



# Italian restaurant guide

## Adapting your menu



# Eat Out Eat Well

## Italian restaurant guide

The aim of the Eat Out Eat Well award is to increase accessibility to tasty food prepared in a healthier way using good food hygiene practices and served in a healthier environment. Healthy catering is not about removing lots of existing dishes from the menu and replacing them all with healthier alternatives. Although you may decide to introduce some totally new dishes and/or increase the range of healthier options, the main emphasis is on making small changes to existing dishes. This may mean changing some of the ingredients used, the proportions of ingredients or how the food is prepared / cooked. Healthy catering is also about

promoting healthier options so customers are more aware of the choices available to them.

This information sheet is designed to provide specific advice tailored to restaurants and takeaways serving Italian cuisine. It should be used alongside the Eat Out Eat Well Award booklet 'A Guide for Caterers', which is a detailed guide including information on how to qualify for and achieve the Eat Out Eat Well award.

# Guidelines

## Fruit and vegetables

A balanced diet should contain lots of fruit and vegetables so have plenty of options available for pizza toppings and include a variety in pasta sauces. There are a range of different fruits and vegetables that can be used as pizza toppings, or within pasta sauces e.g. tomato chunks - cherry tomatoes, onion, spring onion, peppers, mushrooms, sweetcorn, olives, courgette, broccoli, aubergine, spinach, artichoke, fennel, pineapple, jalapeno peppers.

Adjust the proportions of ingredients in pasta sauces and pizza toppings to have extra vegetables and fruit and less meat.

Oven bake/roast, steam or stir-fry vegetables in a minimal amount of unsaturated oil (e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

Try including beans and pulses in the menu (e.g. cannellini bean and tuna salad, lentil pasta sauce, or add lentils to bolognese sauce).

If using canned vegetables (including pulses), choose those that are canned without added sugar and salt. Use canned fruit in pure 100% fruit juice, not syrup.

Have vegetable side dishes available (e.g. French beans, spinach (served without cream), roasted vegetables (using a little unsaturated vegetable oil e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

## Salads/insalata

Offer salad starters, side dishes and main dishes, including a variety of different salad items and vegetables (e.g. rocket, cucumber, spinach, cherry tomatoes, grated carrot, green

beans, cannellini beans, sweetcorn etc.)

Some salads, such as Caesar salad are traditionally prepared with high fat dressings. Offer salads without added dressing. Low\* fat dressings (e.g. those based on vinegar, lemon juice or lime juice) can be offered separately. If mayonnaise and French dressing are offered, offer reduced\*\* fat versions.

If potato salad or coleslaw is offered, prepare these using a reduced fat\*\* mayonnaise.

If shaved parmesan and croutons are served with salads offer these separately. Bake croutons with an unsaturated oil such as olive oil, not butter.

## Bread, pasta, rice and potatoes

Meals should be based around starchy foods such as bread, pasta and potatoes.

### Bread

Offer a range of breads, including ciabatta and focaccia, without added butter/oil.

Offer an option of wholemeal/granary/seeded breads.

Where olive oil is used, offer this separately (e.g. separate olive oil and balsamic vinegar dips).

### Pizza base

Offer an option of deep pan, thick pizza bases. Try offering a pizza base with half white and half wholemeal flour.

### Pasta

Do not add salt to the cooking water. Salt does have a small effect on the flavour of pasta, but

has no effect on how quickly it cooks. There is no need to add salt as the pasta will be combined with a flavoursome sauce.

Offer a choice of plain pasta which is not cooked or tossed in fat/oil. Rinse cooked pasta in hot water to prevent it from sticking together rather than adding oil. If oil must be added to cooked pasta, use a minimal amount of unsaturated oil e.g. olive oil

Offer some whole-wheat pasta dishes (or mixed half white, half whole-wheat pasta). Try making lasagne with some whole-wheat pasta sheets. If available try higher fibre white pasta which has added oat fibre and is designed to be more like white pasta in flavour and texture.

Offer pasta dishes with tomato based sauces (these are lower in fat than creamy/cheesy sauces) and pasta served with less sauce.

Do not add grated parmesan to pasta dishes, allow customers to add their own, or offer to add it at the table.

## Rice

When preparing risotto use a minimal amount of unsaturated oil, e.g. olive oil to toast the rice rather than butter.

Readymade (bought) stock/broth can be high in salt, look for those that meet the salt targets for salt content (see the 'Eat Out Eat Well Caterers Guide') or try to make homemade broth without added salt.

