

Trading Standards Partnership  
South West



# Chinese restaurants

## Adjusting your menu



"Promoting safer, healthier, local food"



Healthy catering is not about removing lots of existing dishes from the menu and replacing them with healthier alternatives. Although you may decide to introduce some totally new dishes, the main emphasis is on making small changes to existing dishes. This may mean changing some of the ingredients used, the proportions of each component or how the food is prepared / cooked. Healthy catering is also about promoting the healthier options so customers are more aware of the choices available.

This information sheet gives specific ideas that are tailored to **Chinese style restaurants and takeaways**. This may include Peking, Cantonese and Szechuan cuisine.



- Include some healthier appetisers and starters on the menu.
- Limit the amount of deep fried appetisers offered and use a monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil that is suitable for deep frying (e.g. rapeseed/canola, corn). Use optimum frying temperatures (look at the recipe/package or fryer instructions, but usually between 180-190°C), as a reduced temperature can lead to increased fat absorption.
- Grill or steam starters where possible.
- Prawn crackers are high in fat. Use a monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil and drain thoroughly before serving. Allow customers to order prawn crackers if they would like them, rather than provide them for free / complimentary with meals. If they are provided free with a meal, try to reduce the portion size.

<b>Less healthy options</b> – high in fat / sugar / salt	<b>Healthier options</b>
Crispy seaweed	Hot & sour / clear soups
Deep fried dim sum / wonton	'Fresh' non fried spring rolls
Deep fried spring rolls	Lettuce wraps with vegetable / chicken fillings
Prawn toast	Steamed dumplings
Fried dumplings	Grilled or steamed king prawns / mussels / scallops
Deep fried chicken wings	Grilled chicken / beef on skewers

*Table continues overleaf*

Prawn crackers	
Fried chicken / beef on skewers	

## Rice, noodles and potatoes

- A meal should be based around starchy foods, which in a Chinese style restaurant would mainly be rice and noodles.
- Offer boiled rice and noodles as alternative to fried.
- Try offering noodle dishes such as chow mein with *boiled* noodles instead of fried
- To make boiled rice more appealing, offer variations with added fruit or vegetables e.g. Chinese / straw mushrooms, peas, pineapple.
- Try offering brown rice, or half brown and half white rice mixed together.
- If dumplings are on the menu, steam rather than fry.
- If chips are on the menu, use *thick, straight cut* chips as these absorb less fat than thin chips / fries. Only put salt on chips if requested by customer.

# Main course dishes

## Fruit, vegetables and salads

- A balanced diet should contain lots of fruit and vegetables, so have plenty of options on the menu.
- There are a range of different fruits and vegetables that are used in Chinese style cooking - peppers, onion, pineapple, broccoli, Chinese greens / Pak Choi, straw mushrooms, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, baby corn, beansprouts.
- Add extra fruit and vegetables into soups, starters, main dishes, rice and noodles.
- Have non-fried vegetable main and side dishes on the menu. Encourage customers to buy a side order of vegetables, or have a 'special' vegetable dish of the week.
- Where possible, steam vegetables or stir-fry in a minimal amount of oil.
- Where possible, add extra beans or pulses into a dish e.g. blackbean sauce.
- Try offering a salad starter or main dish e.g. mixed seafood salad. Serve without dressing, or offer a reduced fat dressing in a separate container.
- Offer fruit as a dessert and have fruit juice available as a drink (see 'Desserts' and 'Drinks' sections).

# Meat, fish and alternatives

## Red Meat –

- Use lean meat where possible and cut visible fat off meat, such as pork and lamb.
- Grill, oven bake or stir-fry in minimal amount of monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil.
- When roasting meat, use a roasting rack to drain excess fat away.
- Pork ribs / spare ribs are generally high in fat. If on the menu, grill / char-grill or roast on a rack to allow fat to drain away. The coating (e.g. BBQ sauce) may also be high in fat, salt and/or sugar (see '*Sauces, stocks and dips*' section).
- Skim fat off meat soups / curries.

## Poultry and Eggs –

- Where possible, remove the skin from poultry, such as chicken and duck.
- Grill, oven bake, boil or stir-fry poultry in minimal amount of monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil.
- When roasting poultry, use a roasting rack to drain excess fat away.
- If omelettes are included in the menu, try to include some vegetables. If milk is added, use semi skimmed milk instead of whole milk or cream. Fry in a non-stick pan with a small amount of monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil.





## Fish –

- Include a variety of white fish, oily fish and shellfish in your menu. Examples in Chinese cooking include:  
White fish – Seabass, monkfish  
Oily fish – Salmon  
Shellfish – Prawns / shrimps, mussels, scallops
- Offer unbattered and non-fried fish and seafood – Steam, poach, grill, oven bake or stir-fry in minimal amount of monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil.

## Meat alternatives –

- Offer tofu and vegetable dishes for people who prefer to avoid meat.
- Nuts are a non-meat source of protein. Include nuts, such as cashew nuts, in some vegetarian dishes.
- Ensure that there are non-fried vegetarian options available.

## Reducing Fat, Salt and Sugar

Tips on how to reduce fat, salt and sugar can be found in most sections of this guide. Further tips and general reminders for adapting recipes and cooking methods are as follows:

- Offer dishes that are steamed, poached, boiled or stir-fried in minimal oil.
- When stir-frying, use small amounts of monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oils e.g. rapeseed oil, olive oil, sunflower oil.
- Do not double / re-fry food as it increases fat absorption further.

