

# A Better Choice



## Tips for Healthier cooking

### Healthy ingredient swaps

Swapping less healthy ingredients with healthier alternatives can improve the nutritional quality of your favourite recipes.

By making simple changes you can reduce the **red** options on your menu and increase **green** and **amber** foods and drinks at the same time. Use the tables below to help you make healthy ingredient swaps.

Dairy products and dairy alternatives		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Plain cow's milk and alternatives fortified with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml		
Evaporated milk (reduced fat)	Evaporated milk (regular fat)	
Yoghurt (reduced fat)	Yoghurt (regular fat)	Coconut-based yoghurt
Cheese (reduced fat)	Cheese (regular fat)	
Cottage cheese, ricotta, cream cheese (reduced fat)	Long life cheese spread (from jar)	
Custard (reduced fat)	Custard (regular fat)	
Evaporated milk (reduced fat)	Cream (reduced fat)	Cream (regular fat)
Natural yoghurt (reduced fat)	Sour cream (reduced fat)	Sour cream (regular fat)



## Healthy ingredient swaps

Fats and oils		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Spread: avocado, ricotta or cottage cheese (reduced fat)  Baking: natural yoghurt (reduced fat)	Margarine	Butter or dairy blend spread
	Mono- or polyunsaturated oil <i>e.g. canola, olive, peanut, sesame, sunflower, safflower</i>	Palm oil, coconut oil, ghee, lard, cophia, shortening
Coconut flavoured evaporated milk (reduced fat)	Coconut milk (reduced fat)	Coconut cream/coconut milk (regular fat)

Meat, poultry, fish and nuts		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Meat or poultry (lean, skinless, without crumbs or coating)	Meat or poultry (regular, with visible skin or fat)	Sausages, frankfurts, chorizo
Mince meat (lean)	Mince meat (regular)	Sausage mince
Sliced cooked meat or poultry <i>e.g. roast beef, chicken/turkey breast</i>	Processed meats (lean, reduced salt)* <i>e.g. lean, reduced salt ham and pastrami</i>	Processed meats (regular fat, regular salt) <i>e.g. bacon, ham, salami, Strasburg, Devon, kabana</i>
Chicken fillet (skinless)	Chicken fillet (with skin)	Chicken (deep-fried) <i>e.g. chicken nuggets</i>

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\* These examples are of a general nature only. To identify healthier options, please refer to Appendix 2 in the [A Better Choice Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Healthcare Facilities](#).



## Healthy ingredient swaps

Meat, poultry, fish and nuts		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Canned fish and legume ready to eat products (in spring water)	Canned fish and legume ready to eat products (in brine, oil or sauce)	
Canned salmon slices (in spring water)	Smoked salmon <i>(reduced salt smoked salmon is a healthier option than regular salt varieties)</i>	
Fish fillet (plain, steamed) Fish fillet (coated on-site using minimal oil/salt, oven-baked or grilled)	Fish fillet (commercial, crumbed, oven-baked or grilled)*	Fish fillet (battered, deep-fried)
Lentil patties and falafel balls grilled or oven-baked and prepared with minimal oil and salt	Lentil patties and falafel balls: prepared with little salt and shallow-fried in little oil (mono- or poly-unsaturated)	
Tofu (plain, pan-fried in mono- or polyunsaturated oil, steamed or stir-fried)	Tofu (marinated in sweet/salty sauce, pan-fried in mono- or polyunsaturated oil)	Tofu (deep-fried)
Meat or vegetable patties/balls (lean with minimal oil/salt, grilled or oven-baked)	Meat or vegetable patties/balls (oven-baked or shallow-fried with extra oil/salt)*	Crumbed or coated meat or vegetable patties/balls (deep-fried)
Nuts or seeds (raw or dry-roasted and unsalted)	Nuts or seeds (roasted in oil and/ or lightly salted without coating)	Nuts with sweet or savoury coating

