



CHEAT SHEET

Ten Easy Ways to Improve Your Favorite Comfort Foods

Everyone has a favorite comfort food and unless you're working toward an extreme fitness goal, there should be occasional opportunities for indulgence in the average diet. But comfort foods don't have to be nutritional nightmares to provide the pleasure and familiarity we're looking for. Following are ten easy ways to improve the nutritional impact of popular comfort foods while preserving the flavor and texture qualities we love.

1. To get some of that familiar crispy crunch without all the calories and dangerous, altered fats, replace fried chicken with baked chicken: Remove the skin, coat chicken pieces with a thin layer of Greek yogurt spiked with lemon juice, garlic, salt and cayenne, coat in whole grain bread crumbs, and bake at 350°F until crumbs are lightly browned and chicken is cooked through.
2. For things like French fries, rather than deep frying, slice potatoes or yams into thin half-moons, French fry shapes or wedges, coat lightly with olive oil, salt and pepper and roast at 375-400°F until caramelized on the outside and soft on the inside.
3. For improved pan-fried steaks, use a grill pan with raised ridges to preserve the seared surface but reduce the total calories by keeping the bulk of the meat from resting in the pool of hot oil.
4. To reduce total sugars and calories in baked goods, try removing 1/4 of the sugar from the recipe. Most of the time there will be little-to-no discernible change in flavor or texture.
5. To reduce calories and boost the protein content of pie, choose an egg white meringue over whipped cream. To reduce total sugars, replace meringues with lightly sweetened whipped cream (pastured and organic only)!
6. To reduce total calories and boost the protein content of sauces and baked goods by one third, replace full fat sour cream with Greek yogurt. You can spike it with a little lemon juice and minced garlic in savory dishes, if desired.
7. To significantly reduce calories while maintaining the tart creaminess in baked goods, replace buttermilk with equal amounts of milk and apple cider vinegar – proportion is one tablespoon of apple cider vinegar to one cup regular milk. Mix the milk and vinegar together and let them rest for five minutes before using. (This is a handy tip for any time you need buttermilk but don't want to run out to the store to buy it.)
8. To reduce calories and avoid dairy while maintaining the creamy thickness of cream-based soups, try replacing the cream with a small amount of brown rice pureed with just enough broth or water to make a thick paste. Use an immersion blender to seamlessly blend it into the soup. Chilled or room temp soups can also be "creamed" with pureed avocado for fewer calories and a higher fiber content.
9. To increase the micronutrient load in baked goods, try adding some grated or pureed fruits or veggies to the batter, such as diced apples in pancakes, shredded sweet potato in spice cakes, shredded zucchini or pureed pumpkin into quickbread or pureed beets into brownies. If you match the colors, purees "disappear", but shreds are usually still visible, so use your discretion.
10. To increase the micronutrients in pasta sauce or ground beef dishes such as meatloaf, add mixed diced or shredded veggies. Finely chopped onion or mushrooms, shredded summer squash like yellow, zucchini or patty pan, and shredded carrots all go beautifully into a red sauce for spaghetti, or even into meatball mix or meatloaf without significantly altering the flavors. Another great trick is to thaw a box of frozen, chopped spinach and squeeze it to thoroughly drain, then add it to a meatloaf. Though you will see the spinach, the flavor is subtle and it actually makes the meatloaf more moist and tender.

Helping You Make Tastier,
Healthier Food in Less Time

