

## Take-aways versus fake-aways (a term created by my daughter)

When you order a take-away you don't know exactly what you're getting - but all contain the following not-so-tempting ingredients:

- poor quality meat
- lots of salt
- surrounded by gooey carbohydrates
- and excess fats,
- often washed down with the temptation of sugary drinks.

So, the key problems with take-away foods are excessive amounts of **SALT, SUGAR and FAT**. For some people, the additives or flavour enhancers such as MSG (monosodium glutamate) can cause reactions too.

However, cooking your own healthy version takes less time than it would to drive to the take-away and back, are much more flavoursome, usually cheaper and so much better for you!

### 1. What's your trigger? Home too late to be bothered to cook? Tired in need of a quick fix? You simply like the taste?

Batch cook your favourite curry or take-away meals once a week and save portions to freeze for later in the week. Cheaper cuts of meat or discounted packs of chicken or turkey make this option really cost-effective. All the taste, none of the downside!

### 2. Salt and sugar: white and deadly

An investigation by consumer magazine Which? in 2008 found out the following:

- A 300 g portion of take-away pepperoni pizza contained more than two-thirds of the recommended daily allowance of salt for an adult
- One McDonald's quarter pounder with cheese contains the majority of your recommended daily salt intake at 1100mg
- KFC chicken drumsticks - a four pack contains a massive 1520 mg of salt – that's 20mg more than is recommended in a whole day!

While you might not think of a take-away meal containing sugar, it certainly does! A Chinese meal contains an average of **19 teaspoons of sugar!**

### 3. Think twice - it's really NOT nice

Fresh food deteriorates quickly over time - but you may notice take-away burgers don't really rot. The meat is often already dehydrated as it's got a very low moisture content, it's more like jerky than burger. Not so juicy after all.

### 4. Cost

One of the most popular excuses for why take-aways cannot be swapped for healthier choices is cost. Just consider the added cost of the petrol to drive to the take-away and back, the drinks - alcoholic or otherwise - that you have alongside! The basic ingredients for healthier versions of take-away style meals are not expensive and spices last a long time. And **don't** forget the cost to your health of all those excess calories, sugar, fat and salt.

## 5. You are what you eat and manage to absorb

Your body really does reflect what you consume. If you ditch the take-away habit, you'll soon notice somebody benefits such as:

- Water retention and puffy ankles will reduce when your salt intake reduces
- Weight loss
- More energy - digesting a fatty meal is hard work for your body
- Better skin - healthy skin is a reflection of what your body is like within. This can only be achieved from a better diet, not a bottle of synthetic supplements.

## How to turn your takeaway favourites into healthier fake-aways ...

### Healthy chicken korma - (serves 4)

*Chicken korma is a UK favourite but a fatty meal can trigger digestive upset. This recipe has all the flavour but much less fat - and includes some vitamin C rich vegetables too. The addition of wholegrain rice adds in some natural fibre but feel free to use basmati rice if you want a more authentic Indian flavour.*

#### Ingredients

- 450g chicken, diced
- 1 chicken stock cube
- 4 teaspoons mild curry powder
- 2 large or 4 small onions, cut into chunks
- 2 green or yellow peppers, cut into chunks
- a few mushrooms, sliced (optional)
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 100g creamed coconut
- 2 teaspoons caster sugar
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 300g low-fat natural yogurt
- salt and pepper

#### Directions

- Put the chicken in a single layer in a wok or large frying pan over a medium heat, with just enough water to cover. Crumble in the stock cube and add 1 teaspoon of the curry powder. Simmer gently, stirring, for about 10 minutes, until the chicken is no longer pink.
- Stir in the chopped vegetables and garlic, and another 1 teaspoon curry powder. Simmer gently for a further 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Crumble in the creamed coconut and stir to dissolve. This should thicken the cooking liquid so that it is no longer watery. If it still appears quite watery, simmer for a little longer until it thickens, or dissolve 1 teaspoon cornflour in a little cold water and mix it in.

- Reduce the heat to low, and stir in the remaining curry powder, sugar and paprika.
- Gradually mix in the yogurt and heat through, stirring, for about 5 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve with brown rice or basmati rice.

## Chow Mein (serves 2)

*The fact is with a takeaway you don't know exactly what you're getting. Why not try cooking this Veggie Chow Mein instead? It takes less than 20 minutes - the same time as it would take to drive to the takeaway and back! It's jam packed full of flavour and you can add in a serving of lean meat or a handful of prawns if you so wish.*

### Ingredients

- 1/2 Courgettes, medium
- 1 cloves Garlic
- 3 tsp Ginger - grated
- 70 g Beansprouts
- 50 g Mangetout
- 1/2 Broccoli Head, medium
- 3 sprigs Coriander Fresh
- 2 tsp Honey
- 4 tbsp Tamari Soy Sauce
- 1/2 Juice of a Lime
- 80 g Rice Noodles

### Directions

- Soak the rice noodles for 15 minutes in hot water until soft.
- Heat the olive oil in a wok until hot, then add the chopped garlic and grated ginger.
- After 30 seconds add the broccoli florets and stir fry for 2 minutes.
- Add the thinly sliced courgettes and continue to stir fry for 1 minute.
- Add in the beansprouts, mangetout, the lime juice, soy sauce and the honey.
- Drain the noodles and add them to the wok along with the chopped coriander.
- Once well mixed serve in a bowl or on a plate.

## Stir-fry Beef (serves 2)

*If beef in black bean sauce is a favourite of yours, but the fatty meat and heavy sauce are too much, why not try this delicious alternative? The sauce contains honey which has antibacterial qualities and fresh ginger which has long been used as an aid to digestion.*

### Ingredients

- 240 g lean Beef
- 1 Red Peppers, medium
- 2 tsp Ginger - grated
- 120 g Beansprouts
- 2 Pak Choi or Bok Choy
- 6 Baby Corn
- 20 Sugarsnap Peas
- 1/2 Broccoli head, medium
- 4 tsp Honey
- 6 tbsp Tamari Soy Sauce (gluten free)

### Directions

- Slice the beef into thin slices.
- Mix the honey, grated ginger and soy sauce and rub into the beef, allow to marinate for 30 minutes occasionally spooning the juice back over.
- Heat a little oil in a wok, once hot add the beef and fry for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the soy sauce, chopped pak choi, sliced peppers, beansprouts, broccoli florets, baby corn and the sugar snap peas and stir fry for another 2 minutes.
- Plate up and serve.

## Pizza

*Why not try this unusual but surprisingly tasty 'cauliflower' pizza base. You can add toppings according to your favourite flavours. Finally, pizza can become a healthy option for dinner!*

### Ingredients

- 2 cups grated cauliflower
- 2 cups mozzarella cheese
- 2 eggs lightly beaten
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 pinch salt
- Olive oil for brushing
- Add a pinch of salt, pepper and any herbs that may go with your topping