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A MEDICINE COMPANY

# Roots and Recipes

**A Journey Through Nutrition  
and Culture**

**Your health journey is unique, and so is your cultural heritage. This guide is designed to honor your traditions while supporting your health goals.**

## The Power of Foods in Culture and Health

Food is more than just something we eat to stay alive. It shows who we are, our traditions, and brings people together. All around the world, families share special meals that have shared across generations. These meals tell stories about being strong, celebrating happy times, and feeling better when we're sick. When we learn about the diverse cultures and health benefits of food, we can respect our own traditions and appreciate others' too.



Food tells us a lot about people and how they live. It helps us feel like we belong in our community and is often a big part of who we are. We can learn the stories behind different foods, help everyone feel good about their cultural differences, and encourage children to celebrate and try new foods.

In many cultures, food is more than nutrition—it's a way to show love, celebrate, and stay connected to our roots. Sharing a meal with family or friends helps build strong relationships. The recipes passed down from your grandparents tell the story of your family and where you come from.







Food brings people together. Family meals are often the heart of holidays, faith, and celebrations. Cooking connects generations. Grandparents often teach children how to cook traditional meals, passing down wisdom and culture. Eating together supports mental health. Sharing meals with loved ones is linked to lower stress and stronger emotional bonds.

**Every dish has a story. Have fun uncovering new flavors and foods!**

# Traditional Foods and Diverse Flavors

Here are some examples of culturally rich food traditions with nutrition-friendly ingredients:

Traditional Foods	Spices to Enhance Flavor	Meals to Make With Them
<p><b>Chicken breast</b></p> 	<p><b>Pepper</b></p> 	<p><b>Grilled chicken salad</b></p> 
<p><b>Corn tortillas</b></p> 	<p><b>Lemon</b></p> 	<p><b>Shrimp Taco</b></p> 
<p><b>Yuca</b></p> 	<p><b>Cilantro</b></p> 	<p><b>Yuca dish</b></p> 
<p><b>Black beans</b></p> 	<p><b>Cumin</b></p> 	<p><b>Black bean salad</b></p> 

**Traditional Foods**

**Spices to Enhance Flavor**

**Meals to Make With Them**

**Bok choy**



**Soy sauce (low sodium)**



**Bok choy tofu stir fry**



**Tofu**



**Wild onions**



**Miso soup**



**Pulses**



**Turmeric**



**Lentil soup**



**Shredded Chicken**



**Garlic**



**Tamale**



**Traditional Foods**

**Spices to Enhance Flavor**

**Meals to Make With Them**

**Millet**



**Okra**



**Millet with okra sauce**



**Collard green**



**Cayenne**



**Collard greens with corn bread**



**Sweet potato**



**Ginger and garlic**



**Lentil sweet potato stew**



**Salmon**



**Corn and beans**



**Grilled salmon with corn and red kidney beans**



Traditional Foods	Spices to Enhance Flavor	Meals to Make With Them
<p><b>Whole wheat pita</b></p> 	<p><b>Chilli powder</b></p> 	<p><b>Golden hummus atop whole wheat pita</b></p> 
<p><b>Eggplant and zucchini</b></p> 	<p><b>Sumac</b></p> 	<p><b>Grilled chicken kabab</b></p> 
<p><b>Labneh</b></p> 	<p><b>Spoonful of za'atar spice</b></p> 	<p><b>Bowl of creamy labneh sprinkled with sumac and za'atar</b></p> 
<p><b>Bulgur wheat</b></p> 	<p><b>Cinnamon</b></p> 	<p><b>Fresh tabbouleh salad with parsley and tomato</b></p> 



## Improve the Nutrition, while maintaining the flavor

You don't have to give up your cultural dishes to eat healthier. Small changes can help you manage your weight without losing the flavor or meaning behind the meal.



## Try These Simple Swaps



### Cooking method

Deep fry → Bake, grill, steam or air fry



### Sauce base

Heavy cream → Broth or yogurt-based sauces



### Grains

White rice → Brown rice, quinoa or millet



**Protein** Fatty meat (sausage, bacon, hot dogs, ribs, or cuts of beef and pork with visible fat) → Lean meats: skinless chicken or turkey, fish (like salmon or tilapia), lean cuts of beef or pork, legumes or tofu

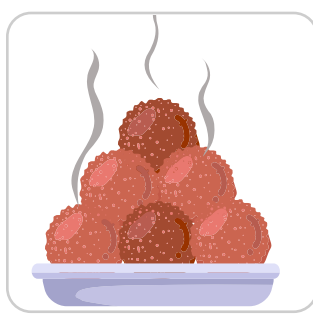


### Drinks

Sugary drinks (energy drinks, soda, sweet tea) → Sparkling water with a lemon wedge or small piece of fresh fruit

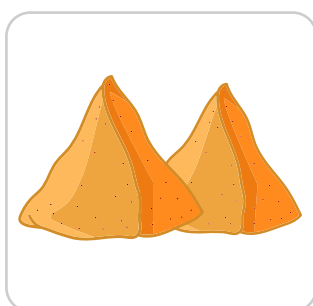


## Easy Examples From Traditional Meals



### Bola-bola (meatballs)

Rather than fry, use bake lean ground turkey



### Samosas

Use a whole-wheat wrapper and air-fry



### Tamales

Make it using vegetable oil and add more veggies and should not include cheese

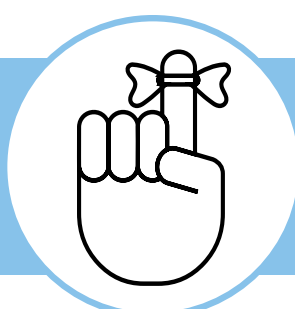


## Ingredient Tip



If a traditional item like tomatillo isn't available, try using:

Green tomatoes—they keep the soul of the dish alive.



