

18 Healthy Cooking Tips

Diane Carbonell, Fit to the Finish

1. Grill, bake, poach, steam, microwave or boil foods rather than frying them.
2. Use low fat dairy products where possible such as skimmed or reduced fat milk, reduced fat cheeses and low fat yogurts.
3. Use light or fat free sour cream. After a few times, no one can tell the difference. I even use ff sour cream in sauces that are cooked. I just add it in right before serving and it works great. .
4. Fat free cool whip can be substituted for full fat whipping cream.
5. Avoid the use of fats and oils, which are all fat.
6. Using stronger cheese for cooking gives you more flavor and you won't use as much. For example, an extra sharp cheddar gives a lot more punch than does a mild cheddar. Grate the cheese as well – it goes farther.
7. Try to use brown rice or pasta in place of white as it contains more fiber (remember it requires a longer cooking time). If you do choose a lower fiber variety of rice or pasta, serve it with some higher fiber food like extra vegetables. For example, add peas or kidney beans to white rice.
8. Reduce the amount of salt used in cooking and at the table as we our salt consumption is generally too high. Flavor your food with lemon juice, herbs, spices or mustard instead for healthier, tastier food.
9. Use legumes such as peas, beans or lentils to replace some of the meat in traditional recipes for shepherd's pie, casseroles, and lasagne. They can also be used extensively in soups and salads. They are low in fat and high in fiber. Canned beans are more convenient but are more expensive than dried ones.
10. Experiment by reducing the added sugar in your baking recipes. You can bake with Splenda or use half sugar and substitute the other amount with Splenda.. The exception for this is if you are just baking for special occasions such as birthdays – I just make a regular cake and enjoy a small piece.
11. If you make your own jellies and jams, instead of using the traditional ratio of 1lb fruit to 1lb sugar you can reduce this to 1lb fruit to $\frac{3}{4}$ lb sugar. Experiment with this ratio. When I made some strawberry jam last year I was able to reduce the ratio to a 1 lb fruit to $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sugar and it was great. A little bit went a long way.
12. Fruit pies, cobblers, crisps and bread pudding, can be sweetened with sugar if necessary but some fruit based puddings or puddings with added dried fruit will not require any sweetening at all. Splenda is the only artificial sweetener I know of that you can bake with. Don't try the others!
13. Substitute cream soups for reduced fat ones in casseroles.
14. If your casserole calls for a topping of stuffing mix drizzled with butter – just don't use the butter. I use half the amount of stuffing the recipe calls for, opting for a sprinkle rather than a covering. None of us missed the butter on top, and I saved about 800 calories just by eliminating a half a stick of butter.
15. Remember, the fat content of dessert and baking recipes is important too. Try to reduce the fat by swapping high fat ingredients for lower fat alternatives.
16. Instead of sautéing vegetables in oil, just use water. I never sauté anything in oil anymore and no one can tell the difference. Remember, every tablespoon of oil contains at least 100 calories – ALL of which come from fat.
17. When making peanut butter sandwiches, spread the thinnest coat possible. Top with banana or sugar free jelly for a delicious treat which is actually low in fat.
18. Make your own tortilla chips by preheating your oven to 450 degrees. Using a few flour tortillas, cut them into triangle shaped wedges. Brush with 1 teaspoon of olive oil, sprinkle with garlic powder and cook for 4 – 5 minutes. Watch these closely – they will burn fast! Dip your tortilla chips into salsa and enjoy guilt free!