- Battered and deep fried dishes contain lots of fat. Only offer a limited number of these dishes and use a monounsaturated / polyunsaturated oil that is suitable for deep frying (e.g. rapeseed/canola, corn). Use optimum frying temperatures (look at the recipe/package or fryer instructions, but usually between 180-190°C), as a reduced temperature can lead to increased fat absorption.
- If you offer curries with creamed coconut, try to replace with reduced fat coconut milk as this contains less saturated fat.
- Some dishes have high levels of salt or sugar (e.g. salted chilli chicken, honey lemon chicken). Only offer a limited number of these dishes and try to reduce the amount of salt or sugar/ honey used.
- Do not add salt to vegetables, rice, noodles or chips.
- Avoid adding Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) to food as it contains large amounts of sodium. When buying readymade sauces, look for ones that don't contain MSG (also labelled as 'E621' on food packaging).
- Use other ways to enhance the flavour of the food (e.g. garlic, herbs, spices, chilli, black pepper, lemon / lime), instead of salt or MSG.
- **Sauces and stocks**
  - Some sauces contain high levels of salt, sugar and/or fat (e.g. Soy sauce, hoisin, plum, blackbean, sweet & sour, oyster sauce, fish sauce). Ready-made / bought-in sauces and stocks can contain particularly high levels.
  - Try to make sauces and stocks in-house and reduce the amount of salt or sugar added.
  - BBQ sauce can be high in sugar, salt and / or fat. If BBQ dishes are on the menu (e.g. BBQ chicken or ribs), try to coat the food lightly, rather than cover the food in lots of sauce.



- Limit the amount of sauce added to a dish and, where possible, offer the sauce separately so the customer can use as little or as much as they like.



Examples of less healthy main course dishes and the healthier alternatives:

<b>Less healthy options</b> – high in fat / sugar / salt	<b>Healthier options</b>
Battered and deep fried products (e.g. sweet and sour pork / chicken / prawn balls)	Chop suey
Deep fried crispy beef	Vegetable stir-fries
Curries based on creamed coconut	Stir-fried beef strips / chicken strips
<i>Fried</i> fish and shellfish	Curries with reduced fat coconut milk instead of creamed coconut
Dishes with a high salt / sugar sauce (e.g. plum, hoisin, blackbean, sweet & sour, oyster, fish sauce, soy sauce)	<i>Steamed / boiled</i> fish / shellfish
Honey coated dishes (e.g. honey lemon chicken, honey roast pork)	<i>Boiled</i> rice / noodles
Salted dishes (e.g. salted chilli chicken / ribs / beef)	<i>Chunky, thick cut</i> chips
Fried rice, fried / crispy noodles	<i>Steamed</i> dumplings
<i>Thin cut</i> chips/fries	Stir-fried beancurd (tofu)
Deep fried dumplings / deep fried tofu	Vegetable dishes (e.g. broccoli, pak choi, straw mushrooms, baby corn)

- *Desserts*

- Desserts and puddings are often high in sugar and fat.
- Avoid deep fried desserts and try to limit the amount of added sugar.
- Try to include fruit based desserts, such as fruit salad, that include a range of fruit (e.g. lychees, mandarins, star fruit).
- Use canned fruit in fruit juice, rather than syrup.

Examples of less healthy desserts and the healthier alternatives:

<b>Less healthy options</b> – high in fat / sugar / salt	<b>Healthier options</b>
Deep fried fritters (e.g. banana / pineapple) in syrup	Steamed banana
Canned fruits <i>in syrup</i>	Canned fruits (e.g. lychees) <i>in fruit juice</i>
Ice-cream	Fruit salads (with fruit juice, not syrup)
	Sorbet

- *Drinks – cold / chilled*
  - Soft 'fizzy' drinks are often high in sugar, so always have healthier options available.
  - Have *unsweetened* fruit juice available. Look out for those labelled "Fruit juice drinks" as they usually contain added sugar, so should be avoided where possible.
  - Have bottled mineral water (still / sparkling) and artificially sweetened 'diet' soft drinks available.
  - Provide a jug of water at each table.
- *Drinks – Hot*
  - Milk and sugar are often added to hot drinks, so healthier options should be available. Offer semi skimmed or skimmed milk and have artificial sweeteners available as an alternative to sugar.
  - Speciality coffees that are topped with cream can contain high levels of fat and sugar. Try to promote Chinese / Jasmine tea as a healthier option.

## **Children's / smaller meals**

- Have smaller portions available (at a reduced price) for children and people with a smaller appetite. This can help prevent people over-eating and food being wasted. Make sure there are smaller portions of the *healthier* options available.
- If there is a dedicated children's menu, make sure it contains healthier options and not just options with chips.

## Display, pricing and marketing

- Include some of the healthier options in the set menus.
- Buffets / self service counters – Include healthier options and make sure there are plenty of starchy foods available (e.g. boiled rice, boiled noodles) and vegetables. Promote the healthier options by having information cards next to the dish that state what it contains (e.g. 'Chicken Chop Suey – Contains tender chicken pieces and a variety of crisp vegetables')\*.
- Try promoting the healthier dishes as 'specials' or 'dish of the day', but do not increase the price as this may put customers off.
- Try highlighting the healthier options on your menu, using a logo next to the healthier choices.
- Make sure staff are aware of the healthier options and promote them to customers.
- Consider using some price promotions for the healthier options (e.g. offer a portion of Chinese greens half price with every order, or free with every order over £10).
- \*N.B. If providing information about the food available, make sure any claims are correct and not misleading (e.g. be cautious about making claims such as 'low fat', 'fresh' or 'traditional').

## Food allergies and intolerances

**Note:** A small number of people suffer from allergies to food. In the UK, peanuts, milk, eggs and fish are among the foods that commonly cause severe allergic reactions, along with tree nuts, sesame seeds and shellfish. For such people, minute quantities of allergenic ingredients can have rapid and fatal effects.



Based on the **Welsh Healthy Options Award**

