

# Your Customers Want to *Eat Smarter!*

*A Restaurateur's guide to  
healthy menus, special diets  
and food safety*



# What are Your Customers Eating?

It used to be that dining out was saved for a special day and a once-in-a-while treat for the family. These days, it seems everyone is running a hectic schedule and eating out has become a way of life. At the same time, we are realizing the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Together this means that now, more than ever, consumers are looking for healthy food choices. As a restaurateur, it's important to meet that demand.

Recent research on Canadians eating habits found these facts:

- 25% of people aged four and up are eating at least some fast food regularly (Statistics Canada, 2004).
- 14% of Canadians are going out to a restaurant 2-3 times a week, and 10% are ordering take-out or home delivered meals at the same frequency (NIN, CFIC, 2004).
- Weekly food expenditure information tells us that Canadians are spending around 30% of their budget in restaurants (Statistics Canada, 2003).
- The average Canadian dines out eleven times in two weeks (Globe and Mail, Thur. Nov. 8/07).

It's not always easy to make the healthy choice when dining out. Many restaurant meals, especially the fast food ones, are low in fibre, high in fat and high in sodium.

Research has shown us time and again that eating more vegetables and fruit, more whole grain products and less fat will help to decrease our risk of many chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer. But still Canadians are not eating enough vegetables and fruit. In fact, only 41% of Canadian adults are getting at least five servings of vegetables and fruit a day (CCHS, 2.2, 2005).

Media reports have been highlighting the incidence of overweight and obesity that is on the rise. Canadian adults are increasingly overweight with 30% of adult women being overweight and 42% of adult men. Even more alarming are the numbers for children with 26% of both male and female children being overweight.

## Portions Gone Wild

To improve our health we need to turn away from the “bigger-is-better” or “2 for 1” message. Not only are portion sizes bigger today than 30 years ago but even the plates are bigger in many restaurants. Research shows that when more food is put in front of us we eat more, and that is not necessarily good for our health. Big portions aren't unhealthy on their own – if more of us “biggied” our salads and other vegetable servings that would be good for us.

If we do a quick comparison of portion sizes of a regular meal of a burger, fries and a cola versus a “Value-Meal” with its supersized proportions we can see that the first one offers only 650 calories, but the supersized version may yield up to 1800 calories. This is as much as the average adult woman might need to eat in a whole day!



## On The Menu

In your restaurant you can influence the menu. Pay attention to what your guests are ordering and how they may be rearranging the menu to get what they want. By listening to customer requests you can find out what and how to meet their changing needs.

Be careful about putting symbols on your menu to indicate a “healthy item” – refer to the labeling laws under the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act.

With consumers now looking for healthy options, it’s important to emphasize what you are doing for their well-being. If you have increased fibre by adding whole wheat versions of pasta or brown rice, tell them so. If you are thinking of shifting your concept to include specialized ingredients like local or organic be sure to inform your customers. This will help justify the increased cost and many customers are willing to pay a premium for these things.

To learn more about the recommendations for Canadians please see the newest version of Canada’s Food Guide in your package or go to [www.healthycanadians.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.ca)

## References

[www.ccfm.ca](http://www.ccfm.ca)

[www.restaurantowner.com](http://www.restaurantowner.com)

[www.statcan.ca/english/research/82-620-MIE/2006002/tables.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/82-620-MIE/2006002/tables.htm)

D.A. Alter and K. Eny, “The relationship Between the supply of fast-food chains and cardiovascular outcomes,” *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 96, 3(2005): pp.173-177.

S.J. Nielsen and B.M. Popkin, “Pattern and Trends in Food Portion Sizes, 1977-1998,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 289, 4 (2003):pp.450-453.

# Moving Towards A Healthier Menu

With more and more consumers looking to find healthier choices when eating out it's up to you to provide healthier solutions. Why not try make a few changes at a time?. Start by asking some of your customers what they think you need to do to improve your menu.

**Here are some menu suggestions:**

## Focus on the Vegetables and Fruit!

- Avoid deep-fried vegetables or vegetables in heavy butter, cheese and cream sauces. Offer low-fat salad dressings and serve them on the side (advertise this on your menu).
- Offer 100% vegetable and fruit juices – words like “drink”, “punch”, and “cocktail” are not real juice.
- Serve broth based vegetable soups and ensure there is at least ½ cup of vegetable in a serving.

