brush with healthier oils, such as canola, rice bran, or sunflower, for crispness. Include as many vegetables as possible in the filling.