

Cook at Home

Cook at home is the second of our 5 key messages and is important for many different reasons. Cooking at home not only saves money, but it gets the family involved in the kitchen and puts you in control of the ingredients going into each meal. The trend toward eating more convenience foods means that more and more families are eating out and purchasing pre-packaged foods that are often high in added salt and sugar and saturated fats. This style of eating does not help to develop healthy eating behaviours or build food literacy skills. This is why we think it's so important to promote this message within the wider community to ensure that these important cooking skills are passed on to younger generations and not lost over time.

With the current coronavirus outbreak and subsequent introduction of distancing measures, shortages in certain foods/products and closure of some food businesses, the skills required to prepare a meal at home from the ingredients available to you have become more important now than ever. For this reason we will continue to promote this message (from the safety of our homes) and encourage you to get creative in how you do this too!

5 Elements of a Healthy Recipe

In order to eat well, we need to understand what makes a recipe healthy. To make this process easier, we have identified 5 elements that are often present in a healthy recipe and have listed these below. While many of our Country Kitchens recipes already align with these five elements, you can also use these tips to tweak other recipes to make them a better choice. The key with recipe modification is to experiment and have a bit of fun until you get it right! The five elements are as follows:



1. Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are a great source of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and phytonutrient, all which have significant health benefits. Consuming fruit and veg everyday reduces a person's risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and some cancers. Adding more vegetables to a recipe adds colour, texture, flavour and nutrition. A helpful tip is to offset the extra fluid contributed by vegetables (particularly in baking) by using wholemeal flour or by adding extra dry ingredients.

2. Sugar content

Sugar occurs naturally in many foods such as milk, fruit, vegetables and legumes. In this form, it is locked away with other important nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and fibre. Added sugars are refined in many ways and include sugar, honey, syrups, malts, glucose, dextrose and corn-syrup solids. Sugar in this form is highly refined and adds kilojoules (energy) without any other important nutrients. In cooking, you can choose sweeter fruits or vegetables to add sugar naturally without the need for refined sugars.

3. Salt content

Salt is an essential nutrient for good health, however consuming too much salt may increase a person's risk of developing high blood pressure which can lead to heart disease, stroke and chronic kidney disease. Salt is hidden in many processed and packaged foods such as bread, cheeses, biscuits, ham, bacon, sauces and canned fish. By consuming less packaged foods and cooking at home, salt intake can be controlled more easily. Avoid adding salt to dishes and instead choose herbs, spices and vegetables to flavour dishes.



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4. Fat type and amount

Fat is essential to our diets for good health. However, we should be aware of the amount and type of fats we are eating. Fats are high in kilojoules (energy) so consuming too much of any fat can contribute to weight gain. Reduce foods rich in saturated fat and replace with sources of healthy unsaturated fats instead (e.g. olive oil, sunflower oil, canola oil). Saturated fat is found in animal meats, butter, cheese, coconut and palm oil and if eaten in large amounts can increase your risk of developing heart disease.

5. Fibre

Fibre is the part of plant foods that your body is unable to digest. It plays an important role in digestive health and regular bowel movement. Fibre can also help to regulate cholesterol and blood sugar levels and helps to keep you fuller for longer. To increase the fibre content of a dish, swap cereals and grains for their wholemeal or wholegrain varieties. Leave the skin on fruit/veg. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes and lentils are all naturally high in fibre.

There are a number of ways that we can promote the cook at home message. For example, sharing a healthy recipe and explaining what makes it a good choice (by pointing out one or more of the 5 elements listed above) is a great example of a Level 2 CK activity that promotes cooking at home. Our Hands on Nutrition Workshops also teach participants the hands-on skills required to cook a recipe from scratch. If you are interested in teaching these vital skills to your community by organising a Hands on Nutrition Workshop, get in touch with your CK buddy to get the planning process started.