

# Chinese restaurant and takeaway tips

Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to customers<sup>9</sup>. Here are some practical healthier catering suggestions for you to consider to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle.

Try to achieve as many tips as possible.  Tick the box when you have achieved each tip and try to add a new tip every month. You may already be achieving several of these tips but be prepared to go further and make real changes to help your customers stay healthy.

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**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.

1. 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
2. **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.

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**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.

3. Try to limit the number of fried foods on your menu- **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.

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39132/attitudes-to-obesity.pdf](http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39132/attitudes-to-obesity.pdf) and [www.gov.uk/government/news/new-change4life-campaign-encourages-parents-to-be-food-smart](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-change4life-campaign-encourages-parents-to-be-food-smart)

4. **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.
  5. Use a healthier oil for frying like **rapeseed or sunflower oil** as these contain less saturated fat.
  6. **Remove the fat** from pork, beef and lamb and the skin from chicken wherever possible.
  7. For **healthier chips, use thick (at least a 14mm /just over ½ an inch), straight-cut chips and fry at 160-165°C if you have a high efficiency fryer, or 180°C if you have a traditional fryer.**  
**Bang, shake and drain chips**, this can reduce fat absorption by 20% and make them crispier.
  8. 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 that they can ask for food to be steamed, boiled or grilled instead of fried.** Also consider having these cooking methods as the **default option**.
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**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.

9. **Reduce the amount of salt and salty ingredients such as salt, MSG, soy sauce, hoi sin sauce, oyster sauce, stock, 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.
  10. Consider **removing salt and soy sauce from tables** and counters and provide it to customers only on request.
  11. **Avoid adding salt 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.
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**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.

12. **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. 
  - 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.

13. Look across your menu and think about **where you could add more vegetables and/or pulses to as many dishes as possible** (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.
  14. Offer **brown rice as an option** on your menu.
  15. Try **adding steamed vegetables to boiled rice** to make it more colourful and promote this option in your restaurant.
  16. Try **offering fruit on your dessert menu**. You could even include this as part of a meal deal. The fruit can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen.
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**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.

17. **Swap 1 or 2 items on your set menus for healthier options** eg boiled rather than fried rice, vegetable soup instead of spring rolls  
**Include healthier drinks, fruit and vegetable options in menus, all deals and promotions.**
  18. When a customer asks for a recommendation, **train staff to suggest and promote healthier options with higher fibre and less salt, saturated fat, sugar and calories.**
  19. Add a section to your menu, or insert an extra page titled: **“These options are steamed, boiled or grilled, not fried”** to help customers identify healthier options.
  20. Where desserts are offered offer those lower in fat and sugars, offer smaller portion sizes, or replace with fruit options. Try to choose those desserts that meet the **sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines**.
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#### **PROCURING HEALTHIER INGREDIENTS AND FOOD PRODUCTS FROM SUPPLIERS**

21. **Check the nutrition information** about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats. Use the following link for advice on how to read food labels: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/food-labelling.aspx> Your supplier may be able to assist you.  
To check against the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines see [www.gov.uk/government/collections/sugar-reduction](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sugar-reduction).
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