



How you can help

Look at the wall chart, and you'll see that people don't need to give up the foods they enjoy most: the secret of healthy eating is all in the balance.

And these days, an increasing number of people are looking for variety of choice to get the balance right. They want more vegetables, salads, fruit, bread, cereals, potatoes, rice and pasta. Some may want a choice of different portion sizes too.

With a few alternative ingredients and cooking methods, you could adapt your menus. As you know your own business better than anyone, you are in the best position to think about how you might apply these suggestions to your area of speciality. You'll find that your customers will appreciate the effort, which means it's not only good for them, but good for your business too.



So what's 'The Balance of Good Health'?

Customers who want to follow healthy eating guidelines will probably be keen to reduce the amount of fat in their diet – particularly saturated fat from dairy and meat products, fried foods and desserts.

You can offer choices that are not fried, do not contain a lot of pastry, or choices that are prepared with unsaturated fats.

Your customers may also want to cut down on sugar and salt, and to be offered plenty of starchy foods such as different breads, pasta, rice and potatoes.



Variety is the spice of life

Many dishes can contribute to a healthy diet. Options include:

- lean meat, poultry or fish.
- jacket or boiled potatoes as well as chips.
- spreads that are high in polyunsaturates – such as sunflower margarine – and low fat spreads as well as butter.
- fresh fruit as a dessert option.



Breads, cereals and potatoes

Starchy, fibre-rich foods should be offered in good-sized portions. They're rich in vitamins and minerals.

Fruit and vegetables

Make the most of plenty of fresh, frozen and canned fruit and vegetables – and don't forget juices and dried fruits.

Milk and dairy

Try to make lower-fat milk, cream, cheese and yoghurt available too.

Meat, fish and alternatives

Alternatives to meat, fish and eggs include beans, nuts and pulses. Offer a good range of portion sizes. Widen choice by offering low-fat versions.

Fats and sugars

Try to pay particular attention to the range of spreads, margarines, oils and dressings you're offering. Offer lower fat low-sugar versions where possible.

Potatoes

If frying, remember that large pieces of potato absorb less fat, as do those fried at the correct temperature. Crinkle-cut chips absorb more fat than straight ones. Change the oil regularly and always drain well. Offer your customers a healthy baked potato and let them add the butter or low fat spread themselves – the same goes when you serve boiled potatoes. Remember too, that a lot of the goodness in a potato lies just under the skin, so don't peel them too deeply.

Salads

Be daring – offer them without a dressing, or with a range of dressings, including low-fat options, and let customers add as much or as little as they like.

Milk and cream

Semi-skimmed milk or half-fat cream can be substituted for full-fat versions.

Back to basics

Order lean cuts of meat and trim off excess fat where possible. Remove skin from chicken before cooking to reduce fat. Put more fish on the menu, including oily fish.

Lean cuisine

Baking, grilling, roasting and poaching can all reduce fat content. Use the minimum additional fat and always rack and drain.

Spreads

Use polyunsaturated margarine or lower fat spreads in sandwiches and offer them alongside butter.

Sweet treats

Fresh fruit can be an appetising alternative – and many people prefer it after a big meal. When you're preparing desserts, try to provide some that don't contain lard, suet, butter or margarine.

Rice

Offer boiled as a healthy alternative to fried. Pre-proportioned boil-in-the-bag rice is available and can be cooked to order.

Sandwiches

Offer different types of bread – thicker slices and rolls are good for healthy appetites. Include low fat options in your choice of fillings.

Other vegetables

Go easy on the oil when you stir or shallow fry and drain vegetables well afterwards. Steaming helps retain nutrients and avoids added fats. Let customers add their own butter or low fat spread.

Cheese

A little bit of strong-flavoured cheese goes a long way in cooking. For sandwiches and cheeseboards offer a choice that includes lower fat versions such as Brie, Edam, Camembert and cottage cheese.

All steamed up

Steaming fish helps to retain nutrients and avoids added fat.

Frying tonight?

Make sure the oil temperature is correct. Change the fat regularly and drain food well. As with potatoes and vegetables, larger pieces absorb less fat.