## Serve more whole grain products such as:

- Whole wheat, rye or multi-grain bread and rolls
- Soft whole wheat tortillas
- Whole wheat bagels
- Hot and cold cereals with whole grains
- Brown rice, whole wheat couscous and bulgur
- Muffins and pancakes made with whole wheat flour
- Limit high fat grain product such as croissants, danishes, and donuts.

## Cook Meat Right

- Serve more meat, fish and poultry prepared using a low-fat cooking method
- Try steaming, broiling, roasting, baking and barbecuing more often

## Go Meatless

Many consumers are choosing to go meatless or trying to incorporate more legumes into their diets. This is a great opportunity to try out some new recipes. Canada's new Food Guide suggests using more beans, peas and lentils in your menu. Look for great recipes from around the world – delicious curry dishes, tasty Mexican fare or why not try a Caribbean side dish?

## Milk Madness

Offer your customers a chance to get the calcium they need without the fat. Try offering 2%, 1% or skim milk for a beverage and for their coffee and tea. Chocolate milk is another alternative to the higher fat milkshake. With increases in lactose intolerance some individuals are reaching for lactose free milk or fortified soy beverages.



## Don't Forget Dessert

Fresh, canned or frozen fruit make tasty desserts. Other good options include milk puddings, sherbet, sorbet, angel food cake and low-fat frozen yogurt.

## On-the-Side

Offer your customer the chance to ask for gravy, sauce, butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise and salad dressing on-the-side or not at all. Provide the chance for customers to ask for a substitute for French fries – choose things such as baked potato, rice, vegetable or salad.

## Switch the Oil

Many of the oils commonly used for cooking are partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVO's). Though highly stable at high temperatures they contain what is known as trans fatty acids. Trans fats that are produced by hydrogenation lead to an increase in the risk for heart disease. Consider switching to a non-hydrogenated vegetable oil. As well, read the labels on pre-packaged products such as cookies and crackers which may also contain partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.

## Portion Size

Offer a menu for “small appetites” or half-size portions for regular items.

## Nutrition Information

Consumers want to know what they are eating – that includes the ingredients and the nutrient breakdown. The key things consumers need to know is about saturated and trans fat content, sodium and many want to know calories. Find a way to get that information to the consumer. Perhaps it could be posted somewhere in the restaurant or a handout could be made available. Ensure the serving staff know where to find that information.

## Voluntary Nutrition Labeling

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association recognizes that restaurant consumers have a growing interest in obtaining nutrition information about food and beverages served in restaurants. It also recognizes that there is a need to standardize the manner in which this information is provided so that consumers know how to find it on a consistent basis. As a result, it has developed voluntary guidelines for providing nutrition information to consumers.

### ***These guidelines are as follows:***

- Nutrient values will be provided for core/standard menu items and be as consistent as possible with the core nutrition label information required for packaged goods and will include calories, fat, (saturated, trans fat), cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates (fibre, sugar), protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium.
- This information is made available to restaurant consumers through in-store brochures or pamphlets and on websites. The availability of the nutrition brochure will be prominently displayed on menus, menu boards, and such vehicles as take-out and home delivery packaging.
- Chain restaurants are encouraged to use the same pamphlets or brochures to provide allergen information for standard/core menu items. These include the top 10 allergens: peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, soy, wheat and other gluten, sesame seeds and sulphite.

### ***Check out their website to find out more:***

<http://www.cdfa.ca/news/bytopic/nutritionandfitness/voluntaryguidelines.asp>

# Stepping up the Kids Menu

Cheeseburgers, chicken fingers, pizza and mac “n” cheese – these are the staples on most kids menus at restaurants. Not to mention the French fries! Consequently, many kids menus offer little variety and plenty of calories, fat and sodium. Given that 26% of children aged 2 to 17 (CCHS 2.2, 2004) are considered overweight or obese it’s surprising that healthy menu options offered to adults have not made their way to the kids menu. Being overweight increases a child’s risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure both of which were commonly considered adult diseases.

## You can start to make that change!

Many families are feeling the time crunch. Putting a homemade meal on the table is a challenge for many families with soccer practice and swimming lessons to get to. Take-out and restaurant meals are taking on a more significant role in household meal plans. Many kid’s menu items contain more saturated fat, sodium and calories than children need.