Do not add parmesan when cooking risotto, allow customers to add their own, or offer to add it at the table.

Include some vegetables in the risotto recipe, e.g. spinach, pumpkin, mushroom.

## Potatoes

If potato dishes are served, steam or boil the potatoes in a minimal amount of unsalted

water, rather than fry.

If potato Gnocchi are served, steam or boil in unsalted water. Serve with a tomato sauce, rather than butter or creamy sauce.

If roasting potatoes (e.g. rosemary potatoes), use large chunks of potato and roast with a little unsaturated oil (e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil)

If chips are served use oven chips or choose thick cut chips or potatoes wedges instead of thin cut chips – they absorb less oil when cooking.

If frying potatoes, pre-blanch in steamers beforehand as this reduces the amount of oil absorbed when frying. Ensure frying temperatures are correct, (look at the recipe/packet or fryer instructions), as this will also reduce the amount of oil absorbed. Use suitable unsaturated oils such as rapeseed, corn or sunflower oils, olive oil is not suitable for deep fat frying. Drain the oil off the chips and do not pre-salt. Customers may wish to add their own salt, and salt may be made available, but don't provide salt on customer tables.

Readymade (bought) 'seasoned' or 'Cajun' fries/wedges may contain added salt. Offer a plain alternative, or season freshly prepared potatoes in-house with spices such as paprika and black pepper.

## Milk and dairy foods

Cream and butter are high in saturated fat. Replace butter in cooking with unsaturated oils e.g. olive oil.

Replace cream in dishes with lower fat milks (e.g. semi skimmed/1% milk, skimmed milk), low fat\* yoghurt and low fat \* fromage frais.

## Cheese

Allow customers to add cheese on top of pasta sauce/ risotto, don't add automatically.

Offer alternatives to creamy/cheesy pasta sauces and fillings on the menu such as tomato and vegetable based sauces.

Use reduced\*\* fat cheese (e.g. reduced\*\* fat mozzarella, reduced\*\* fat cheddar) where possible, or use less of a stronger flavoured cheese.

Reduce the amount of cheese added on top of pizzas, avoid cheese stuffed crusts.

Offer a pizza option without cheese.

## Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Offer a range of vegetarian starters and main dishes, such as vegetable pizza and pasta dishes.

Make sure that there are some vegetarian dishes that are not cheese-based. Try including an alternative protein source, such as beans and pulses or nuts (e.g. lentils, pine nuts).

If using eggs, make these without the use of cream or butter (e.g. oven-baking eggs on pizza topping). If scrambled egg or omelettes are made with milk, use lower fat milks (e.g. semi skimmed milk/1% milk or skimmed milk). Make in a non-stick pan brushed with a minimal amount of unsaturated oil (e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

Include a variety of white fish (e.g. halibut, seabass, monkfish, cod, and tinned tuna), oily fish (e.g. salmon, sardines, fresh tuna, and swordfish) and shellfish (e.g. prawns, mussels, and calamari) in your menu. Steam, poach, grill, oven bake or stir-fry in minimal amount of

unsaturated oil (e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

Use fish on pizza toppings and include in pasta sauce, as well as offering fish main courses.

Some processed fish can be high in salt (e.g. tinned tuna in brine, anchovies). Where possible, buy a non-salted version (e.g. tinned tuna in spring water), reduce the amount of anchovies on top of pizza.

Use lean meat where possible and cut visible fat off meat, such as lamb, beef and veal.

Use lean/lower fat mince for bolognaise dishes and skim fat off the top when cooking.

If meatballs are made in-house, use lean/lower fat mince. If readymade (bought) meatballs are used, try to buy lower fat versions.

Smoked and cured meats (e.g. pancetta, prosciutto, salami, and pepperoni) are generally high in salt. Reduce the amount of these meats used in pasta sauce and on pizza. Check the salt content with your suppliers and buy those versions lower in salt. Look for those that meet the salt targets for salt content (see the 'Eat Out Eat Well Caterers Guide').

If smoked and cured meats are served as a starter, offer less meat and serve with bread, salad or fruit (e.g. melon and parma ham).

Readymade (bought) processed meats and poultry (e.g. spicy beef/spicy pork and Cajun chicken for pizza toppings) can contain high levels of fat and salt. Where possible, replace with lower fat/salt alternatives or add spices and seasoning in-house to fresh lean meat/poultry (without using salt).

