

Healthy eating, Sri Lankan Cuisine



HEART &
STROKE
FOUNDATION



Sri Lanka's exotic food has been shaped by the cuisines of India and Malaysia and influences by the Dutch, Portuguese and British, as well as spices grown in its lush plantations.

Coconuts from this tropical island are used in preparing many Sri Lankan dishes – their milk is used to make hoppers, kiribath and many desserts; shredded coconut is used in chutneys, sambols, curries and rotti; and many dishes are cooked in coconut oil. Coconut and coconut oil is high in saturated fat, and Canada's Food Guide recommends limiting saturated fat in your diet. Consuming saturated fats raises unhealthy cholesterol (LDL) levels.

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. Follow our guidelines to eat a healthy diet.

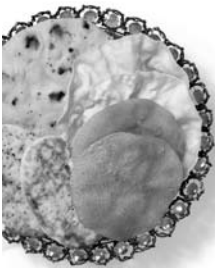


Eat more vegetables and fruit Vegetables and fruit are important sources of healthy nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and fibre, so include plenty of them through your day and meals.

- Add steamed or seared finely diced vegetables in addition to the mashed potatoes and meat in rolls.
- Instead of making curries with just meat, fish or chicken, add vegetables to them for added flavour, texture and nutrients.
- Add shredded vegetables to short eats (snacks) such as vada (lentil croquettes), cutlets, buns (samosa like baked appetizers), meat rotis (wraps) and patties (pastry stuffed with meat or fish).
- Instead of making biryani, pulao or fried rice with just meat or chicken, add assorted seasonal vegetables as well.
- Rotti (flatbread) made with shredded vegetables instead of coconut added to the dough tastes delicious!
- Serve fruit with sweet dishes such as wattilappam (baked dessert with eggs, nuts and cardamom), kiri bath (milk rice), bibikan (semolina, honey and coconut dessert) or add fruit to the mixture before cooking.



Eat whole grains Include at least half your grain servings as whole grain.



- Substitute brown basmati for white.
- Use multi grain or whole-wheat flour for making flat breads.
- Use brown rice flour to prepare dishes such as hoppers, dosas and other rice flour based dishes.

Choose lower fat milk and alternatives

- Try using lower fat milk (2%, 1% or skim) or fortified soy beverage instead of coconut milk in dishes or sweets, where appropriate.

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

- When making kottu, a main curry biryani or pulao use lean cuts of meat.
- Include meat alternatives such as beans, dal, lentils and tofu often in your meals. Use skin on whole lentils for preparing dal curries.
- When making rolls or Frikkadels, try substituting part of the meat with tofu.
- Eat at least two servings of fish each week prepared in a low fat manner such as baking. Cold water fish (such as char, herring, mackerel, rainbow trout, salmon or sardines) are especially high in heart-healthy fats.

Choose lower fat choices and cooking methods Cut down on the use of coconut and coconut milk in every dish.

- Cook vegetables such as okra, beans, eggplant or mushrooms directly in your curry instead of frying them beforehand.
- Limit your use of coconut milk to an occasional choice. If the use of coconut milk is essential to a recipe, use light coconut milk for similar flavour and less fat.
- Try preparing traditional recipes without adding coconut. The taste will be slightly different but the food will be more healthful.
- Avoid using coconut oil, ghee or vegetable ghee for preparing food.
- Cook food simply by steaming, roasting, sautéing lightly or baking instead of deep-frying.
- Bake stuffed rolls instead of deep-frying them.
- Try baking the meatballs of dishes such as frikkadels in the oven for a lower fat alternative.
- Pan-fry short eats such as vadas, cutlets, fried stuffed chillies and patties in cooking spray instead of deep-frying them.

Make healthy choices when eating out

- Avoid eating deep fried appetizers and snacks.
- Avoid eating curries made with coconut milk or shredded coconut.
- Choose smaller portions if steamed or sautéed choices are not available.
- Choose sambols (chutney like condiments) that are not made with coconut or coconut milk.
- Limit or avoid eating desserts that are made with shredded coconut, coconut milk or ghee.

Eggplant curry

Makes 4 servings

In our heart-healthy version, the eggplant is roasted in the oven and then simmered in a rich spicy sauce of light coconut milk.

- 1 medium eggplant, cubed into 1" pieces
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) oil, divided
- 5 mL (1 tsp) black mustard seeds, divided
- 2 dried red chillies
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2.5 cm (1 inch) piece ginger, chopped
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) apple cider or other vinegar
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) canned light coconut milk
- 1.3 cm (1/2 inch) stick cinnamon
- 20 fresh curry leaves
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 5 mL (1 tsp) brown sugar
- 1 mL (1/4 tsp) ground cardamom
- 1 mL (1/4 tsp) ground cloves
- 2 mL (1/2 tsp) turmeric
- 2 mL (1/2 tsp) ground coriander

1. Preheat oven to 400°F/200°C. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place eggplant cubes in deep mixing bowl; toss with 15 mL (1 tbsp) oil. Spread in single layer on baking sheet. Bake 30 min. or until tender and lightly browned. Reserve.
2. Puree 2 mL (1/2 tsp) mustard seeds, red chillies, garlic, ginger, vinegar and coconut milk in blender until smooth. Reserve.
3. Heat remaining oil in deep non-stick skillet over medium high heat. Add remaining mustard seeds, cinnamon stick, curry leaves and onion. Sauté 5 min. or until onions are softened and lightly browned. Add reserved coconut milk puree, sugar, ground cardamom, ground cloves, turmeric and ground coriander. Reduce heat to medium, cook 5 min. or until spices are fragrant. Add reserved eggplant, mix gently. Cook 2-3 min. or until liquid has been absorbed by eggplant and mixture is almost dry.

Nutritional Information per serving (2 skewers)

Calories 121, Protein 23g, Fat 2g, Saturated Fat 0g, Cholesterol 59mg, Carbohydrate 2g, Fibre 1g, Sodium 55mg, Potassium 335mg

Frikadels

Makes 4 servings (24 meatballs)

These meatballs are usually made with ground beef, dipped in egg and breadcrumbs, then deep-fried. In our heart healthy version, we use lean ground chicken mixed with tofu for the meatballs, rolled in fresh breadcrumbs and baked in the oven for the same crisp, delicious taste.

- 1 medium onion
- 2.5 cm (1 inch) piece ginger
- 2 cloves garlic
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped fresh dill
- 5 mL (1 tsp) ground cumin
- 5 mL (1 tsp) ground coriander
- 2 mL (1/2 tsp) ground black pepper
- 1 mL (1/4 tsp) ground cloves
- 1 L (1/4 tsp) ground cinnamon
- 1 mL (1/4 tsp) ground cardamom
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) extra firm tofu, diced
- 1 slice flax bread
- 250 g (1 cup) lean ground chicken
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) fresh breadcrumbs from flax bread

1. Preheat oven to 400°F/200°C. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place all ingredients, except breadcrumbs, in food processor and mince until well blended. Transfer to a deep mixing bowl. Using dampened hands, shape 2.5 cm (1-inch) meatballs from mixture and roll each meatball in breadcrumbs, tapping out excess. Place on baking sheet.
3. Bake for 30 min. or until crisp and cooked through.

Nutritional Information per serving (6 meatballs)

Calories 154, Protein 15g, Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 2g, Cholesterol 49mg, Carbohydrate 8g, Fibre 2g, Sodium 77mg, Potassium 445mg