Chinese takeaways

Adapting your menu to create healthier alternatives

Helping you to promote healthier options to existing customers and attract new ones, increasing business, sales and profits
Chinese Takeaways

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 amounts of ingredients used or how the food is prepared and cooked. Healthy catering is also about promoting the healthier options so customers are more aware of the choices available.

The following sections provide further guidance as to how to make these small changes in relation to Chinese style cooking.

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**Prawn crackers are high in fat.** Use monounsaturated/polyunsaturated oil e.g. rapeseed oil, olive oil, sunflower oil and drain thoroughly before serving. You could let customers order prawn crackers if they would like them, rather than provide them for free with meals. If they are provided free with a meal, reduce the portion size; you could offer healthier appetisers free instead.

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**Rice, noodles and potatoes**

A meal should be based around starchy foods, which in Chinese style cooking 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.
Fruit, vegetables and salads

A balanced diet should contain lots of fruit and vegetables, so have plenty of options on the menu. Make sure that vegetables make up a substantial part of the dish.

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, bean sprouts.

- 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. black bean 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.

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 +/- or sugar (see ‘Sauces, stocks and dips’ section).
- Skim fat off meat soups/curries.
**Poultry and eggs**

- Where possible, remove the skin and fat from poultry, such as chicken and duck.
- Grill, oven bake, boil or stir-fry poultry in small amounts of monounsaturated/polyunsaturated oil.
- When roasting poultry, use a roasting rack to drain excess fat away.
- If omelettes/fooyeung 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.

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**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 the right frying temperatures (look at the recipe/packet or fryer instructions, but usually $175^\circ C$ is ideal), as a reduced temperature can lead to increased fat absorption.
- 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, or at least reduce 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). If you do, be aware that these foods already contain sodium. 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, hoi sin, plum, black bean, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Healthy menu Items</th>
<th>Healthier alternatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battered and deep fried products (e.g. sweet and sour pork/chicken/prawn balls)</td>
<td>Chop suey</td>
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<td>Deep fried crispy beef</td>
<td>Vegetable stir-fries</td>
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<td>Curries based on creamed coconut</td>
<td>Stir-fried beef strips/chicken strips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fried fish and shellfish</td>
<td>Curries with reduced fat coconut milk instead of creamed coconut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dishes with a high salt/sugar sauce (e.g. plum, hoi sin, black bean, sweet &amp; sour,</td>
<td>Steamed/boiled fish/shellfish</td>
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<td>oyster, fish sauce, soy sauce)</td>
<td>Boiled rice/noodles</td>
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<td>Honey coated dishes (e.g. honey lemon chicken, honey roast pork)</td>
<td>Chunky, thick cut chips</td>
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<td>Salted dishes (e.g. salted chilli chicken/ribs/beef)</td>
<td>Steamed dumplings</td>
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<td>Fried rice, fried/crispy noodles</td>
<td>Stir-fried bean curd (tofu)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thin cut chips/fries</td>
<td>Vegetable dishes (e.g. broccoli, pak choi, straw mushrooms, baby corn)</td>
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Drinks – cold/chilled

Soft ‘fizzy’ drinks are high in sugar, diet versions are better but still contain sugar; always have healthier options available; e.g., unsweetened fruit juice, NOT “Fruit juice drinks” as they usually contain added sugar, so should be avoided. Have bottled mineral water (still/sparkling) and artificially sweetened ‘diet’ soft drinks available.

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 healthier options available. Package children’s meals in a fun way.
- If there is a dedicated children’s menu, make sure it contains healthier options and not just options with chips. Examples could include:

  - Chicken and noodles, mild curry sauce, chicken stir-fry
  - Half size portions of regular menu items, with no added salt or sugar
Display, pricing and marketing

- Include some of the healthier options in the set menus.
- Try promoting the healthier dishes as ‘specials’ or ‘dish of the day’, but do not increase the price as this may put customers off.
- Offer reduced-size lunchtime specials (a container with half rice and half meat)
- Try highlighting the healthier options on your menu, using a logo or symbol next to the healthier dishes. 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).
- Some customers aren’t afraid to ask for what they want, but most are too shy to ask for something that isn’t on the menu. **Highlight on your menus** or **train staff to tell customers** that they can ask for food to be steamed, boiled or grilled instead of fried, giving your customers that authentic, tasty option.
- List healthier options higher up on the menu.
- Promote adding more vegetables to meals, and show photographs of them.

“We get lots of requests for dishes with less fat so we started serving dishes like boiled chicken satay - it tastes really good and is very popular!”
(Hwee L Goh, Forum House Chinese Restaurant, South Cambridgeshire)
Following these tips when you are deep frying can help you:

- save money
- make your fried foods crispier and tastier
- lower the amounts of saturated fat and salt in a portion

Where you see this symbol £ this means the tip could save you money. A poster with these tips on is available at:

http://www.potato.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication_upload/Tips%20for%20Healthier%20Chips%20Poster%20FINAL.pdf

1. Use thick, straight-cut chips
   These absorb less fat, so you use less oil and it’s healthier for your customers. £ Make your chips using a cutter with at least a 14mm (just over ½ an inch) cross section.

