

HEALTHFUL TIPS

HEALTH AND FITNESS TIPS FOR YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY

Dips & Sauces

Incorporate this variety of nutritious sauces to add flavor without the fat

There is just something so irresistible about scooping up a dollop of dip or ladling thick creamy sauce over a grilled piece of meat. Let's be honest; we all know our favorite creamy concoctions are often high in saturated fat or sodium and usually not high in nutritional value. The problem with fattening food is that it tastes really good. We like the salty and sweet tastes on our tongues but those wonderful flavors last only a moment. Unfortunately, our health and waistlines can be affected by too many of those single-moment indulgences. So what can we do to make healthier dips and sauces?

Generally a good sauce or dip should be low in calories, high in nutrients, tasty, and a fitting complement for the fruit, veggies, or entree.

Often, plain raw vegetables are unappealing, so enter dips. Vegetables have few calories and a lot of fiber--don't blow it by caking on back-tracking dip. All that fiber makes the body work hard to break down food, causing it to burn more calories, which is great. So if you are a person who really loves veggies, just go easy on the dip and remember that even a few tablespoons still come packed with calories. However, if you really struggle to get those veggies down, go for low fat or no fat dips, since you will probably need a few more spoonfuls to help the "medicine" go down. Remember, just because you're eating vegetables doesn't mean you're eating healthily.

Here is a big tip: avoid mayonnaise! If you can't say no entirely, then use reduced fat mayonnaise or Miracle Whip Light to create those creamy dips. Ranch dressing has been king for way too long and other choices like olive oil, beans, or

tofu can offer less or no saturated fat. Try to improve dips by stirring in flavorful and nutritious ingredients like nuts or even chopped veggies.

Really, non-dairy dips are the healthiest for you. For a change you can try salsa, natural peanut butter, or guacamole with your veggies and fruit. All three are heart-healthy.

Most fruit dips are made with yogurt or creams that are heavy with sugar and fat. This defeats the purpose of the "healthy" fruit snack. Choose plain low-fat yogurt (less sugary than those with added flavors) and use other ingredients to create flavor, such as vanilla extract, coconut, citrus zest, cinnamon, or nuts. Another option is to use reduced-calorie whipped topping. Make your fruit the star of the dish. Fruit is low in calories and high in nutrients. The dip can just add a little zip.

Most large supermarkets have a "healthy foods" section if you're not open to making your own dips and sauces. However, you will pay a premium for these foods. Take a stab at making them yourself and you'll save money.

There are so many ways to add the right flavor to your meal with a wide variety of nutritious sauces. You might be asking, "Is there a world of flavorful sauces made without using fat, cream, or butter?" Maybe there weren't for Julia Child, but we're not Julia Child.

In order to tackle the restaurant trap you will have to think critically. One of the most deceptive parts of a restaurant meal is the sauce. Choose the wrong sauce and you can transform a healthy entrée or side dish into a calorie disaster. Beware

of creamy, high-fat sauces! Avoid sauces like béarnaise, hollandaise, alfredo, carbonara, and any other sauce advertised as cream or butter-based. Usually these favorites dominate the menu. You can ask for them to be placed on the side so you control the amount you eat. Or you can choose a low calorie sauce to make the meal more satisfying and enjoyable.

If you want to make a nice cream sauce at home, try substituting skim or soy milk for the cream. Dry milk powder or low fat yogurt can give your sauce a little more body. Low calorie margarine or light butter can be substituted for full fat butter. All these little tricks can bring down the calorie and fat content.

Ideally, though, we should all be in love with tomatoes. Tomato-based sauces are an excellent source of healthy lycopenes and are naturally low in calories. Looking for tomato-based sauces on the menu is best for you. Do be brave and check with the waiter to be sure the tomato-based sauce you've chosen has no added cream or butter.

It really isn't difficult to whip up a quick and healthy marinara sauce at home; try tomato-based salsas to add flavor to fresh seafood dishes. Bottom line, cultivate your own collection of healthy dips and sauces

so you don't risk a weak or havoc-ridden moment and give in to what's fattening.

