

Lasting Im



Impressions

Ending a meal on a healthy note

By Lucia Weiler

Dessert is the final course in a dining experience, and the best opportunity for chefs and restaurateurs to make a memorable last impression on guests. While dining out, many Canadians are looking for menu items that are delicious and better for their health – even when it comes to dessert. “Healthy dessert” may sound contradictory, but treats can be part of a healthy, balanced diet (and menu). These nutrition tips and healthy dessert recipe ideas will show you how!



DESSERTS



In Canada, there is no regulated definition of “healthy” food or “healthy” dessert. Foods that contain high amounts of nutrients while providing a reasonable amount of energy (calories) are usually considered healthy. Many dessert foods such as cakes and pastries tend to fall into the less-healthy category because they are high in calories, fat and added sugars while low in other nutrients, including fibre.

You can create healthier desserts by making the calories count, and increasing the nutritional value of desserts. In other words, boost fibre, vitamins and minerals, healthy fats and protein; and lower the fat and added sugars. Look to healthful ingredients such as fruit, whole grains, and lower-fat dairy to help improve the nutritional profile of desserts without compromising taste.

1. LEVERAGE THE NUTRITION

As you plan your dessert menu, be conscious of portion size and look for recipes that give many nutrients for fewer calories, in addition to delivering terrific taste and customer satisfaction. Use the recipe’s nutrition information to get a snapshot of how many calories, energy-producing macronutrients (protein, fat and carbohydrate) and key micronutrients are in a stated serving size of the recipe. The nutrition information – such as %DV (per cent daily value), or percentage of the recommended daily intake – helps you figure out the nutritional value of a food,



compare nutritional content of recipes and manage healthier offerings.

2. BUILD ON THE POWER OF FRUIT

“If you are looking to make desserts healthier, adding fruit is a great first step,” advises Chef Joe Kumar, Professor of Baking and Pastry Arts at Humber College in Toronto. As a dietitian, I wholeheartedly agree! All fruits are chock full of healthy compounds such as vitamins, minerals, fibre and polyphenols which can act as antioxidants. Including fruit in the diet can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Best bets for fruits are those that are brightly coloured and are usually eaten with the skin on, such as apples, berries or pears. Fruit in a menu item can also contribute to the 7–10 servings of fruits and vegetables as recommended by Canada’s Food Guide.

Another trend consumers are looking for is fruit that is fresh, in season and local. Offer healthy desserts with a variety of local and seasonal fruit for the best-bet mark on your menu.

3. PRACTISE STEALTH HEALTH

Many food professionals are experimenting with healthy ingredient substitutions and are changing foods for the better without necessarily promoting them as healthier. It’s a strategy we refer to as “stealth health.” For dessert menu items, try to modify, change or add ingredients that slash fats and added sugars while boosting fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Sue Mah, registered dietitian and President of Nutrition Solutions in Toronto, forecasts a growing trend for vegetable-based desserts: “Sneak

in veggies whenever you can. Imagine grated beets in chocolate brownies or puréed sweet potatoes in a coffee cake.”

Consider some of these tried-and-true ingredient tips to boost the nutritional value of your desserts without compromising on taste:

- Add puréed black beans, chick peas or lentils to brownies and muffins for a fibre boost.
- Swap out some of the refined flour for nutrient-rich grains such as bran, oats, lentil flour, pea flour, quinoa flour, barley flakes or whole-grain whole-wheat flour in your baked goods. Other ideas: brown rice pudding or pudding with chia seeds.
- Substitute applesauce for one-half of the butter, shortening or margarine in cookies or cakes. Applesauce is a great way to reduce the fat in recipes while keeping the moisture.
- Reduce the amount of sugar gradually by one-quarter to one-third in some baked goods such as cakes, pies, and cookies. To enhance flavour when sugar is removed, add vanilla, cinnamon, or nutmeg.

