

Is Chinese Food Unhealthy?

Next to Pizza, Chinese food has to be on of the more popular takeout foods for Americans. So, is it bad for you? Chinese food is a favorite of both the native Chinese and American foreigners alike. Their spicy dishes and authentic cuisine suits almost any palate and has endless possibilities. Unfortunately, sometimes Chinese food can be anything but a healthful dinner. Lucky for many Chinese food lovers, there are healthy alternatives that are equally tasty but lower in saturated fats and simple carbohydrates. Choosing the right type of foods when ordering Chinese takeout can make a world of difference in the nutritional value you will receive. Picking foods that are high in protein, such as chicken or beef dishes and full of veggies are great healthy choices. As a substitute to fried dishes such as sweet and sour or sesame chicken, opt for a sautéed alternative such as cashew chicken or beef and broccoli. These dishes provide nutritional value that other traditional plates such as lo mein lack. Lo mein provides several sources of bad fats and carbohydrates due to the large amounts of noodles and the oil it is stir fried in. Always make sure that the Chinese restaurant you choose serves food without MSG. There have been conflicting reports about the poor nutritional value contained within. For healthy side dishes, skip the fried egg roll and wontons and instead have a cup of soup. Skip the order of fried rice. It is an unnecessary supply of large amounts of calories. It also contains high concentrations of cholesterol. If available, brown rice is the most healthful alternative to fried or white rice. If possible, on the day you choose to order Chinese takeout, limit your intake of sodium rich foods. Many Chinese meals are high in sodium content due to the use of soy sauce and other additives. Don't add any more salt than necessary once your meal arrives! Additionally, if you are ordering a dish with peanuts, eat them in moderation. Peanuts can be very beneficial and contain many good fats and nutrients. However, eating too many can make a somewhat healthy dish unhealthy quite quickly. Choosing between inexpensive restaurants and high end Chinese restaurants can also increase or decrease the health of the food served. As a generalization, many high end Chinese food restaurants will have a special menu with specifically healthy options as well as a list of their nutritional content. When all else fails, do not hesitate to question your server or the manager of the Chinese restaurant. Most are eager and willing to provide you information on their native dishes and are usually very knowledgeable about their cuisine. The majority of restaurants are required to have nutritional content information on site. This could be useful in helping you decide on the best healthy Chinese takeout options.

About the Author

Working to strengthen the capacity of community nutrition practitioners across Ontario to deliver quality nutrition programming in a health.

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