Oven bake, grill or stir-fry meat and poultry in a minimal amount of unsaturated oil (e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

Use a roasting rack when roasting/oven baking meat and poultry, to drain off excess fat.

Where possible, remove the skin from poultry, such as chicken.

Skim off fat/oil floating on the top of pasta sauces and meat soups. This rises to the surface of the dish when left to stand.

## Appetisers/starters/soups

Include healthier options on the menu such as:

- Non creamy soups e.g. Minestrone
- Bruschetta
- Ciabatta
- Breadsticks (grissini)
- Grilled sardines
- Olives, sun dried tomatoes
- Grilled/oven baked chicken pieces
- Salads e.g. tomato, mozzarella & basil, rocket salad (low fat\*/ reduced\*\* fat dressings served separately)
- Steamed/grilled mussels or prawns
- Roasted peppers, Pimento peppers

Reduce the choice of less healthy options on the menu such as:

- Dry cure and smoked meats/sausage - pancetta, prosciutto, salami, pepperoni, carpaccio
- Garlic bread (including cheese topped)
- Mushrooms/prawns in garlic butter
- Deep fried calamari/whitebait/mushrooms/prawns
- Deep fried cheese
- Deep fried chicken pieces/wings
- Deep fried potato skins
- Salads with creamy dressings (e.g. Caesar salad)

## Main courses

Include healthier options on the menu such as:

- Sauces based on tomato e.g. Neapolitan, Arrabbiata, Marinara, Al Pomodoro, Fra Diavolo

- Chicken/Fish Cacciatore
- Vegetable based sauces e.g. Primavera made with olive oil
- Bolognese sauce made with lean mince and the fat skimmed off
- Risotto without butter and cheese added (use olive oil and broth)
- Potato gnocchi with tomato sauce
- Steamed/boiled/grilled/oven baked fish/shellfish
- Salads with low fat\* / reduced\*\* fat dressings served separately
- Pizza with deep pan, thick base and lower fat toppings (e.g. vegetables/fruit, tuna, prawns, chicken, ham, reduced fat cheese)
- Al Calzone (pizza parcel), baked with tomato, vegetables, ham and reduced fat\*\* cheese

Reduce the choice of less healthy options on the menu such as:

- Sauces containing cream and/or cheese e.g. Carbonara, Alfredo, Marsala with cream, Spinach with cream/cheese
- Dishes made with creamy/cheese sauce e.g. Lasagne, Cannelloni with cheese sauce
- Sauces with salty meat e.g. Pancetta sauce
- Buttery sauces e.g. Piccata
- Pizza with cheese stuffed base and high fat/salt toppings (e.g. cured meats/pepperoni, processed meats, 'meat feast', extra cheese, anchovies)
- Risotto with butter & cheese added
- Potato gnocchi with cream/cheese sauce
- Al Calzone (pizza parcel) filled with lots of cheese, cured meats/sausage, deep fried
- Fried fish and shellfish
- Salads with creamy, high fat dressings (e.g. Caesar salad)

## Reducing fat

Offer meat, poultry and fish dishes that are oven baked, grilled, steamed, poached or stir-fried in minimal amount of unsaturated oil e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil.

Readymade (bought) processed meats and

poultry (e.g. spicy beef/spicy pork and Cajun chicken for pizza toppings) can contain high levels of fat and salt. Where possible, replace with lower fat/salt alternatives or add spices and seasoning in-house to fresh lean meat/poultry (without using salt). Limit the use of processed meats such as pepperoni and salami etc.

Replace butter with olive oil or other unsaturated oils (e.g. rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil).

Unsaturated oils are a healthier choice than saturated fats, but, all fats and oils are high in calories, so also reduce the quantity of oil used.

Serve plain pasta without butter/oil.

Do not double/re-fry food as it increases fat absorption further.

Battered and deep fried dishes contain lots of fat. Offer a limited number of these dishes and use unsaturated oil that is suitable for deep frying (e.g. rapeseed oil, corn oil, and sunflower oil). Use optimum frying temperatures (look at the recipe/package or fryer instructions), if a reduced temperature is used this can lead to increased fat absorption.

Creamy and cheesy sauces/fillings are high in fat. Use lower fat milk (e.g. semi skimmed/1% milk, skimmed milk) to make milk based sauces (e.g. Béchamel sauce). Use reduced fat\*\* cheeses.

