



February 2024

## Love Your Heart with Healthier Choices

February is National Heart Health Month and one of the best ways to promote a healthy heart is with a healthy diet. Try these tips to celebrate great food choices for heart health:

**Reduce your intake of sugary drinks and snacks high in added sugar.** Make water more exciting by adding fruit for a delicious fruit-infused, refreshing beverage that will hydrate without added sugars. Choose snacks such as nuts or fresh, canned, or frozen fruits with no added sugars for snacks and desserts. Try reducing the amount of added sugar used in your favorite dessert recipes.

**Choose leaner cuts of meat.** Look for cuts of meat that have less visible fat and remove skin from poultry like chicken or turkey before cooking. Baking, broiling, or grilling can cut down on added fats. Try to eat fish or seafood twice a week.

**Switch to fat-free or low-fat dairy products.** Sliced and shredded cheeses have low-fat versions that cost and taste about the same as the higher fat cheeses.

**Limit foods with higher amounts of sodium.** Sodium raises blood pressure, which may increase risk for heart disease. Sodium is most commonly eaten from the salt that is added in food. Look at Nutrition Facts labels to choose items with lower amounts, such as those with less than 20% sodium



per serving, and cook at home to be in control of how much salt goes into your meals.

**Aim to eat more fruits and vegetables.** Try adding fruit to your cereal or oatmeal at breakfast or adding a small bag of frozen vegetables to pasta, soup, or stir fry at dinner. February is also National Sweet Potato Month, so enjoy this nutritious vegetable in many different ways – even baked into a pie! (see this month's featured recipe).

**Pick whole grain products.** Great choices for eating more whole grains are brown rice or 100% whole grain bread, popcorn, barley, and rye. Whole grains have a good amount of fiber, B vitamins, magnesium, zinc, and other heart-healthy nutrients.

**Cook with healthier fats.** Choose fats like olive oil or canola oil instead of saturated fats like butter or lard. Use cooking oils and added fats in moderation.

Every healthier choice in your eating routine can help reduce your risk of heart disease, so love *yourself* this February by trying a few healthier choices!

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Content Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/resources-publications/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html>

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/heart-healthy-living/healthy-foods>

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## Recipe of the Month

*Recipe adapted from MyPlate.gov*

### Personal Sweet Potato Pies

*A healthier twist on a dessert favorite.*

**Serves 12**

#### Ingredients:

##### Graham Cracker Crust

- 1 cup crushed graham crackers (6 sheets)
- ¼ cup oil (vegetable or canola)

##### Filling

- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup nonfat evaporated milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

##### Filling (continued)

- ¼ cup white sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar, lightly packed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds), cooked, skin removed, and mashed
- 6 tablespoons nonfat whipped topping, optional

#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line one standard 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners.
2. In a small bowl, mix crushed graham crackers and oil until well combined. Divide the crust mixture evenly into the bottom of each muffin cup and press down. Bake until golden and just set, 2 to 4 minutes. Set aside to cool.
3. In a large bowl, mix eggs, milk, and vanilla. Add white and brown sugar, salt, and pumpkin pie spice. Once mixed, add sweet potatoes. Stir until well combined.
4. Spoon the pie filling evenly over the graham cracker crust in the 12 muffin cups. Bake for 30 minutes. Let cool, and then chill in the refrigerator for 2 to 4 hours. Serve chilled, and top each pie with ½ tablespoon nonfat whipped topping (optional).

**Nutrients Per Serving:** 130 calories, 3.5 g total fat, .5 g saturated fat, 40 mg cholesterol, 160 mg sodium, 22 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 11 g total sugar, 5 g added sugar, and 3 g protein

**Total Cost:** \$\$\$\$



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