

Healthier catering tips for sandwich shops

Guidance for sandwich shops on providing and promoting healthier food and drink.

Healthier eating is becoming more important to customers. Here are some practical catering suggestions to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle.

Following these tips will help you;

- make your sandwiches healthier
- offer more choice to your customers, helping you to compete in the market
- make more money from the sandwiches you already sell

You may already be achieving several of these tips but be prepared to go further and make real changes to help your customers make healthier choices.

Portion size

Eating too many calories can lead to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Even small reductions at each meal can make a real difference.

- **Think about the size of your portions** and if you're being too generous. Have a set portion for each filling (for example, a certain size of scoop/spoon or a fixed number of slices/pieces) and ask staff to keep to these portion sizes to provide consistency for your customers – this could help you save money.
- **If you're mixing two fillings** (for example chicken and bacon) you don't have to use a full portion of each – **try using half a portion of each.**

Start with the right bread

- **Try using wholegrain, wholemeal, malted wholegrain or brown bread as standard**, unless customers ask for white. Offer 50/50 white bread with added nutrients and fibre for customers who do not like brown or wholemeal bread.
- **Choose lower salt bread** where possible. Look for breads with less than 0.85g salt per 100g (or less than 340mg sodium per 100g).

Choose the right spread

- **Use low or reduced fat spread**, ideally made from unsaturated vegetable oils such as sunflower, rapeseed and olive oils. Compared with butter, these spread more easily, are lower in fat, especially saturated fat, and cost less.

- Choose a spread with less than 0.96g salt per 100g (or less than 380mg sodium per 100g).
- **Try making sandwiches without any spread**, especially if the filling is moist. Or let your customers choose if they want spread. You will save time preparing your sandwiches and save money by using less spread.
- If a customer asks for spread, try to spread it thinly or consider putting it on one slice of bread only.

Pick the right fillings

[By checking the label](#) when selecting ingredients or making simple changes when making your sandwiches, it is easy to reduce the levels of salt and fat, especially saturated fat.

Below are tips to make some common sandwich fillings;

Cheese

- **Swap to reduced-fat hard cheese or a cheese naturally lower in fat**, like Edam
- **Swap to lower fat cream cheese**
- **Use thinly sliced cheese or grated cheese instead of sliced** – this can mean you use less cheese and it will add volume to your sandwiches

Mayonnaise, salad cream and salad dressings

- **Use less mayonnaise** in sandwiches - this is another way to reduce the amount of fat and saturated fat the sandwich contains and saves you money
- **Swap to lower fat and salt mayonnaise or salad cream/dressing or use low-fat plain yogurt** (most are similar in price and taste)
- If you do not want to use a lower fat mayonnaise, try picking a standard mayonnaise with lower fat, saturated fat and salt levels – often these are from the 'basic' or 'value' ranges so may also save you money while satisfying your customers

Meat and fish

- **Offer leaner meats** like turkey and chicken without skin and a variety of fish options like tuna or salmon
- **Cut off visible fat** – it looks nicer for the customer and is healthier too
- Processed meats can all be high in fat and salt so try to pick those with lower salt and fat levels and use less in sandwiches

Salad vegetables

- Salad vegetables are low in calories and good sources of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre - eating plenty of salad vegetables will help to promote digestive health and can help prevent heart disease, stroke and some cancers
- **Offer salad** (for example, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, peppers, sweetcorn, radish, cress, rocket, courgette, carrot ribbons, onions or spinach and choose seasonal vegetables to increase variety) in or with every sandwich - it is a good way to make the sandwiches look bigger and more colourful.

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** such as 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.
- **Remove confectionery, cakes, pastries, biscuits, morning goods and sugary drinks from till points, checkout aisles and areas around checkouts.** If you do offer them, offer smaller portion sizes and choose products that meet [Public Health England's sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines](#).

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.

- **Promote healthier sandwich options, snacks and drinks with meal deals.** This could give you a unique selling point.
- **Offer fresh fruit, plain unsalted nuts or plain low-fat yogurts.** Or choose low-fat fruit yogurts that meet the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines.
- **Try offering a selection of baked or popped crisps and snacks** – they're not fried so have a lower fat content than standard crisps.
- **Offer smaller-sized packets** of 30g or less of crisps and the smallest standard single serve pack sizes of confectionery such as chocolate, containing no more than 250kcal per pack.
- **If biscuits, cakes and pastries are sold, offer those lower in fat and sugar and offer smaller portion sizes.** Or choose ones that meet the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines.
- If you offer meal deals, try to include a starchy carbohydrate (for example, potato, bread, rice or pasta), vegetables and one portion of fruit.
- Attractive store and window displays are a simple way to promote the range of healthier options you offer.
 - **Display fruit and healthy snacks in prominent areas** or near to where customers stand - this may boost their sales and your profits
 - **Put healthier drinks like water, lower fat milks and no added sugar drinks at eye-level** in fridges
- Use promotional sandwiches. Include a sandwich of the day/week that is also healthier, such as lean meat, tuna, hard-boiled egg and cheese such as Edam, mozzarella and lower fat cream cheese - all including salad.

Source healthier ingredients and food products

Check the nutrition information about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats. Your supplier may be able to assist you.

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.