2. Fry at 175°C
   Getting oil to 175°C (350°F) before you start frying gives you crispier, more appealing food that absorbs less fat. That means you use less oil. £

   Each time you fry a new batch, let the oil come back up to 175°C before you start.

   Overloading your fryer, or adding too much food when you’re frying, makes the temperature of the oil drop. That makes the food greasier and uses more oil. If you use baskets, they shouldn’t look more than half full.

3. Check the temperature
   Make sure the temperature on your range is accurate. You can do this by heating the oil and testing the temperature in the middle of the oil with a probe thermometer. If you have a range with a thermostat, make sure the probe is clean when you drain the fryer. You should have the thermostat checked as part of a regular service of your equipment.

4. Cook for 5-6 minutes
   The cooking time for chips will depend on the type of potato you use, but for thick-cut fresh potatoes cooked at 175°C it’s about 5-6 minutes, until the chips are a pale, golden colour. If you cook them straight through and take them out of the oil as soon as they are cooked, they will absorb less fat. And you will use less oil. £

   If you decide to blanch some chips to help with a busy service, then you should blanch at 175°C, allowing the oil to come back up to temperature between batches. This will reduce the fat absorption and help prevent greasy chips.

5. Bang, shake and drain food
   By shaking the food and banging the wire scoop several times, you can reduce fat absorption by 20% and make your foods crisper. This is because foods can carry on absorbing fat after they come out of the fryer. If you bang and shake you’ll use less oil, need to top up less often, and need to empty the drain less often. £
6. Look after your oil
Try to change your oil before it foams, froths or smokes. It will also change colour, smell rancid or fishy when you heat it and will affect the flavour of the food.

Follow these tips to keep your oil fresh for longer. Then you will use less oil. £
• Don’t heat your oil above 175°C.
• Dry fresh chips for as long as possible after soaking. If you use a potato preparation you will be able to dry your chips for longer.
• Keep fryer topped up with oil.
• Don’t ‘idle’ a fryer at high temperatures, let it cool to 100°C and cover it.
• Sieve the oil every time you fry a batch and throw the scraps away.
• Filter your oil often, ideally once a day.
For information on changing oil safely, see www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cais17.pdf

7. Fry chips on their own
If you fry foods like sausages, chicken and anything in breadcrumbs, don’t fry these in the same oil you use for chips as they will affect your oil quality. Gently shake any food in breadcrumbs before you fry it to knock off any loose bits – this will help keep your oil fresh.

8. Use a liquid oil
The more saturated fat in your oil, the more saturated fat there will be in your food.

Liquid oils such as sunflower and rapeseed have about 10% saturated fat. Solid oils such as palm oil or beef fat have about 50%. Some suppliers provide palm oil blends (a mix of palm and other oils) that have about 30% saturated fat. If you choose sunflower or rapeseed oil, you need to use a ‘high oleic’ version, as these are more stable (provided you look after your oil well).

Whichever oil you choose, always make sure it is not hydrogenated.

But what about the taste?...
Worried your customers won’t like the taste? Winners of the Perfect Portion Awards, voted for by customers, fry with rapeseed oil!
Further information

The Public Health Responsibility Deal

Public health is everyone’s responsibility and there is a role for all of us, working in partnership, to tackle these challenges.

Too many of us are eating too much, drinking too much and not doing enough physical activity. Creating the right environment can empower and support people to make informed, balanced choices that will help them lead healthier lives.

The Public Health Responsibility Deal aims to tap into the potential for businesses and other influential organisations to make a significant contribution to improving public health by helping us to create this environment.

Further information on how to get involved or to just get access to lots more advice can log onto https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/ or search on online for ‘responsibility deal.’

Change 4 Life – What is it?

These days, ‘modern life’ can mean that we’re a lot less active. With so many opportunities to watch TV or play computer games, and with so much convenience and fast food available, we don’t move about as much, or eat as well as we used to.

The change for life website contains a wealth of information aimed initially at individuals and families however the principles and guidance contained within the site can be very useful and include topic such as:

- Meal mixer
- Try our tips to make your weekly shop healthier.
- What's on the label?
- Be calorie smart
- More about calories
- Lunch boxes
- Packed lunch ideas
- Cooking terms

Log onto http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx or simply search online for Change4life

If you would like further information regarding Eat Well Wirral please contact:

environmentalhealth@wirral.gov.uk OR visit www.wirral.gov.uk

The guidance in this booklet was compiled by Wirral Borough Council from multiple sources including The Department of Health and the Director of Public Health Wales.