

Indian and South Asian restaurant and takeaway tips

Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to customers. Here are some practical healthier catering suggestions for you to consider to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle¹⁰.

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.

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 wanting 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. ☐
 3. Consider **reducing portion sizes** across your menu to a level that is acceptable to customers. If customers are tending to leave food on their plates, this is a clear signal that portion sizes are too large and a smaller size would be acceptable. This could also help reduce the costs of removing waste. ☐
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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.

¹⁰ See 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

4. If the tandoor is on, **cook in the tandoor rather than using the deep fat fryer** which will use up oil. For example, tikkas, poppadoms, samosas and marinated paneer can be cooked in the tandoor with the addition of just a little unsaturated oil eg rapeseed or sunflower oil. ☐
5. **Avoid frying food more than once**- par-frying, double or triple cooking and reheating food in oil increases the fat content of the food. Frying snacks like onion bhajis only once will use less oil. ☐
6. Use a healthier oil for frying like **rapeseed or sunflower oil** as these contain less saturated fat. ☐
7. If you make your own base curry sauces (gravy) **use less oil** and **drain off any excess fat**. You should aim to have no oily layer floating on the top at the end. This is healthier and more attractive for your customers. ☐
8. In dishes like butter chicken and chicken korma **use rapeseed or sunflower oil** to cook the dish and, if essential, just **use a small amount of butter or ghee** at the end as these are high in saturated fat. You will get the flavour, gloss and aroma but with less saturated fat. ☐
9. Use **plain, low fat yoghurt** in marinades, chutneys, chaat dishes and lassi. You can make yoghurt with semi-skimmed or 1% milk, or buy low fat yoghurt. They will not cost any more than full fat products and this is a simple way to cut saturated fat from the food you serve. ☐
10. **Getting oil to at least 160-165°C if you have a high efficiency fryer, or 180°C if you have a traditional fryer**, before you start frying snacks like pakoras, onion bhajis or chips gives you crisper, more appealing food that absorbs less fat. That means you use less oil. ☐

Bang, shake and drain off any excess fat, as this can reduce fat absorption by 20%.

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.

11. **Reduce the amount of salt** and salty ingredients in your dishes over time when: ☐
 - frying your spice blend for the base dishes and flavoured rice
 - preparing your dishes for serving
 - making the dough for naan breads
 - cooking rice

Customers won't notice if you do this gradually. Try adding a little less salt each week until you can avoid adding it all together.

12. Consider **removing salt from tables** and counters and provide it to customers only on request. ☐
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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.

13. **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**.
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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.

14. 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. Try some of the following: ☐
- experiment with adding more vegetables like peppers to meat dishes and peas or spinach to paneer dishes. This can add texture and colour making them more appealing
 - intersperse skewered meat with vegetables like peppers and onions
 - serve starters with a plain side salad either without dressings high in fat, sugar and salt or provide a very small portion of dressing. Choose dressings from the **sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines**.
 - try adding steamed vegetables to boiled rice to make it more colourful, like peas, sweetcorn, peppers, carrots, green beans or mushrooms with no added salt or oil
 - offer half portions of meat dishes with half portions of vegetable dishes as a main meal option
 - add or increase the amount of lentils or beans in dishes like soups, stews and rice.
15. Offer **wholemeal chapatis and brown rice** as an option on your menu. ☐
16. Try **offering fruit on your dessert menu** for example mango with kulfi or fruit salads with orange, papaya, lychees, mango or pineapple. You could even include this as part of a meal deal. The 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.

17. 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.** ☐
18. 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 eg plain boiled rice rather than flavoured rice or tomato-based main dishes rather than creamy dishes
 - for two people, you could try offering a main dish, dhal and a vegetable side with boiled rice, chapatti and a fruit salad dessert

Include healthier drinks, fruit and vegetable options in menus, all deals and promotions. If you offer desserts as part of the healthier option choose ones that meet the **sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines**.

Where desserts are offered offer those lower in fat and sugars, offer smaller portion sizes, or replace with fruit options.

19. **Do not serve poppadoms free of charge** as these can add a lot of fat and calories to a meal. ☐
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PROCURING HEALTHIER INGREDIENTS AND FOOD PRODUCTS FROM SUPPLIERS

20. **Check the nutrition information** about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats, for example any sauces or items like samosas, chutneys and pickles. 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.
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