

Healthier catering tips for Chinese restaurant and takeaways

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[Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to customers](#). Here are some practical healthier catering suggestions to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle.

Try to achieve as many tips as possible. While you may already be doing some of these, be prepared to go further and make real changes to help your customers stay healthy.

Portion size

Eating too many calories can lead to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Even small reductions at each meal can make a real difference.

Give customers who want smaller portions a choice. In addition to your standard portions, try at least one of the following:

- Offer reduced-size specials (a container with half the rice and half the meat of a standard portion size)
- Make small portions or children's portions available and market these to everyone

Try not to overfill or compress food into containers or try using a slightly smaller container for takeaway dishes. Ask staff to keep to these portion sizes to provide consistency for your customers.

Fats and frying

High-fat foods contain lots of calories which can lead to weight gain. This in turn can lead to diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Reducing saturated fat intakes can lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Limit fried foods

Offer steamed, boiled or grilled dishes among your range of starters and main courses. The food will taste great, give customers more choice and you will save money by using less oil. Many restaurants offer starters like grilled dumplings and vegetable soups. Boiled chicken and steamed fish are also proving popular.

Avoid frying food more than once

Par-frying, double or triple cooking and reheating food in oil increases the fat content of the food. If you need to pre-prepare, then try par-boiling meat and chicken first and flash-frying to finish it off.

Use healthier oil

Rapeseed or sunflower oil as these contain less saturated fat.

Remove excess fat

Remove the fat from pork, beef and lamb and the skin from chicken wherever possible.

Use thick, straight-cut chips

For healthier chips, use thick straight-cut chips (at least a 14mm /just over ½ an inch) and fry at 160-165°C if you have a high efficiency fryer or 175°C if you have a traditional fryer.

Bang, shake and drain chips

This can reduce fat absorption by 20% and make them crispier.

Steam, boil or grill

Some customers aren't afraid to ask for what they want but most are too shy to ask for something that isn't on the menu. Highlight on your menus and train staff to tell customers they can ask for food to be steamed, boiled or grilled instead of fried. Also consider having these cooking methods as the default option.

Salt

It is important to reduce your salt intake as too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

Reduce the amount of salt and salty ingredients

Reduce ingredients such as salt, MSG, soy sauce, hoisin sauce, oyster sauce, stock or ketchup in your dishes over time. Customers won't notice if you do this gradually. Try adding a little less each week. Instead, use herbs and spices and other ingredients like garlic and ginger to add flavour. Be careful not to add sugar instead.

Remove salt and soy sauce from tables

This can be given to customers only on request.

Avoid adding salt during cooking

This applies to vegetables, rice and noodles during cooking. Customers won't notice if you do this gradually. Try adding a little less each week until you can avoid adding it altogether.

Sugar

Eating too many foods and drinks high in sugar can contribute to excess calories and lead to weight gain, which in turn increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. It is also linked to tooth decay.

- Offer healthier drinks as the default option. These can include water, lower fat milks, low calorie or no added sugar drinks or pure fruit juices (in a 150ml serving size or as close to this volume as possible) rather than sugary drinks.
- If you do offer desserts either offer fresh fruit without sugar or syrup or desserts and

pastries that are lower in fat and sugars. Offer smaller portion sizes or choose desserts or pastries that meet the [sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines](#).

Fruit, vegetables and fibre

These are low in calories and good sources of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Eating plenty of them will help to promote digestive health and can help prevent heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

- Add more vegetables and/or pulses to dishes (while not adding more fat, sugar or salt). They are usually cheaper than meat and fish so could save you money and will increase the fibre content of dishes
- Offer brown rice as an option on your menu
- Add steamed vegetables to boiled rice to make it more colourful and promote this option in your restaurant
- Offer fruit on your dessert menu or make it part of a meal deal - fruit can be fresh, canned (in fruit juice), dried or frozen.

Promote healthier options

Although it is important to improve the nutrient content of all menu items, you can additionally develop promotions to give a unique selling point and encourage customers to pick a healthier meal or snack to eat. If you offer meal deals or set menus, this is a great way to get your customers to try healthier dishes.

- Swap 1 or 2 items on your set menus for healthier options e.g. boiled rather than fried rice or vegetable soup instead of spring rolls
- Include healthier drinks, fruit and vegetable options in menus, all deals and promotions
- Train staff to suggest and promote healthier options with higher fibre and less salt, saturated fat, sugar and calories if asked for a recommendation
- Add a section to your menu highlighting steamed, boiled or grilled options to help customers identify healthier options
- Offer desserts lower in fat and sugar, smaller portion sizes or replace with fruit options. Try to choose those desserts that meet the [sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines](#)

Source healthier ingredients and food products from suppliers

Check the nutrition information about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats. [Follow our advice on how to read food labels](#). Your supplier may be able to assist you.

Use [Public Health England's report](#) to check against the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines.

Provide energy information

[Calorie Wise](#) is a free scheme in Northern Ireland to help catering businesses display calorie information on menus. This allows customers to have the information they need to make healthier choices when eating out.

The Food Standards Agency provides a free, online tool called [MenuCal](#) which helps businesses to calculate the energy value of food, in both kilojoules and kilocalories. The MenuCal tool also assists businesses to manage allergen information.