

Ingredient Swaps for Healthier Holiday Meals

It's no secret that traditional [holiday](#) recipes contain high amounts of saturated fat, salt and sugar — three ingredients that can be harmful to our health when consumed in excess. These are also ingredients that can be easily substituted with healthier alternatives. Try some healthy holiday makeovers by using the following ingredient swaps to improve the nutritional quality of your favorite holiday meals, snacks and desserts.

Saturated Fat

- Use low-fat or skim milk in place of whole milk or heavy cream.
- Choose baking, grilling or steaming as your cooking method instead of frying.
- Use equal parts of applesauce (no sugar added) instead of butter in baking.
- Use Greek yogurt to replace or decrease the amount of oil, butter, mayonnaise, sour cream, heavy cream and buttermilk.
- Use vegetable oils, such as olive or canola oil, in place of butter for a healthier fat source.

Salt

- Choose low-sodium, reduced-sodium or no-salt-added products such as broth, gravy and canned foods.
- Use fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned.
- Look for vegetables, meat and fish without added sauces or seasonings.
- Serve fresh, cut-up fruits and vegetables instead of chips and pretzels.
- Make it homemade when able, so you can control the amount of salt added.
- Limit the salt shaker — this is a large contributor to sodium intake.
- Use herbs and spices in recipes to spare the salt.

Sugar

- Replace sugar-sweetened beverages with low-fat milk or water flavored with fruit.
- Use less sugar than the recipe calls for.
- Add dried fruit (such as cranberries and cherries) and nuts (such as almonds and pistachios) in place of chocolate chips or other candies.
- Use spices and herbs such as cinnamon and sage in place of sugar.

- Use extracts like vanilla, almond and peppermint, which are lower in calories and can add flavor in place of sugar (or butter).
- Look for whole-grain breads, rice and pasta instead of refined white grains.
- Try whole-wheat flour, or a mixture of whole-wheat and white flours, instead of just white flour.

Looking for an example of how to make these ingredient swaps? Check out this [sweet potato puree](#), courtesy of Food Network.