

Healthier catering tips for pizza restaurants and takeaways

Guidance for pizza restaurants and takeaways on providing and promoting healthier food and drink.

Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to customers. Here are some practical catering suggestions to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle.

You may already be achieving several of these tips but be prepared to go further and make real changes to help your customers make healthier choices.

Portion size

Eating too many calories can lead to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Even small reductions at each meal can make a real difference.

- **Consider reducing portion sizes** across your menu to a level that is acceptable to customers. For example, consider gradually reducing your pizza width – you will use less dough and fewer toppings.
- **Make your standard pizza base thinner** or add a thin base option to your menu. Using less dough will reduce calories and taste authentic. Lots of businesses are already doing this as many people prefer thinner bases. Make sure you don't miss out on customers.
- Give customers who want smaller portions a choice. In addition to your standard portions, try offering smaller portions (like 6 inch pizzas).
- **Creating more slices on a pizza** may encourage people not to eat so much. If you normally divide a pizza into 8 slices, try dividing it into 10 and try dividing a 10 slice pizza into 12 slices.
- Make it clear on the menu how many people one pizza will serve, for example, a large pizza serves 3-4 people.

Fats and frying

High-fat foods contain lots of calories which can lead to weight gain. This in turn can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Reducing saturated fat intake can lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

- Cheese and processed meats can be high in fat and salt so use sparingly when adding these ingredients and **be generous with vegetable toppings**. Also avoid offering meat and cheese-stuffed crust.
- Place your pizza base directly onto the tray without greasing it or use a little flour to stop it sticking. If you do need to oil the tray, try just a little rapeseed or sunflower oil instead of butter (as butter is high in saturated fat).
- **Swap chilli oil** for chilli flakes or fresh chilli.
- If you make your own garlic bread, try using a little less butter or brush with olive oil instead.

Salt

It is important to reduce salt intake as too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

- If you make your own pizza dough and tomato sauce, gradually cut down the amount of salt you use. Customers won't notice if you do this gradually. Try adding a little less each week until you can avoid adding it altogether.
- In addition to your standard pizzas, try promoting new combinations that offer less salty meat and more exciting vegetables like a 'Hot Pepperoni' made with rocket leaves, chilli and less pepperoni or cheese.

Sugar

Eating too many foods and drinks high in sugar can contribute to excess calories and lead to weight gain, which in turn increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. It is also linked to tooth decay.

- **Offer healthier drinks as the default option** such as water, lower fat milks, low calorie or no added sugar drinks, or pure fruit juices (in a 150ml serving size or as close to this volume as possible) rather than sugary drinks.
- If you do offer desserts, **offer fresh fruit** without sugar or syrup or desserts that are lower in fat and sugar. Offer smaller portion sizes or choose desserts which meet [Public Health England's sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines](#).

Fruit vegetables and fibre

These are low in calories and good sources of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Eating plenty of them will help to promote digestive health and can help prevent heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

- Look across your menu and think about where you could **add more vegetables to as many dishes as possible** (while not adding more fat, sugar or salt). This will allow you to use less of other ingredients (like cheese).
- **Offer fruit salad or a platter of fruit** on your dessert menu or fruits like melon or figs as part of a starter. The fruit can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen.

Promote healthier options

Although it is important to improve the nutrient content of all menu items, you can additionally develop promotions to give a unique selling point and encourage customers to pick a healthier meal or snack to eat.

- If you offer meal deals, this is a great way to get your customers to try healthier dishes. For example, a small pizza with a vegetable topping served with soup or salad and fruit for dessert adds variety. Offer healthier drinks and desserts which are lower in fat and sugar or those which meet the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines, smaller portion sizes or replace with fruit options.
- Encourage customers to choose healthier toppings. You could try doing special price promotions or marketing pizzas with lower salt and fat toppings like tuna, chicken and vegetables (peppers, mushrooms, onion, sweetcorn, garlic or rocket) instead of salty or fatty processed meats and cheeses.
- Train staff to **suggest and promote healthier options with higher fibre and less salt, saturated fat, sugar and calories** if asked for a recommendation.

Source healthier ingredients and food products from suppliers

[Check the nutrition information](#) about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats. Your supplier may be able to assist you.

Provide energy information

[Calorie Wise](#) is a free scheme in Northern Ireland to help catering businesses display calorie information on menus. This allows customers to have the information they need to make healthier choices when eating out.

The Food Standards Agency provides a free, online tool called [MenuCal](#) which helps businesses to calculate the energy value of food, in both kilojoules and kilocalories. The MenuCal tool also assists businesses to manage allergen information.