

10 tips

Nutrition
Education Series

enjoy foods from many cultures



10 tips to wisely celebrate healthier foods and customs

As a diverse Nation, we can embrace our cultural traditions for the foods we love and still prepare them in healthier ways. This involves being creative with favorite recipes by substituting foods and ingredients that are less healthy with flavorful and appealing choices that still help remind us of our treasured food ways.

1 cook with others

Learn about cooking different traditional or regional foods from others who use authentic recipes and ingredients and explore ways to improve the nutrition of some of your own family favorites. Cooking dishes at home allows you to add variety to meals. If needed, adapt recipes by cutting back on gravies, creams, and sauces; adding more vegetables; or baking instead of frying.



2 blend cultures

Many popular foods and beverages in America blend the cuisines of many cultures. Celebrate our Nation's diversity and be inspired by dishes that include more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, seafood, lean meats, and low-fat dairy.

3 add a touch of spice

Combinations of herbs and spices often remind us of dishes from our own heritage or our favorite ethnic food. Add flavor to meals with herbs and spices, such as chili, garlic, ginger, basil, oregano, curry, or cilantro, which can replace salt and saturated fat.



4 use familiar foods to create exotic dishes

Use foods you know and prepare new recipes, such as adding curry to chick peas, cilantro to brown rice, or mango to your salad or smoothie. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

5 find the salt and sodium and go with lower numbers

All packaged foods are labeled to show amounts of sodium. Use "low-sodium" soy sauce, or broth or canned beans labeled "no salt added." Check nutrition labels and use products that are lower in sodium or are salt-free.

6 think about beverages

Many cultures offer tasty beverages, such as fruit drinks, alcoholic drinks, rich coffees, and sweet teas. Consider using frozen fruits to create a great tasting smoothie, or adding spices, low-fat dairy, and small amounts of sugar to make beverages. When buying prepared beverages, choose items with less sugar and fat. To manage calories, drink water or other unsweetened beverages instead of sugary drinks.

7 delight in cultural gatherings

Celebrate traditions, especially those that help you stay physically active. Have fun with traditional dances, sports, and games that make you move. Balance what you eat with regular physical activity.

8 show children what's important

Children learn to cook from their elders. Show kids how meals and dishes from various traditions are prepared. Let them taste foods they made, as you share related stories and customs from your own heritage or expose them to other cultures, but consider ways to cut back on high-calorie foods and ingredients.

9 make smart choices when dining out

Eating out offers tempting new dishes that make it easy to overeat. Choose lower calorie dishes, such as stir fries, kabobs, or whole-wheat pastas with tomato sauce. Split a dish or ask for a take-home container at the start of a meal to save part of what's served on your plate.



10 remember, all types of foods fit on MyPlate

MyPlate is designed to remind Americans to eat healthfully, using foods from the food groups. The MyPlate website provides practical information, tips, tools, and recipes that will help you build a healthier diet. Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.