### Healthier Alternatives for Kids

- Pasta served with tomato sauce  
*(with whole grain pasta is even better!)*
- Plain burgers
- Grilled chicken or other meat
- Steamed fish
- Choose whole grain bread and real cheese for grilled cheese sandwiches
- Soup – turkey and vegetable, tomato etc..  
*(Kids love soup!)*
- Quesadillas

### New Side Dish Options

- Serve raw vegetables and dip
- Have mashed potatoes or rice as a side dish option
- Cooked vegetables as a substitute for fries  
*(carrots and corn are kid pleasers!)*
- Kids eat salad too *(why not offer some on the side?)*
- A small side dish of fruit with a meal

### Drink Up!

Skip the pop and sugary iced tea – offer milk, 100% fruit juices and water

*(You can make it fun - Once, we had a server bring my daughter her chocolate milk in a martini glass and she was very excited to get her calcium intake that day!)*



## **What's for Dessert?**

- Try serving canned fruit or cocktails
- Fruit flavoured frozen yogurt
- Fruit crumbles
- Fruit smoothie shakes – made with milk, yogurt and frozen fruit

## **It's all in a name**

Try jazzing up the name of your menu items to make the healthy choice exciting for kids. This could be, for example, Intergalactic Yogurt Blast or Super Sonic Spaghetti.



# Food Allergies – Take It Seriously!

Food allergies are on the rise in North America. People with food allergies must avoid allergenic foods completely, because even one bite can lead to a serious and potentially deadly reaction. This is why it is important that restaurateurs educate their staff about food allergies.

## Serving Customers with Food Allergies

### 1. Take a customer seriously

Listen carefully and ask questions to get clarification. Tell the chef about the food allergy and report back to the customer about how you can meet their needs.

### 2. Prepare Staff on Menu Ingredients

Servers should be able to describe a menu item and its ingredients upon request. If the server does not know the answer, encourage them to admit it. Staff should know where to find the information and even can show a customer a food label to help assess the situation themselves. Ideally, there would be a designated person on staff during every shift that is prepared to answer questions on ingredients.

### 3. Check for allergens every time

Often recipes and food products change. Ensure that the server and/or the chef checks the labels. Beware of allergens hiding in foods like sauces, soups, dressings and oils.

### 4. List the most allergenic foods on your menu

To avoid a customer receiving an allergen in their meal print the most common allergy ingredients on the menu. Mention on your menu or menu board that customers should let their server know if they have an allergy.

