

# Healthy eating, **Pakistani** **Cuisine**



HEART &  
STROKE  
FOUNDATION



Pakistani cuisine contains an assortment of biryani, korma, curry and many varieties of kababs, as well as mithai and bowls of kheer and sevan. These rich dishes are hard-to-resist, but eating too much fat, salt and sugar can increase your risk of developing illnesses such as heart disease and stroke.

Eating a healthy diet that is lower in fat, especially saturated and trans fat, and being active most days is the best way to protect your heart health. To eat a healthier diet, please follow these guidelines.



**Eat more vegetables and fruit** Have at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.

- Vegetables make a delicious addition to any type of meat curry: add bhindi or gobhi to chicken; chopped or pureed methi, palak or sarson saag to lamb, chicken or fish; finely diced or shredded vegetables in koftas, kababs, dal, kadhi, pakodas, cutlets or keema.
- Karhai chicken or beef tastes great with sweet peppers, zucchini, asparagus or green beans.
- When preparing balti dishes, incorporate finely diced seasonal vegetables or oven roasted root vegetables into the sauce. For salans, use root vegetables such as turnips, rutabagas, sweet potatoes or parsnips other than just potatoes.
- Alternate low-fat cuts of meat with red onions, sweet peppers, zucchini or cherry tomatoes on tandoori skewers.
- Choose colourful fruit such as cantaloupe, watermelon, mangoes, peaches, nectarines, oranges, berries, cherries and grapes.



**Choose whole grains** Make at least half your grain servings as whole grains, such as brown basmati, bulgar, barley, quinoa, wild rice, oats or millet.



- When stuffing vegetables with ground meats, add cooked bulgur or brown rice to the dish.
- Use whole-wheat or multi-grain bread when making bun kababs and for binding ground meats or making breadcrumbs for koftas, kababs or cutlets.

**Choose lower fat milk and alternatives**

- Drink low-fat milk (skim, 1%, or 2%) or fortified soy beverage each day.

**Meat and alternatives** Choose lean cuts of meat and trim all visible fat before cooking.

- Include meat alternatives such as beans, dahl, lentils and tofu often in your meals.
- Substitute tofu for part of the ground meat used in koftas, kababs, keema or stuffed naans and vegetables.
- When making nargisi kofte, try stuffing them with minced tofu.
- Include fish at least twice a week.
- Remove skin from chicken before cooking.



**Use healthy cooking and preparation methods** Use a small amount of oil, such as canola, olive or soybean each day. Include only 2-3 tablespoons (30 – 45 mL) of unsaturated fats each day, including cooking oil, salad dressing, margarine and mayonnaise.

- Don't deep-fry kababs; pan-fry, grill or bake them. Lining a baking sheet with parchment paper keeps kababs from sticking without any extra grease. Another fat-free trick for making kababs: dampen hands with water instead of greasing them.
- Kofta mixtures do not need any added salt as the flavourful sauce they are cooked in may also be seasoned.
- When preparing kormas, cut back to no more than ¼ cup of nuts, for each person. Choose unsalted nuts.

**Make healthy choices when eating out**

- Enjoy fresh fruit for dessert instead of high fat dishes like sheer khurma, gulab jamun, kalakand, shahi tukre, gajraila, kulfi or ras malai.
- Eat kormas sparingly as they are usually cooked with nuts and high fat cream.



## Kofta Kabab

Makes 8 servings

This lighter version uses chicken, tofu, herbs and spices for delicious healthy kababs that can be pan fried, grilled on the barbecue or made into koftas and baked in the oven.

- 1 medium onion, quartered
- 4 cloves garlic
- 5 cm (2 inch) piece ginger
- 125 mL (½ cup) packed fresh coriander, washed, drained and well dried with paper towels
- 125 mL (½ cup) packed fresh mint, washed and dried with paper towels
- 2 fresh green chillies
- 200g (7 oz) extra firm tofu, diced
- 2 slices whole wheat bread, cubed
- 1 egg
- 5 mL (1 tsp) each: ground cumin, ground coriander, garam masala, dried fenugreek leaves (Kasoori methi), cumin seeds, fennel seeds, ground pomegranate seeds (anardana powder) and cayenne pepper
- 500g (1 lb) lean ground chicken
- Cooking spray

1. Place all ingredients except chicken in food processor and mince. Add chicken and process until mixture is well blended.
2. Transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate 1 hour. Using 50 mL (¼ cup) measure, divide mixture into 16 equal portions. Shape into burger like patties.
3. Warm large non-stick frying pan over medium heat and spray lightly with cooking spray. Pan fry patties in 2 batches, turning once in between cooking, about 12-15 minutes per batch, adding cooking spray if necessary for second batch.
4. Transfer to platter and serve with a sprinkling of fresh lemon juice if desired.

### Nutritional Information per serving (2 Koftas/serving)

Calories 165; Protein 16g; Total fat 8g; Saturated fat 2g; Cholesterol 73mg; Carbohydrate 9g; Fibre 2g; Sodium 105mg; Potassium 477mg

## Navrattan Korma

Makes 4 servings

Kormas are rich preparations made with cream and nuts. This healthy version uses tofu, fat free yogurt and a small amount of ground almonds to achieve that classic korma flavour.

- 15 mL (1 tbsp) oil
- 2 mL (½ tsp) cumin seeds
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 5 mL (1 tsp) minced ginger
- 2 large plum tomatoes, diced
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) plain fat free yogurt
- 30 mL (2 Tbsp) ground almonds
- 5 mL (1 tsp) each: dried fenugreek leaves, garam masala, ground coriander, ground cumin, ground fennel seeds
- 2 mL (1/2 tsp) each: turmeric, cayenne pepper, ground cardamom seeds
- 250 mL (1 cup) water
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 small yellow zucchini, diced
- 1 small green zucchini, diced
- 1 orange pepper, diced
- 250 mL (1 cup) cauliflower florets
- 100 g frozen peas, thawed
- 100 g (3.5 oz) extra firm tofu, diced
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped fresh coriander
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) lemon juice

1. Warm oil in deep non-stick skillet over med-high heat. Add cumin seeds, sizzle 30 sec. Add onions, garlic & ginger. Sauté 5 min. until slightly softened and browned.
2. Add tomatoes, cook 2 min. Add yogurt and ground almonds, stir for 2 minutes.
3. Add remaining spices, cook 1 minute.
4. Add water, mix well. Add vegetables and tofu, cover and bring to a boil.
5. Reduce heat to medium low and cook 20-25 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.
6. Fold in fresh coriander and lemon juice.

### Nutritional Information per serving

Calories 168, Protein 9g, Total fat 7g, Saturated fat 1g, Cholesterol 1g, Carbohydrate 20g, Fibre 5g, Sodium 69mg, Potassium 622mg