

Adjusting the Comfort Foods We Love to a Training Diet

This is all about compromise

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Mmmm.....the pleasing feeling of a warm grilled cheese sandwich dipped in a basil cream tomato soup. Or, is it a slice of greasy cheese pizza and a beer that suits your fancy? Maybe you prefer mom's homemade sausage gravy and biscuits. These foods that soothe the psyche are usually not designed to be particularly healthy. In fact, comfort foods can be off the charts unhealthy if one is not careful.

This time of year I can't help but think about comforting foods. Thoughts of these foods tend to occur most often when I want to run from my car to a hot shower due to the cool sweat from a long morning run. I usually think of nothing better than one of those rich and fancy lattes packed full of fat and calories to warm my chilled bones.

Comfort foods may be something we associate with a fond memory of home or that simply bring us a sense of satisfaction. The fact is, most of us can probably think of a handful of comforting foods we crave at various times of the year. Sure, more often than not we may have the self-discipline to avoid the sense of gluttony we associate with post comfort food fullness. However, why not find a peace of mind by adjusting those foods to be better quality.

The key things to remember with adding quality to your comfort foods are 1) Add value whenever possible. This would include adding vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean proteins. 2) Substitute if possible, by substituting whole fat and sugar products for the lower fat or sugar alternative. 3) Reduce portions. It may be tempting to order the largest size comfort food, but unless you are sharing, always opt for the smaller portion as to avoid the temptation of eating the entire larger version.

For example, my favorite fatty latte can be turned into a lighter drink with the substitution of skim milk for whole milk, asking for the beverage without whipped cream, choosing decaf, and finally ordering a small serving. My large gingersnap latte snack just went from a whopping 450 calories and 21 grams of fat to a reasonable 170 calorie and 0 gram fat delight. Learn other fun facts about some favorite comforts foods and their healthier alternatives.

KFC Chicken Pot Pie contains 770 calories, 40 grams of fat, and 14 grams of trans fat. Wow! That pie packs a big punch. How about making this classic meal at home? You can substitute white flour for a whole-wheat flour crust.

Use low fat or fat free sour creams, creams, and buttermilks. Fill the shell with lots of veggies and lean meat. Never forget the power of fresh herbs and seasonings to replace the flavor of otherwise missing fat.

Pizza and beer is a social comfort food for many. Would you believe a meal of 2 slices of a stuffed crust Meat Lover's pizza at Pizza Hut and a dark beer will run you about 1150 calories and 52 grams of fat! However, there is a healthier alternative. You can order a pizza with whole grain thin crust and skip the fatty meat. Try topping it with a variety of veggies. Order a light beer and you quickly turn this into a meal of about 500 calories and 12 grams of fat. Even if you had a third slice you would be cutting the calorie content by 40% and the fat by 65%. Well worth the switch!

Anything fried, some will say. Fried foods such as chicken, cheese, French fries, veggies, and even deep fried Twinkies are common comfort foods. Could there possibly be a way to make fried food healthier? O.K. not always, but you can try your best. First, always choose healthier oils, such as canola or olive oil. Consider removing the skin on chicken and coating it with a crunchy topping such as corn flakes, nuts, or seeds and bake it. Make your own version of fries by cutting your own potato and bake it coated in a little oil and seasoning. If a thick fried coating presents itself, remove some or all of the fried coating before eating it.

How about those ooey, gooey, moist, and chewy Cinnamon Rolls! Licking your figures after a Cinnabon Cinnamon Roll may be a fond memory of family outings to the mall. One of these savory treats will rack up a whopping 730 calories and 24 grams of fat. Do you prefer the Pecan version? Well, that would be 1100 calories and 56 grams of fat! Yes, you can actually make tasty sticky buns using whole wheat flour. Also consider reducing the amount of butter and sugar in the topping. If you are not much of a baker, reduce the portion size by sharing this indulgence with your friends.

Most comfort foods can become better quality. Or, at the very least, by making conscious effort in limiting portions a better quality diet can still fit into the rest of your day. It may take a little creativity and an open frame of mind. Learn about other great recipes and ways to substitute at one of my favorite websites http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/collections/healthy_comfort_food_recipes.html

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