Sauces and mayonnaise

Try to use them sparingly, and offer lower fat alternatives. Always provide them separately, and let the customer choose how much to add. Try offering fromage frais, quark or plain yoghurt in place of cream.

Ice cream

Offer ice-cream as well as cream. Think of offering sorbets and a variety of choices.

Breakfast cereals

Offer plenty of choice including low-sugar varieties. Provide sweeteners as well as sugar and lower-fat milk. Many people like to add low fat yoghurt, and dried fruit, too.

Bread, toasted teacakes, scones

Let customers add their own spreads whenever possible.

Pasta

Plenty of it – and easy on the oil!

Fruit

Offer a selection of fresh fruits as a dessert, served with a choice of half-cream, ice cream, yoghurt (delicious frozen) or fromage frais. Canned fruit is best in light syrup or, better still, choose fruit juice.

Yoghurts

Add low fat alternatives to the dessert menu. Natural yoghurt is a versatile ingredient that makes delicious salad dressings and can be used instead of cream in soups and sauces.

Don't make them chew the fat

In all recipes, use as little fat or oil as possible. Skim off excess fat and use a minimum of butter and ghee. When using cheese and cream, try lower fat varieties. If you use pre-prepared dishes, encourage your supplier to use lower fat ingredients.

Soft drinks

Make diet varieties, fruit juices and mineral water available.

Goodies

Be aware of other 'goodies' that contain fat or sugar. These include chocolate, crisps, biscuits, cakes and pastries, puddings, rich sauces, fatty gravies and sweets.

Let the customer choose

Let the customer decide how much extra to add when serving:

- salad dressing.
- butter with breads, potatoes or peas.
- salt with fish and chips.

These suggestions might even bring cost benefits.

Portion size is important

Your customers don't need to deprive themselves to strike a healthy balance. In some cases they should actually be eating more – more foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals such as fruit and vegetables, and rich in starch and fibre such as pasta, rice and bread.

If you increase slightly the portion sizes of these foods and reduce the servings of fatty or sugary foods, you can make a significant difference to the balance. For example, try serving more pasta with less sauce or slightly thicker bread for sandwiches.

Don't over-egg the pudding!

You'll probably want to feature some healthy options on your menu. But be careful that you're not making false or exaggerated claims that could be said to be calculated to deceive and could lead to prosecution under various statutory provisions.

There are guidelines on some nutrient content descriptions such as 'low fat', 'reduced sugar' or 'high fibre'. If you wish to use these, or more specific claims, seek advice from your local trading standards department at the County Hall, Town Hall or Civic Centre.

You might try highlighting the healthier alternatives alongside other menu items where your customers are sure to see them, rather than putting them in a special section on the menu.



Are you offering your customers:

- more choice?
- less fat?
- value for money?
- kids appeal?
- more variety?

Are you serving your customers right?

In the UK we have one of the highest rates of heart disease and stroke in the western world. There are many reasons for this – for example, cigarette smoking. But experts agree that what we eat is very important too.

This guide aims to show those who work in the restaurant and fast food businesses how to offer customers healthier choices. It's been designed to fold out into a wall chart and includes many tips on how to select and prepare healthy options for your customers. You could display it in the kitchen so that you and your staff can refer to it at work.

Customers will also be able to make healthy choices while they're eating out. The message they'll get is, 'It's your meal: you choose'. So in future they may well ask for more options, greater variety, or advice on how to enjoy a balanced meal.



The Food Standards Agency

is a UK-wide, non-ministerial government department, providing advice and information to the public and government on food safety, nutrition and diet.

The Agency is committed to protecting the interests of consumers through effective enforcement and monitoring in relation to food safety and standards and will:

- put the consumer first
- be open and accessible
- be an independent voice

The Agency's advice is based on the best scientific evidence available, from independent expert advisory committees and all advice will be made public. The FSA supports consumer choice through promoting accurate and meaningful labelling.

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Want to know more?

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Orderline: 0845 6060667
Minicom: 0845 6060678
Fax: 020 8867 3225
Email: foodstandards@eclogistics.co.uk

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Dine out, Eat well

How you can offer your customers healthy choices that will keep them coming back for more

