

Top 10 Healthy Food Alternatives

If you talk to the average person about dieting, they'll usually assume it's about deprivation and misery. It may be difficult to reign in some of your nasty habits at first, but it doesn't have to be a miserable experience in the long run. And you certainly don't have to deprive yourself of good tasting, satisfying foods. It's just a matter of a few simple substitutions, and you will be well on your way to weighing less.

Be a wary shopper, because not all wheat breads are created equal.

The following are 10 food substitutions that will save you thousands of calories over the course of a year, and not be bland or boring in the process.

1. Instead of chocolate, try carob. Chocolate is first on the list because it's first on most people's list of guilty pleasures. I'm not here to tell you to do away with anything forever. Moderation is key to lasting health.

In fact, dark chocolate has gotten good press in recent years for having potent antioxidants that fight free radicals, destructive molecules that are connected to heart disease and other ailments. But if you like to do more than dabble in chocolate's decadent

sweetness, try to substitute the little known carob, a Mediterranean tree that produces pea-like pods that produce the sweet concoction.

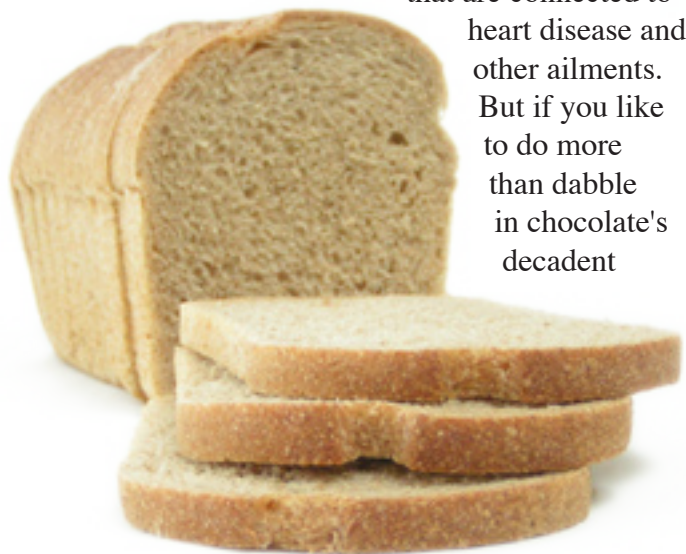
It's not that carob is superior nutritiously, but it has a couple things going for it: Carob has 51 calories per ounce to cocoa powders 98. But even more significant is that carob is naturally sweeter than (or, perhaps more accurately, not as bitter as) chocolate, so you don't have to use as much sugar with it in recipes.



2. Instead of white bread, switch to whole wheat. I grew up on white bread, but have spent most of my adult life exclusively buying whole wheat. Once you go whole wheat, you wonder how Wonder Bread ever tasted like bread to you. Since it's whole grain it has more nuanced and substantive taste. White bread is bleached flour (does that even sound close to healthy?) and is enriched with things like high fructose corn syrup. Whole wheat bread is unprocessed, so your body has to spend energy (calories) digesting it.

Be a wary shopper, because not all wheat breads are created equal. Manufacturers will try to trick you with fancy word plays on wheat. Make sure that the first ingredient is a "whole" grain.

3. Instead of a salad dressing, try vinegar. Salad dressings are a great way to kill a



perfectly healthy salad with hundreds of useless calories. Use a balsamic vinegar and it will add nary a calorie to your salad.

4. Drop the dip and use salsa. Tomatoes, cilantro, onions, maybe garlic... have you heard anything that sounds unhealthy? Then I think you know why salsa is a much better choice than most chip dips. Chips aren't exactly a healthy snack, but if you're going to indulge now and again, the least you can do is cut out the fatty processed creamy dips.

5. Of those aforementioned chips, you should try more air-popped popcorn. Do you know anyone who doesn't like popcorn? Either do I. You'll also like that a cup of popcorn has about 30 calories compared to 140 calories in an ounce of tortilla chips. And we all know an ounce of chips isn't going to be where you stop.

6. Bacon... any way you slice it, turkey is better than pork. Bacon is probably the single biggest reason many of us can't be vegetarians.

It's a fatty vice that's hard to quit. Purdue turkey bacon has about 50 calories in 2 slices and 1 gram of saturated fat, where some regular pork versions can have 14 times the saturated fat and more than twice the calories.

7. Turkey burger instead of beef. Turkey shows up again on our list, this time in place of your usual beef burgers. Since there's less fat, some people may miss the flavor it adds. But even the most stubborn of beef backers can grow to love the lower fat turkey version. Once

you put on all your favorite toppings (lettuce, pickle,



tomato) the difference is really negligible.

Don't assume that all ground turkey is leaner than beef. Some are packaged with dark meat and even fat-laden skin. As always, be a smart consumer and read the nutrition labels.

8. Instead of a full-fat creamer, go nonfat. It won't take long for *any way you slice it, turkey is better than pork* you to get acclimated to the non-fat version, and if you have a couple coffees a day those calories can really add up.

9. Sack the soda and try sparkling water. I know, you're thinking... water? But if you spike it with a few twists of lemon or lime it becomes a flavorful drink. Besides saving calories, you also avoid some of the other soda ingredients (sugar, phosphoric acid, potassium benzoate) that may cause long-term health issues.

10. Instead of salt, spice food with herbs. The preference for salt is a learned behavior. Which means you can unlearn it. If you are adventurous in the kitchen, try using garlic, oregano, pepper, sage, tarragon, turmeric, cinnamon, and other herbs and spices. If you want the easy way out, Mrs. Dash comes in all kinds of no-sodium, no-calorie combinations.

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