4. OFFER INHERENTLY HEALTHY DESSERTS

Search for recipes that have been designed using ingredients and methods that are satisfying on their own. Anna Olson, celebrity chef and best-selling cookbook author, has crafted many desserts designed to please the palate without using excessive fat or sugar (see her book *Back to Baking* for great examples). Look to websites such as Dietitians of Canada (www.dietitians.ca) for healthy recipe ideas, or consider adding some of these inherently healthy desserts to your menu:



Healthy Dessert Selection Guidelines

Use the following check system to formulate healthier desserts

✓✓ Excellent Choice and ✓ Good Choice

	✓✓ Excellent Choice	✓ Good Choice
Calories	0-150 calories/serving	151- 250 calories/serving
Fibre	3 grams or more/serving	2 grams/serving
Fat	0-5 grams/serving	6-10 grams /serving

Adapted from: *Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines, California 5 a Day— Be Active!* Worksite Program (2012); Nutrition Standards for Ontario Schools PPM150 Baked Goods (2010); Bake It Up, Nutrition Resource Centre OPHA (2010)

DESSERTS

- Biscotti
- Angel food cake (offer a variety of fruit options for a customizable dessert that meets the “my way” menu trend)
- Strawberry shortcake
- Fruit galette
- Fat-free frozen yogurt
- Easy fruity crêpes (kid friendly!)
- Sorbet – use fruit; also on-trend if artisan or “made in house”
- Pies with a thin crust, or crustless pies
- Chilled peach, mango or melon soups

Remember to offer healthy options in kids’ desserts too: apple slices with yogurt dip, fresh fruit salad, piece of fresh fruit or house-made applesauce.

5. KEEP PORTIONS SMALL

Bite-sized or mini desserts continue to stay on trend according to Nation’s Restaurant News.

Downsizing dessert portions can help customers manage calories. Suggesting that customers share a dessert is another way to keep portion size under control.

Consider these mini dessert tips for your healthy dessert menu:

- Serve miniature desserts with fruit for added health benefits
- Increase nutrition with toppings like toasted nuts or toasted hemp hearts
- Try chocolate covered apple slices dipped in crushed nuts (remember to coat apple slices in fresh lemon juice to prevent browning)
- Create mini spiced-fruit tarts (use trending spices such as cinnamon and ground allspice)
- Serve mini desserts in a clear shot glass or mini ramekins with attractive garnishes

Now that you have the know-how, it’s easy to create healthy desserts that taste great! Offering healthy dessert menu options to customers means you can provide better-for-you, on-trend foods that meet your guests’ satisfaction and your business goals. Bon appétit!

For more healthy dessert ideas, visit



Better-for-You Frozen Desserts

No need to skip desserts this summer! Gelato and sorbetto are the perfect gourmet alternatives with numerous nutritional benefits.

Very popular in Europe and growing at a fast pace in North America, these frozen Italian treats are no longer considered a “temptation” but rather a customer favourite, taking the frustration and monotony out of some restricted-calorie diets. With less fat than ice cream and infused with spices, herbs and flowers or many other trendy ingredients, gelato and sorbetto combine both healthy attributes and artisanal flavours.

As with all desserts, presentation is key. These frozen treats can be scooped, layered in a cake, offered as a soft serve or even enjoyed on a stick as a frozen pop. Made with authentic and fresh ingredients, such as whole milk and cream (gelato) and fruits and juices (sorbetto), these products also leave room for customization and adaptation to various diets. Dairy-free, sugar-free, low-calorie, gluten-free, vegan or Kosher-certified formulations are all possible.

Creamy or refreshing, gelato and sorbetto are an upcoming trend for 2015. They can be found in food trucks as a panini gelato (an on-the-go solution), in restaurants as an affogato (a combination of coffee and gelato) or as a plated dessert. In cafés, they may be served blended in a smoothie or milkshake, while soft-serve shops serve them swirled and topped as desired. With an increasing number of exciting flavours available – from amaretto to mango – children and adults alike can once again indulge in high-end frozen desserts ... guilt free!

Courtesy Of Camille Bedu, Marketing Specialist for PreGel CANADA (www.pregelcanada.com).

BREAKDOWN OF SUGAR, FAT AND OVERRUN

	SUGAR	FAT	OVERRUN
GELATO	16%-22%	4%-8%	30%-35%
SORBETTO	25%-30%	0%	25%
ICE CREAM	21%	14%	50%-100%
CUSTARD	21%	10%	15%-30%

*Overrun refers to the volume of air that is whipped into a frozen dessert.

Lucia Weiler is a registered dietitian and nutrition communications professional who specializes in marketing, education and regulatory affairs related to food and beverages. As principal of Weiler Nutrition Communications Inc., Lucia provides expert services on nutrition trends, food science and labelling compliance. As the co-founder of Nutrition for NON-Nutritionists™, and a faculty member at Humber College School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism, she teaches nutrition, food safety and professional development. Contact Lucia at lucia@weilernutrition.com or follow her on Twitter @LuciaWeilerRD.