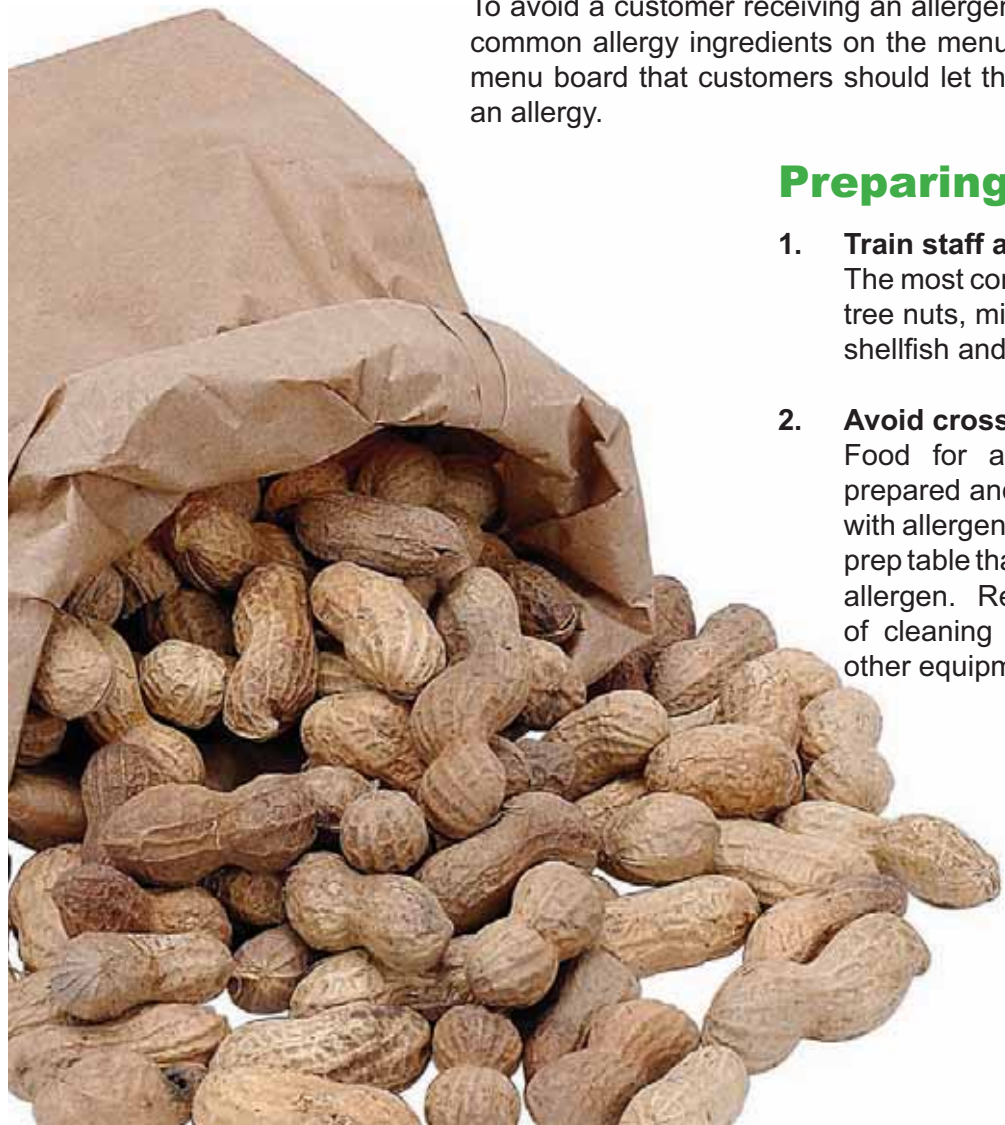
## Preparing Food

### 1. Train staff about potential allergens

The most common allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, milk products, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish and eggs.

### 2. Avoid cross-contamination

Food for allergy sufferers should be prepared and served without any contact with allergens. Train kitchen staff to use a prep table that has not been exposed to an allergen. Re-emphasize the importance of cleaning and sanitizing utensils and other equipment.



**3. Do not include common allergens as a “mystery ingredient”**

Adding peanut butter for instance to thicken a soup or stew could lead to a customer going into anaphylactic shock.

**4. Be aware that a miniscule amount of a food can set off a severe allergic reaction.**

For example, if a customer says they are allergic to walnuts the chef cannot simply scrape the nuts off the top of a piece of cake.

## Emergency Procedures

People with a food allergy experience a reaction within seconds or hours. This reaction is a response of the immune system overreacting to a food substance in the body. Chemicals are released in the body that cause affected skin areas to become red, itchy and swollen, blood vessels to widen and internal muscles to contract.

**Restaurant Staff should know how to spot a reaction.**

***Symptoms may include:***

- Itching in and around the mouth
- A tightening of the throat or airway
- Shortness of breath
- Appearance of hives
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of consciousness

**Save a Life – If you spot this happening don’t ignore it!**

- Call 911 – if you see a customer in distress
- Instruct staff to be sure to inform a manager of any such situation
- Stay with the customer until help arrives

## Special Diets

Some of your customers may have specific dietary concerns due to a chronic health issue or a food sensitivity. Examples of more common special dietary requests you might receive are listed below. To find out more please contact your local Health Unit Dietitian.

### Gluten-free (celiac) diet

- Cannot digest the proteins in wheat, rye, oats and barley
- Avoid regular bread products & flour, bran, cakes, pasta, many cereals
- Instead, use products made from corn, potato, rice, flax, arrowroot, lentils & beans

### Diabetes

- Must control portion size, especially of carbohydrates (“starchy” or “sweet” foods)
- Often will request sugar-free pop, artificial sweeteners, unsweetened fruit
- May also be watching fat and salt intake

### Low Sodium

- Avoid table salt
- Use spices to flavour food instead (e.g. “Mrs. Dash”)
- Avoid salty foods like pickles, potato chips, sauerkraut

### Heart Healthy – Low Cholesterol

- Low in fat, especially saturated fat
- Lean, trim meats, lower % MF. dairy, more vegetables
- Minimum added fat in cooking, and limit fried foods

### Vegetarian

- “Vegans” - very strict eat no animal products
- Looking for meat alternatives on the menu (e.g. black beans in salad)
- Others will eat some dairy, eggs, or even fish & poultry

### References

[www.restaurant.org](http://www.restaurant.org)

[www.foodallergy.rutgers.edu/](http://www.foodallergy.rutgers.edu/)

[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) – *Training Manual for restaurant staff on food allergies*





# Keeping Your Food Safe

## What Your Health Inspector is Looking For

### Food Storage

- Are thermometers provided in all refrigerators and coolers?
- Are raw foods stored below cooked and ready-to-eat foods in refrigerators and coolers?
- Is food stored at least 15 cm (6") off the floor?
- Are storage areas clean and well-maintained?
- Are chemicals stored separately from food? Are chemicals labeled?

