

Dining Detox

Pile on the flavor (without piling on all the junk!) with better-for-you condiment swaps.

By Karina Timmel

You can count calories, buy organic produce and look at your food ingredients as much as you want, and then ruin all of your hard work by choosing condiments packed with unhealthy sugars, oils and sodium. Keep your healthy ways on track with these top-notch condiment ops.

Ketchup

The big offender in your staple condiment: high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a highly processed sugar. Consider "choosing an organic ketchup like Annie's Naturals organic ketchup, which will ensure that the product is HFCS- and pesticide-free," says Carolyn Ballard, registered dietitian and owner of CB Health Counseling.

Soy sauce

Since soy is one of the most genetically modified crops in our country, limit your consumption of it whenever possible. Bypass your Asian go-to sauce for similar-tasting alternatives, like liquid or coconut aminos. "Liquid aminos are made from GMO-free soybeans, while coconut aminos are made from coconut, making them an ideal choice to limit soy intake," Ballard explains.

Barbecue sauce

Not all barbecue sauces are created equal—many are loaded with artificial fixings. "Check to make sure your barbecue sauce has a label you can understand with ingredients like tomatoes, vinegar, molasses, peppers and garlic, for example," advises Marisa Moore, registered dietitian nutritionist and Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics spokesperson. One to try: Wegmans Memphis-style BBQ sauce.

Salad dressing

Hate to break it to you, but there are very few store brands that are free of added sugars, chemicals, additives and cheap oils, such as canola and vegetable oils (versus more nutrient-dense olive oil). Crafting your own is a no-brainer! "Make a 30-second dressing at home with olive oil, balsamic vinegar and Dijon mustard," Ballard recommends.

Mayo

Don't be as concerned with the fat and calories on the label, as with the quality of the product. "The best picks contain olive oil or organic canola oil. Lemonaise and Vegenaïse are also good choices, but may not provide the same creamy taste you're used to," Ballard says.

Salsa

It's a great way to get your veggies in! For one of the healthiest condiments, choose salsa from the refrigerated section in the grocery store, such as Whole Foods 365 cantina-style salsa. These will be less likely to contain preservatives and added sodium, Ballard suggests.

Mustard

Whether you choose classic yellow, spicy or Dijon, mustard is a flavorful, low-calorie and preservative-free condiment. "But be wary of honey mustard, which can contain HFCS," Ballard warns. Moore adds, "Sodium can be very high, so check the label and select the lowest in the category if this is a concern."

Hot sauce

Your full-of-flavor favorites are also full of sodium. Ballard says the Cholula brand seems to be one of the lowest, though still high at 85 milligrams of sodium per teaspoon. As much as possible, she suggests seasoning with dried spices such as red pepper flakes or cayenne pepper instead to add sodium-free heat to your dish.

Relish

Though dill relish seems fairly innocent, the ingredients tell us otherwise. Nearly every brand on the shelf contains preservatives and artificial flavors and colors, so your best bet is to choose an organic variety, such as Sweet Creek Foods organic dill pickle relish. Also, steer clear of sweet relish. "Dill-pickle relish doesn't have as much sugar," says Jessica Harlan, author of *Homemade Condiments: Artisan Recipes Using Fresh, Natural Ingredients*.

Sources: Carolyn Ballard, registered dietitian and owner of CB Health Counseling; Jessica Harlan, author of *Homemade Condiments: Artisan Recipes Using Fresh, Natural Ingredients*; Marisa Moore, registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson, Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics

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