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## Healthy ingredient swaps

Fruit and vegetables		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Fresh vegetables Frozen vegetables Roasted vegetables (lightly sprayed with olive oil – add herbs for extra flavour) Dried and prepared beans and peas	Vegetables in oil or brine <i>e.g. sundried tomatoes, olives</i>	
Hot potato chips and wedges prepared on-site from fresh potatoes and oven-baked with minimal oil/salt	Oven-baked commercial hot potato chips, wedges, potato cakes, hash browns, gems*	Deep-fried hot potato chips, wedges, potato cakes, hash browns, gems
Canned fruit in natural juice	Canned fruit in syrup or jelly	
Stewed fruit with no sugar added	Stewed fruit with added sugar	
Dried fruit (plain)	Dried fruit (plain)	

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Bread and pastry		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Turkish bread, wholemeal, white, and wholegrain bread, rolls, wraps, and pitas	Focaccia	
Filo pastry	Puff pastry (reduced fat)	Puff pastry (regular fat) or shortcrust pastry

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## Healthy ingredient swaps

Sauces, dressings and seasonings		
Green: best nutritional value	Amber: some nutritional value	Red: limited or no nutritional value
Tomato sauce, BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce (reduced salt/sugar)	Tomato sauce, BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce (regular salt/sugar)	
	Asian style sauces (reduced salt/sugar) <i>e.g. soy, satay, oyster, kecap manis, sweet chilli</i>	Asian style sauces (regular salt/sugar) <i>e.g. soy, satay, oyster, kecap manis, sweet chilli</i>
	Chutney, relish, cranberry sauce (reduced sugar/salt)	Chutney, relish, cranberry sauce (regular sugar/salt)
	Pesto (reduced fat/salt)	Pesto (regular fat/salt)
Tomato paste (reduced salt/no added salt)	Tomato paste (regular salt)	
	Gravy (reduced fat, reduced salt)	Gravy (regular fat, regular salt)
Natural yoghurt (reduced fat), mixed with garlic, herbs or lemon juice	Creamy sauce (reduced fat) <i>e.g. mayonnaise, aioli, tartare</i>	Creamy sauce (regular fat) <i>e.g. mayonnaise, aioli, tartare</i>
Citrus or vinegar-based salad dressing <i>e.g. Balsamic vinegar or lemon/orange juice</i>	Oil-based salad dressing <i>e.g. French dressing</i>	Creamy salad dressing <i>e.g. Caesar or coleslaw dressing</i>
Stock (reduced salt)	Stock (regular salt)	
Herbs and spices (no added salt/sugar)		Salt
	Intense natural or artificial sweetener	Sugar

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## Healthier cooking methods

Cooking methods can have a big impact on how nutritious the meal is. Where possible, avoid deep-frying as this adds unnecessary energy (kilojoules) to the meal. Boiling or braising food can cause the loss of valuable nutrients. To keep the meal as nutritious as possible, try the following healthy cooking methods:

- grill
- stir-fry
- roast or bake with minimal oil  
(e.g. use spray or lightly brush with oil)
- steam or blanch in boiling water
- microwave.

**Remember all deep-fried foods and meals containing deep-fried ingredients are classified as red.**

## Additional tips

Swap this...	...for this
Baking trays greased with butter/oil	Baking trays lined with baking paper
Extra fat (butter or oil) to prevent food from sticking to cookware	Non-stick cookware or a light spray of oil
Pastry cases for pies	Ramekins (individual crockery pie dishes) with a pastry lid for pies
Quiches (with pastry)	Frittatas (without pastry)
Deep-frying commercial crumbed and coated products	Oven baking commercial crumbed and coated products or preparing them on-site
Large amounts of sugar, fat or salt in recipes	Reduced amounts of sugar, fat and salt in recipes (use some of the healthier ingredient swaps in the section above for ideas)
All white flour in recipes	Half wholemeal flour and half white flour in recipes

For further information visit [www.hw.qld.gov.au/a-better-choice](http://www.hw.qld.gov.au/a-better-choice) or contact [abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au](mailto:abetterchoice@hw.qld.gov.au).

*This resource is adapted with permission from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's [Tips for healthier cooking webpage](#)  
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