### Foodhandlers

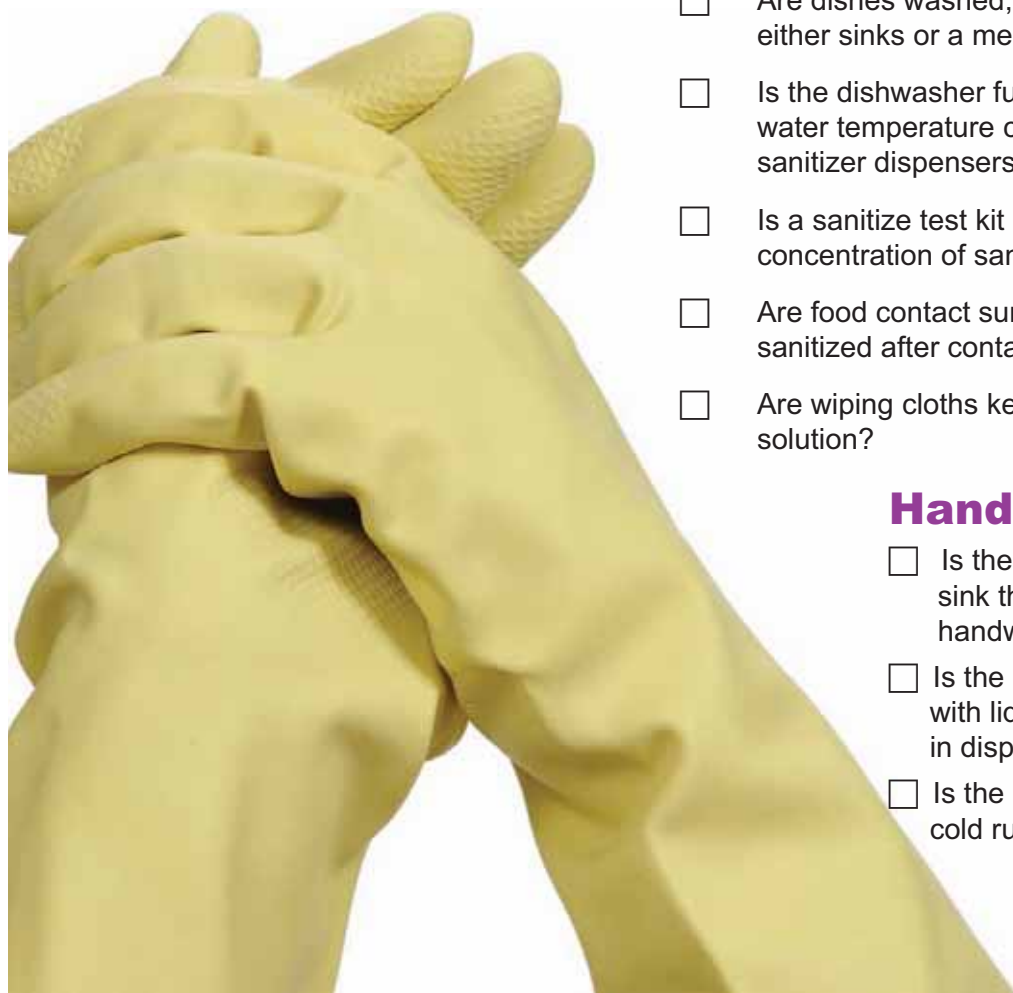
- Are all those working in the kitchen clean and wearing clean clothing and/or uniforms?
- Do all those working in the kitchen have their hair suitably confined – tied back, wearing a hair net or hat or very short hair?
- Do those working in the kitchen wash their hands frequently – after every possible contamination, such as handling raw meat, handling garbage, taking out the trash, clearing tables and handling dirty dishes, after using the washroom, after taking a break, after coughing, sneezing or blowing the nose?

### Dishwashing

- Are dishes washed, rinsed and sanitized in either sinks or a mechanical dishwasher?
- Is the dishwasher functioning properly? Is the water temperature correct? Are the soap and sanitizer dispensers working?
- Is a sanitize test kit provided for measuring the concentration of sanitizer?
- Are food contact surfaces washed, rinsed and sanitized after contact with food?
- Are wiping cloths kept in a bucket of sanitizing solution?

### Handwashing

- Is there a separate handwashing sink that is used ONLY for handwashing?
- Is the sink adequately supplied with liquid soap and paper towels in dispensers?
- Is the sink provided with hot and cold running water?



