



Healthy Recipes – What to Look for

Do you have a potluck coming up? Are you doing a recipe share with your friends, family, or congregation members? Do you simply want to find healthier foods for you and your family? If so, you might know that it can be difficult to find meal options that are both convenient and healthy.

Most grocery stores are overloaded with processed foods that offer short preparation time, but little nutrition. The good news is that there are easily prepared foods that are not only healthy, but taste great as well. Many of your family's favorite dishes will have a lower-fat, lower-calorie alternative.

When sifting through books, magazines, and websites looking for the best healthy recipes, use the information below to zero in on healthier dishes. As time can also be a factor in cooking healthy meals, look for healthy recipes that don't require hours of preparation and hard-to-find ingredients.

First, remember, there are no bad foods – moderation is the key. Eating healthier doesn't mean that you can never make your family's favorite dish again. However, some foods are healthier than others, so the focus should be on eating more of the healthy foods than the unhealthy ones. One of the most important factors in improving your health is increasing the servings of fruits and vegetables you consume everyday. Fruits and vegetables are not only high in fiber, which helps lower cholesterol and prevents heart disease, but they are high in disease fighting anti-oxidants. Increasing your daily servings of fruits and vegetables is one of the easiest ways to protect your health. Even great tasting desserts can have fresh fruit in them. Look for recipes that include fresh fruits and vegetables.

Many recipes provide nutritional information. The following guidelines can help you decide whether or not a recipe is "healthy." These are not strict standards, but they should help you make smart choices.

Appetizers and Side Dishes (per serving):

< 150 calories, < 5g total fat, < 2g saturated fat, < 500mg sodium, < 50mg cholesterol

Main Course (per serving):

< 600 calories, < 20g total fat, < 5g saturated fat, < 1000mg sodium, < 100mg cholesterol

Dessert (per serving):

< 175 calories, < 5g total fat, < 2g saturated fat, < 500 mg sodium, < 50mg cholesterol

If don't want to sift through cookbooks, try the following websites, which offer a wide variety of free, easy to prepare, healthy recipes.

***Fruits & Veggies, More Matters* website:** This website maintained by the Centers for Disease Control is a government website promoting the consumption of more fruits and vegetables – all recipes incorporate fruits and vegetables in some form. Many are quick and easy.

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnparecipe/recipesearch.aspx>

***Mayo Clinic* website:** This website from the Mayo Clinic, offers healthy recipes, many for special diets including diabetic, weight loss, heart-healthy, low-sodium, and more.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes/RE99999>

***Cooking Light* magazine:** This magazine's website has a great selection of healthy recipes (many common family favorites, in low-fat, low-calorie versions). Make sure that the recipe says it comes from *Cooking Light*, and not another magazine.

<http://www.cookinglight.com>

If you are going to post these recipes in a church bulletin, newsletter, or other publication, make sure to note where the recipes came from (i.e. *Cooking Light* magazine, May 2007). Also, let readers know that these are healthy recipes – it's often helpful to include a health tip next to the recipe to give it some context.