## Remember

These small changes let you honor your heritage while also nourishing your body.

**Write the changes you would like to make to your meals that still honor your culture:**

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## Try These Healthy Cultural Snacks!

**Baba Ghanoush and Crackers**

**Baked Hush Puppies and Peach Slices**

**Banana Bread and Dried Dates**

**Crumpets and Strawberries**

**Mangu and Egg**

**Mexican Street Corn Cups**

**Onigiri (Brown Rice Balls) and Tuna Mayo**

**Papaya and Bola-Bola Made With Shrimps**

**Pita Bread and Afghan Salata**

**Polish Carrot Salad**

**Potato Pancake and Applesauce**

**Tofu Musubi**

**Turkish Pide Bites**

# Common Challenges to Eating Healthy and Simple Ways to Overcome Them



## Limited access to fresh food

Nearly 8.4% of US residents live in areas where it is hard to find affordable fruits and vegetables. These places are often filled with fast food and convenience stores—this is called a food swamp or food desert.

- ✓ **Try joining a local food cooperative, shopping at farmers' markets, or asking nearby stores to carry more fresh produce. You can also buy frozen or canned (no-salt and no sugar) fruits and vegetables, or grow small herbs and greens at home to save money and eat healthier.**



## Not enough time to cook

Busy schedules from work, caregiving, and other responsibilities can make it hard to prepare healthy meals.

- ✓ **Try cooking traditional meals in large batches, using a slow cooker.**



## Big portions

In many cultures, large servings show love and hospitality. But big portions every day can affect health.

- ✓ **Use smaller plates or add more vegetables to your meals to stay full while still enjoying your favorite dishes.**



## Fast food and advertisements everywhere

It's easy to choose less healthy meals when fast food and advertisements are all around.

- ✓ **When eating out, choose grilled instead of fried items, and go for whole grain sides to enjoy the flavors you love in a healthier way.**

# Support Networks

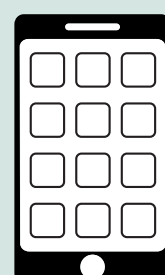
Explore free or low cost support groups that honor your cultural values. Whether it's a local walking club, a church-based program, or an online peer group, there are resources made for you. Click on the website link for easy access.

Organization	Website	Description
TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)	<a href="http://www.tops.org">www.tops.org</a>	Affordable weight-loss support group with community-based and virtual meetings, offering peer accountability and encouragement
CDC Healthy Weight Program	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>	Offers tips and programs tailored to families and children, with culturally adaptable community resources
The Balm In Gilead	<a href="http://www.balmingilead.org">www.balmingilead.org</a>	Partners with Black churches to promote chronic disease prevention, including weight management
The National WIC Association	<a href="http://www.nwica.org">www.nwica.org</a>	Provides nutrition and health education for women, infants, and children with sensitivity to cultural food practices
Partnership for a Healthier America	<a href="http://www.ahealthieramerica.org">www.ahealthieramerica.org</a>	Works to improve food access and physical activity in underserved US communities



## Educational Materials

- 1) USDA & HHS Printable Guides (Nutrition.gov)
- 2) MyPlate Print Materials
- 3) DASH Diet



## Apps

- 1) Start Simple with (USDA)
- 2) MyPlate Alexa Skill (USDA)
- 3) BAM! Dining Decisions (CDC)
- 4) DASH Diet and Meal Plan

## Professional Help



If you're worried about your weight or want to change your physical activity or eating habits to lose weight, talk to your doctor. They can help you set goals for your weight and advise you on a treatment plan. But starting the conversation about weight can be hard. As you prepare to talk with your doctor, think about the factors in your life that may affect your weight.

If talking about weight or obesity with your doctor or other healthcare professional makes you uneasy, let them know. Acknowledging that you feel uncomfortable can help ease the tension. You can also bring a family member or friend for support. Remember, talking to the doctor can help you get the right care and take control of your health. Your doctor may also recommend support groups as a good resource for sharing experiences.

### "Here is a list of free professional and community programs:"

- 1) Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- 2) Healthy Weight Programs (NIFA)
- 3) Tips to Keep Moving – NIH/NIDDK
- 4) Weight Management for Youth
- 5) NIH Body Weight Planner – NIH HHS

**Your cultural heritage is a strength in your journey toward better health. Embrace your traditions, make informed choices, and celebrate each step forward.**

### Remember These Key Takeaways:



1. Food is an important part of your cultural heritage.
2. You don't have to give up foods that are important to you and your family to eat healthy.
3. By making a few simple changes, like swapping out ingredients or preparing meals differently, you can enjoy healthier versions of the flavors you love.