## Overall Maintenance

- Are floors, walls and ceilings, in food preparation and storage areas, including walk-in coolers and freezers, being kept clean and sanitary?
- Is there a cleaning/maintenance program in place?
- Is there evidence of a pest (rodent or insect) problem?
- Are staff and customer washrooms cleaned when necessary and adequately supplied?
- Is garbage taken out as often as it should be?

## Food Safety

- Are refrigerated food being kept cold enough– 4°C (40°F) or colder?
- Are foods that are being hot-held being kept hot enough – 60°C (40°F) or hotter?
- Are hazardous foods being cooked to high enough final cook temperatures?
- Is a probe thermometer available for use?
- Are foods protected from contamination? Are foods covered?

## Food Safety Tips

- Cook to proper temperatures. Cooking times vary for meats, poultry and fish.
- Use a clean instant-read probe thermometer that measures the internal temperature of cooked foods to make sure they are cooked to high enough temperatures.
- Thoroughly wash fresh produce under running water to remove dirt and residue. Scrub fruits and vegetables that have firm surfaces such as oranges, melons, potatoes and carrots.
- Always keep perishable foods in the fridge until you are ready to use them.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave if you will be cooking it immediately.
- When using raw meat, remember to wash your hands immediately after handling it and keep the meat and any utensils or surfaces it touches separate from other foods

### FINAL INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURES

(USING A PROBE THERMOMETER)

Temperatures must be maintained for at least 15 seconds

FOOD PRODUCT	CELCIUS	FAHRENHEIT
<b>Poultry</b>		
Whole Poultry	82°	180°
Individual Pieces	74°	165°
<b>Mixtures</b>		
Containing poultry, egg, meat, fish or other hazardous food	74°	165°
<b>Beef &amp; Veal</b>		
Hamburger, deboned and rolled roasts	71°	160°
<b>Pork</b> All Products	71°	160°
<b>Lamb</b>		
Ground, deboned and rolled	71°	160°
<b>Fish</b> All Products	70°	158°
<b>Eggs</b>	63°	145°

## Helpful Websites

Canadian Food Inspection Agency – [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

Fight Bac! – [www.canfightbac.org](http://www.canfightbac.org)

In Good Hands – [www.ingoodhands.ca](http://www.ingoodhands.ca)

Safe Foodhandling Fact Sheets:

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Safe\\_Food\\_Handling\\_Fact\\_Sheets/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Safe_Food_Handling_Fact_Sheets/index.asp)

[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pub\\_menus/pub\\_foodsafe.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/pub_menus/pub_foodsafe.html)

Ontario Food Premises Regulation – [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900562\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900562_e.htm)

Information on Food Recalls – [www.healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca)

## Finding More Information

When it comes to healthy eating, there's so much information available to you. The websites below are current and credible sources to link to.

### The Thunder Bay District Health Unit

Find out more on a variety of health topics or speak to a Public Health Dietitian at 625-8813.  
[www.tbdhu.com](http://www.tbdhu.com)

### Eat Right Ontario

Provides information on popular nutrition topics and access to a Dietitian.  
[www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)

### Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide

Order your own copies of Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide and the booklet for educators and communicators. Access the new interactive component of the food guide called "My Food Guide" which allows users to create a personalized copy of the food guide.  
[www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide)

### Food and Allergy Network

An American site that contains many educational resources and up-to-date information on food labels and product alerts.  
[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

### Health Canada

Access a variety of information on healthy eating.  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition)

### Heart and Stroke Foundation

This fantastic resource will help lead you towards better health. Check out the site for great recipes, tips on improving your heart health and explanations for common heart related diseases.  
[www.hsf.ca](http://www.hsf.ca)

### Dietitians of Canada

The Dietitians of Canada website provides answers to your nutrition questions and allows you to reach a local Dietitian. DC has great resources under the Eat Well, Live Well section. Try out the EATracker, Meal Planner, Virtual Kitchen and Grocery Store to help you make healthy eating decisions.  
[www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

### Statistics Canada

Canadian Community Health Survey Nutrition 2.2  
[www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=82-620-MIE#formatdisp](http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=82-620-MIE#formatdisp)

### Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association

[www.crfa.ca](http://www.crfa.ca)

### Specific Nutrition Information Program

[www.crfa.ca/news/bytopic/nutritionandfitness/nutritioninformationprogram.asp](http://www.crfa.ca/news/bytopic/nutritionandfitness/nutritioninformationprogram.asp)



