



Department  
of Health

## Tips for Indian & South Asian Restaurants

*Serve great tasting and healthier food!*

Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to consumers. Follow these tips to ensure you stay ahead of the market!

**Try to achieve at least ten tips, including at least one from each section (Portion size, Fats & Frying, Salt, Fruit & Vegetables and Promotions).**

Tick the boxes when you have achieved each tip, and try to add a new tip each month.

### **PORTION SIZE** – *Eating too many calories can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer.*

1. Offering different portion sizes makes good business sense so give customers with smaller appetites a choice. Try at least one of the following: 
  - offer **reduced-size lunchtime specials** (e.g. a container with half rice and half meat)
  - make **small portions** or children's portions available to everyone. (Make sure this option is clearly advertised to customers).
2. Consider **reducing portion sizes** across your menu to a level that is acceptable to customers. If customers are tending to leave food on their plates, this is a clear signal that portion sizes are too large and a smaller size would be acceptable.
3. Try not to overfill or compress food into containers. Or try **using a slightly smaller container** for takeaway dishes.

### **FATS & FRYING** – *High fat foods contain lots of calories, which can make us put on weight. Saturated fats increase the risk of heart disease too.*

4. If the tandoor is on, **cook in the tandoor** rather than using the deep fat fryer which will use up oil. For example, tikkas, poppadoms, samosas and marinated paneer can be cooked in the tandoor with the addition of just a little oil.
5. If you do need to fry, try to **avoid frying food twice** – pre-cooking food in oil increases the amount of fat in the dish. 
  - *frying snacks like onion bhajis only once will use less oil.*
6. When choosing your vegetable oil, check the ingredients list on the label and try to **choose a lower saturated fat option like rapeseed or sunflower oil.**
7. If you make your own base curry sauces (gravy) try to **use less oil** and **drain off any excess fat.** You should aim to have no oily layer floating on the top at the end. This is healthier and more attractive for your customers.
8. In dishes like butter chicken and chicken korma **use rapeseed or sunflower oil** to cook the dish and, if needed, just **use a small amount of butter or ghee** at the end. You'll get the flavour, gloss and aroma but with less saturated fat.
9. Use **low fat yoghurt** in marinades, chutneys, chaat dishes and lassi. You can make yoghurt with semi-skimmed or 1% milk, or buy low fat yoghurt. They won't cost any more than full fat products and this is a simple way to cut fat from the food you serve.

10. **Getting oil to at least 175 °C** before you start frying snacks like pakoras, onion bhajis or chips gives you crisper, more appealing food, which absorbs less fat. That means you use less oil.  
➤ Remember to **drain off any excess fat** from the food after frying.

**SALT** – *It's very important to reduce your salt intake as too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease.*

11. Lots of people are trying to cut down on the amount of salt they eat and many people already have high blood pressure. Research shows that you can **gradually use less salt** and customers cannot tell the difference. You could try adding a little less salt when you:

- fry your spice blend for the base dishes;
- prepare your dishes for serving;
- make the dough for naan breads;
- cook rice, including the amount you add to the spices to fry pilau or other flavoured rice.

12. If you buy in any sauces or items like samosas, chutneys and pickles, check the labels and **choose the ones with less salt** or ask your supplier to help.

13. **Remove salt cellars from tables** and only give to customers on request. Many businesses are already doing this.

**FRUIT, VEGETABLES, WHOLEGRAINS** – *These are good sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Eating plenty of them can help prevent heart disease, stroke and some cancers.*

14. Look across your menu and think about where you could add more vegetables. Try some of the following:

- Experiment with adding more vegetables like peppers to meat dishes and peas or spinach to paneer dishes. This can add texture and colour making them more appealing;
- Intersperse skewered meat with vegetables like peppers and onions;
- Serve starters with a side salad.
- Make plain boiled rice more interesting by adding boiled or steamed vegetables like peas, green beans or mushrooms with no added salt or oil;
- Offer half portions of meat dishes with half portions of vegetable dishes.

15. Try **offering fruit on your dessert menu** for example mango with kulfi or fruit salads with orange, papaya, lychees, mango or pineapple. You could even include this as part of a meal deal.

16. Try offering wholemeal chapatis and brown rice on your menu.

## **PROMOTIONS**

17. When customers ask for a recommendation, try **suggesting healthier options** with less **salt, fat and calories**.

18. If you have drinks promotions, try **offering diet, low-calorie drinks or water** rather than sugary fizzy drinks.

19. If you offer **meal deals** or **set menus**, this is a great way to get your customers to try healthier dishes.

- *Swap 1 or 2 items on your set menus for healthier options e.g. plain boiled rice rather than flavoured rice or tomato based main dishes rather than creamy dishes.*
- *For two people, you could try offering a main dish, dhal and a vegetable side with boiled rice, chapatti and a fruit salad dessert.*

20. **Don't serve poppadoms free of charge** as these can add a lot of fat and calories to a meal.