Use béchamel sauce instead of cheese sauce where dishes are finished with cheese (e.g. lasagne). Try reducing the amount of béchamel sauce and increasing the tomato sauce.

## Reducing salt

Reduce the amount of salt added to foods. Do not add salt to sauces, vegetables, risotto,

potatoes or chips, pizza bases or toppings.

Check any procured (bought) pizza dough/sauce for added salt and choose those lower in salt. Look for those sauces that meet the salt targets for salt content (see the 'Eat Out Eat Well Caterers Guide').

Use other ways to enhance the flavour of the food, such as garlic, herbs, spices, black pepper and lemon, instead of salt.

Try reducing the salt content of dishes gradually over time, this will allow for taste adaptation in customers used to higher levels of salt and sugar in their food.

## Sauces, stocks and dips

Some sauces contain high levels of fat, salt and/or sugar. Ready-made (bought) sauces and dips can have particularly high levels. Look for those that meet the salt targets for salt content (see the 'Eat Out Eat Well A Guide for Caterers'). Stocks should contain no more than 0.6g salt per 100mls (when made up with water).

Try to make stocks, sauces and dips in-house and reduce the amount of oil, salt and sugar added.

Offer a range of tomato based sauces. Where a dish is currently being served with a cheese sauce, offer tomato sauce as an alternative (e.g. cannelloni baked in tomato sauce rather than cheese sauce).

Where 'creamy' sauces are made, replace some of the cream with lower fat milk (e.g. semi skimmed/ 1% milk, skimmed milk) or use low fat\* yoghurt or low fat\* fromage frais. Also, consider reducing the amount of sauce added to the serving of pasta.

Where cheese sauces are made, use a reduced fat\*\* cheese or use a mature, stronger

flavour cheese as less of this will be needed. Also, consider reducing the amount of cheese sauce added to the serving of pasta.

If a dish contains both cheesy and tomato sauces (e.g. lasagne), try to reduce the amount of cheesy sauce and increase the tomato sauce.

When serving sauces with meat, fish or poultry dishes (e.g. steak with cream & pepper sauce), serve the sauce in a separate dish so customers can add as little or as much as they like.

Readymade (bought) dips/sauces e.g. barbecue (BBQ), sour cream, sweet chilli, ketchup, salsa can be high in fat, salt and sugar. If these are served do not provide these automatically, only provide them if requested by the customer and offer healthier alternatives such as tomato salsa and reduced fat\*\* versions e.g. reduced fat\*\* mayonnaise.

## Desserts

Include healthier options on the menu such as:

- Fresh fruit
- Fresh Fruit salad (made with 100% pure unsweetened fruit juice)
- Fruit kebabs
- Sorbet (reduce the sugar added to sweeten this)
- Low fat yoghurt with added fruit

Reduce the choice of less healthy options on the menu such as:

- Tiramisu
- Zabaglione
- Profiteroles
- Crème caramel
- Cheesecake
- Gelato/Ice-cream
- Deep fried desserts e.g. doughnuts

## Reducing fat and sugar

Desserts and puddings are often high in sugar

and fat. Try to include fruit based desserts, such as fresh fruit salad (made with 100% pure fruit juice), that include a range of different fruits.

If using canned fruit use fruit canned in 100% pure unsweetened fruit juice, rather than syrup.

Try offering a fruit coulis (without added sugar) with ice-cream, rather than fruit flavour syrups.

Add fruit toppings to cheesecakes.

Offer fruit sorbet (reduce the sugar added to sweeten this/ choose those lower in added sugar/ reduced sugar\*\* varieties) as an alternative to ice cream. Try offering lower fat/ reduced fat \*\* ice cream.

Allow customers to order cream/ice-cream/ custard accompaniments separately and serve these in separate serving containers with the dessert so the customer can control how much they add.

Make custard with lower fat milk e.g. semi skimmed, 1% or skimmed milk.

Offer lower fat alternatives to cream such as low fat\*\* fromage frais and low fat\*\* crème fraiche.

The sugar content of many desserts can be halved without a detectable difference in sweetness, there are a few exceptions to this e.g. meringues, so try experimenting.

Offer traditional Italian desserts in a small serving size (at a reduced price) e.g. as a 'Mini dessert' on its own or served in combination with a hot drink.

Ensure a portion of fruit (fresh fruit or fruit salad/ tinned fruits made/canned with 100% pure unsweetened fruit juice) is cheaper than the other desserts.

