

## **“Take out makeover”**

By Chef Jen RDN/LDN

This month of May, I've decided to do “Take out Makeover” ideas. It's well known among the nutrition professional population that restaurant food is notoriously high in sodium (salt). That is across the board from Italian, to burgers, to noodle/pho houses, to American casual restaurants.

Another very popular take out meal is Chinese food. For this week's video, we are making “Chicken and Homemade fried rice”. While most restaurant food is higher in sodium (salt), Chinese food in particular is extremely high. It should go without saying that it's fine to consume with a well-rounded diet, every now and again. But it's something that **should not** be consumed frequently. Most Chinese take out has more than your daily serving of sodium in just the ONE MEAL. Why is it so high? Some restaurants use MSG (monosodium glutamate), soy sauce or salt in their preparation. Keep in mind that this doesn't include any salt or soy sauce that you may add on yourself.

### **Let's look at the sodium content:**

According to [PF Chang's](#) website, here are some popular meal's sodium content:

Sesame Chicken: 1560 mg

Mongolian Beef: 2300 mg

Buddha's Stir-fried feast (vegetarian): 2330 mg

Fried Rice Combo: 1920 mg

Chicken Pad Thai: 2730 mg

Ramen: Either 3390 or 2710 mg

Ramen is the new “in” bowl in the restaurant industry and online. As you can see, it's *extremely high* in sodium and crushes your recommended daily intake with that **one meal!** Now, keep in mind, that doesn't include what else you may be eating, drinking with or adding condiments to the meal or what else you've eaten throughout the day.

1 tbsp of regular soy sauce: 960 mg.

One packet of soy sauce (usually given with meals): 489 mg

### **Here are some good alternatives:**

Use Reduced sodium soy sauce: 1 tbsp contains 520 mg. While it's still higher than a dietitian would like, it's almost half the amount of regular soy sauce.

Limit or omit the salt in your recipes

Load the dish with vegetables

Using vinegar can add the salty/Umami flavor that soy sauce gives

Ask for the food to be prepared with low sodium products. (or ask for no salt added at all).

When making ramen noodles at home, use the noodles but discard the packet and boil the noodles in low sodium chicken or vegetable broth instead. To really indulge, add tofu, carrots, spinach, ginger, rice vinegar, low sodium soy and shitake mushrooms!

Just remember the “golden rules” of nutrition and food (that I just made up)

1. There is no “bad” food, just less healthful foods that should be enjoyed infrequently and in small quantities. If it's your birthday, eat that slice of cake. If it's your 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin's stepson's girlfriend's birthday... skip it.

2. MOVE YOUR BODY. Physical activity is key! Go for walks, take the stairs, hold plank, dance... etc.

Until next week.....

Bon Appetit!

~~ Chef Jen



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