

# Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Try adjustments to favorite comfort foods

**When fall comes and the weather starts getting cooler, I tend to indulge in comfort foods. I know most of them are high in calories, fat and sodium, and I worry about the effect on my weight and health. Are there ways I can make my favorite comfort foods healthier so I can keep enjoying them?**

Yes, absolutely. In a lot of cases, you can make some relatively small adjustments to recipes that will boost nutrition, cut calories or otherwise make them healthier overall.

You can find many ideas for making these types of food substitutions with a simple search on the web. One good source from Ohio State University Extension is a free fact sheet, "Modifying a Recipe to Be Healthier," available to download as a PDF online at [go.osu.edu/modifyrecipe](http://go.osu.edu/modifyrecipe). Other good sources include Michigan State University Extension's "Making comfort foods healthier this winter" (search for it at [msue.anr.msu.edu](http://msue.anr.msu.edu)) and Clemson Cooperative Extension's "Making Comfort Foods Healthier" (search at [clemson.edu/extension](http://clemson.edu/extension)). Ideas include:

- In baking, substitute applesauce or prune puree for half of the butter, shortening or oil that the recipe calls for. A half-cup of unsweetened applesauce has just 50 calories and barely any fat, compared with nearly 1,000 calories and more than 100 grams of fat in a half-cup of oil. Another idea: Just reduce the amount of sugar the recipe calls for by a third. Chances are you won't notice the difference.
- For chili, stews and soups, increase the proportion of beans and legumes and reduce meat to increase fiber and reduce overall calories. For meat, choose lean beef or turkey.



photo: iStock

If using broth as a base, choose low-sodium versions. Check the organic or health-food aisle at the grocery store to see if the broth offered there is even lower in sodium than what's offered in the soup aisle. Brands vary in sodium content, but one brand of regular vegetable broth has 800 milligrams of sodium per cup, compared with 140 milligrams per cup in another brand's low-sodium vegetable broth. Checking for sodium is a good reason to get in the habit of studying Nutrition Facts labels.

- Instead of sour cream, try plain Greek yogurt. If nonfat versions don't work for your recipe, try a traditional full-fat version. A cup of regular plain Greek yogurt has 190 calories and 9 grams of fat, compared with sour cream's nearly 450 calories and 45 grams of fat.
- If you use whole milk or cream in your mashed potatoes, try buttermilk instead. A cup of buttermilk has less than 100 calories and 2 grams of fat, compared with 145 calories and 8 grams of fat in whole milk, and 315 calories and 28 grams of fat in a cup of half and half cream.
- Try liquid egg substitute for whole eggs. One large egg has 70 calories and 5 grams of fat, compared with 30 calories and zero fat in a quarter-cup of fat-free liquid egg substitute.

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By Martha Filipic  
614-292-9833  
[filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu)

**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carolyn Gunther, Ohio State University Extension specialist in Community Nutrition Education.

*Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

**College Marketing and Communications**  
2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1043  
614-292-2011

208 Research Services Building  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
330-263-3780

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