## Drinks – cold/chilled

Provide tap water freely

Offer a range of low calorie (includes sugar free) and no added sugar soft drinks. Low calorie drinks are drinks containing not more than 20kcal (80kj) per 100mls. No added sugar drinks are drinks that have not had sugar added to them as an ingredient (includes pure 100% unsweetened fruit juice and smoothies in a 150mls serving size).

Offer pure 100% unsweetened fruit juice and smoothies in a 150ml serving size. Fruit juice and water mixes can also be included for example a 200ml serving size, with 150mls of 100% pure fruit juice and added water.

If sugar sweetened drinks are sold, (consider hot and cold drinks) the serving size should not exceed 330mls.

## Drinks – hot

Use semi skimmed milk/ 1% milk as standard for all hot drinks. Offer skimmed milk as a choice.

Do not pre- sweeten drinks

Provide low calorie sweeteners as an alternative to sugar.

Be aware that speciality coffees and hot chocolate drinks that are made with sugar and topped with cream can contain high levels of fat and sugar, If served, don't promote these options on the menu/ verbally when customers are ordering after dinner drinks. Offer herbal teas (e.g. mint tea).

## Children's meals and smaller portions

Have smaller portions available (at a reduced price) for children and people with a smaller appetite. This can help prevent people over-eating and food being wasted. Make sure there are smaller portions of the healthier options available.

If there is a dedicated children's menu, make sure it contains the healthier menu options, vegetables and fruit and only water, lower fat milks (e.g. semi skimmed milk, 1% fat, skimmed milk) and low calorie and no added sugar soft drinks.

Healthier options for children's menus could include:

- Roasted vegetables (roasted in a little unsaturated oil e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, sunflower oil)
- Pasta in fun/cartoon shapes with a tomato based sauce
- Mini pizzas with healthier toppings (e.g. tuna, sweetcorn & spring onion or ham, mushroom & pineapple).

If the children's menu includes desserts, offer healthier options, such as fruit salad made with 100% pure fruit juice, fruit kebabs and low fat\* yoghurt. If ice-cream is part of the children's menu, offer options with fruit (e.g. strawberries and ice-cream) rather than ice-cream with chocolate/fruit flavour syrups or sweets.

## Display, pricing and marketing

If you provide self-service counters include healthier options and make sure there are plenty of starchy foods available including higher fibre varieties (e.g. white and whole-wheat pasta, ciabatta and seeded bread), along with healthy salads (with low fat\* / reduced\*\* fat dressings served separately) and vegetable options. Promote the healthier options by having information cards next to the dish that state what it contains (e.g. 'Pasta Primavera – Penne pasta with peas, spinach, green beans, asparagus and a hint of garlic') See note.

Try promoting the healthier dishes as 'specials' or 'dish of the day', but do not increase the price as this may put customers off.

If 'Meal deals' are available, offer the healthier menu options for starters, mains and desserts. In each meal deal include a starchy food, vegetables and a portion of fruit\*\*\*. If including drinks, offer pure 100% fruit juice in a 150ml serving size, no added sugar or low calorie drinks or water.

Make sure staff are aware of the healthier options and promote them to customers.

Consider using some price promotions for the healthier options (e.g. offer a portion of mixed roasted vegetables half price with every order).

**Note:** If providing information about the food available, make sure any claims are correct and not misleading (e.g. be cautious about making claims such as 'low fat' if the dish has not been assessed for nutrient content as this claim is defined by law and must meet the criteria to be legal).

## Food allergies

A small number of people suffer from allergies to food. In the UK, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame seeds, milk, eggs, fish and shellfish are among the foods that can most commonly cause severe allergic reactions. For some people minute quantities of allergenic ingredients can have rapid and fatal effects.

Food businesses must comply with the European Union 'Food Information for Consumers Regulation' introduced in December 2014. All food businesses need to provide information about 14 named allergenic ingredients used in food sold or provided by them.

Please refer to the Eat Out Eat Well Award 'A Guide for Caterers' and <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide/allergen-resources> for further allergen information.

Definitions:

\*Low fat- where the total fat content is 3g or less per 100g of food product.

\*\*Reduced fat/sugar- the food product contains at least 30% less fat/sugar than the standard product.

\*\*\* A portion of fruit for adults is 80g fresh/ canned fruit and 30g of dried fruit



# Chinese restaurants

## Adapting your menu

