

## Healthy Eating: Ethnic Foods



Do you love Mexican food? Soul food? Chinese takeout? Maybe ethnic foods are part of your family's cultural history. Or maybe you just love to eat foods from different places. Either way, these foods can be part of healthy eating.

Many dishes can be changed to lower the amount of fat, sugar, or salt. You can enjoy traditional foods while eating healthier too. And ethnic restaurants, such as Indian, Thai, or Japanese restaurants, often have a wide variety of vegetarian choices you can try.

### Tips for eating healthy ethnic foods

#### Soul food

- Keep the greens. Cook collards and other greens using chicken broth instead of pork fat. They taste delicious and are part of a healthy diet.
- Lose the fat. Trim excess fat from meat before you eat it.
- Skip the sauce. Barbecue sauces and gravies can be high in fat, calories, and salt. Leave them off your plate or use only a tiny bit.

#### Soul food cooking at home

- Make macaroni and cheese with evaporated fat-free milk and low-fat or reduced-fat cheese. Try adding chopped onions for flavor instead of salt.
- Use extra lean ground beef for meat loaf. Add lots of vegetables and spices, such as onions, green and red peppers, tomatoes, and garlic.
- Cook skinless chicken breasts using olive oil. Try a mix of curry powder, thyme, and other spices for flavor. Add some potato, onion, and scallion.
- Bake lean pork chops with the fat trimmed. Before baking, dip them in egg white and fat-free evaporated milk. Cover with cornflakes, dry bread crumbs, and spices such as oregano. Try the recipe with fish or skinless chicken.
- Slice apples into a salad with cranberries, unsalted seeds or nuts, and low-fat vinaigrette dressing.

#### Latino

- Skip the chips. Or eat only a small handful. Every chip has about a gram of fat in it. Have a few, and then push the basket away.
- Choose corn tortillas instead of flour tortillas. Corn tortillas have fewer calories and less fat.
- Go easy on the cheese.

### Latino cooking at home

- Make beef enchiladas with corn tortillas and lean beef. Add plenty of vegetables, such as onion, tomato, lettuce, and carrots.
- Use corn tortillas and skinless chicken breast for tacos. Use only a small amount of cheese.
- Grill vegetable kebabs with zucchini, yellow squash, bell peppers, onions, cherry tomatoes, and mushrooms. Mix balsamic vinegar, mustard, and garlic for a tasty sauce.
- Make a veggie wrap with whole wheat tortillas, bell pepper, onion sauteed in canola oil, and avocado mixed with lime juice and cilantro. Top with low-sodium black beans, nonfat sour cream, and fresh salsa.
- For baked fish such as tilapia, mix chopped tomatoes, olives, garlic, and red onion with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a tablespoon of lime juice. Pour the mix on the fish and bake.

### Chinese

- Avoid sweet and sour. Most of these dishes, along with dishes like lemon chicken, have meat that is breaded, deep-fried, and covered with sugary sauce.
- Use chopsticks. You'll eat slower and give your stomach more time to get full on less.

- Have more vegetables. Ask your server for more veggies and less meat in your dish.
- Choose steamed, not fried. Fried rice has at least double the calories of steamed rice.

### Native American

- Buffalo beats beef. Buffalo meat is generally leaner than meat from cows.
- Fry less fry bread. You can make healthier fry bread by adding whole wheat flour to the mix, cooking it in vegetable oil instead of lard, and making serving sizes smaller.
- Grow your own. Eating more fresh veggies is always a good idea. By growing your own, you can eat the fruits and vegetables that are a part of your own traditions.

### A few more tips:

- **Middle Eastern.** Stay with the starters. Appetizers like baba ghanoush and dolmas are low in fat. Make a meal out of these healthy starters.
- **Creole.** If you make your own red beans and rice, leave out the pork. You'll keep out lots of fat.
- **Japanese.** Try the sushi. Most sushi is low in fat and has lots of fresh ingredients. If you don't want the raw fish, there are plenty that have cooked fish or vegetables only.
- **Vietnamese.** Go easy on the sauce. Lots of dipping sauces are high in fat or salt. Dunk lightly, if you dunk at all.
- **Italian.** Use tomato sauce. It's the basis of lots of Italian food, and it's usually the healthiest sauce on the menu. Eat it with pasta and without lots of cheese. Avoid cream sauces and fried meat.