

## Chinese Food In Texas May Taste Good, But Is It Good For You?

A recent AP newswire story reported the consumer group, Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), has found that the typical Chinese restaurant menu is full of bad nutritional properties. For example, a plate of General Tsao's chicken is loaded with about 40 percent more sodium, and more than half the calories, of an average adult's daily needs. The battered, fried chicken dish with vegetables tallies out to 1,300 calories, 3,200 milligrams of sodium and 11 grams of saturated fat. That's before the rice, which is 200 calories a cup. And, if you order the egg rolls, you add on 200 calories and 400 milligrams of sodium. - Across the board, American restaurants need to cut back on calories and salt, and, in the meantime, people should think of each meal as not one, but two, and bring home half for tomorrow, said Center for Science in the Public Interest's nutrition director, Bonnie Liebman. According to government guidelines, the average adult only needs approximately 2,000 calories a day and 2,300 milligrams of salt, which equals one teaspoon. The National Restaurant Association reported that restaurants in Texas and throughout the country were already making efforts to offer customers healthier choices. In particular, Chinese restaurants typically offer plenty of options for customers looking to steer clear of fried foods and heavy sauces. But the CSPI's study reports that, in some ways, Italian and Mexican restaurants can be worse for your health, because their food is higher in saturated fat, which can increase the risk of heart disease. And while Chinese restaurant food can be bad for your waistline and blood pressure - sodium contributes to hypertension - it does offer vegetable-rich dishes and the kind of fat that's not bad for the heart. But Chinese cooked veggies aren't off the hook. A plate of stir-fried greens has 900 calories and 2,200 milligrams of sodium. And eggplant in garlic sauce has 1,000 calories and 2,000 milligrams of sodium. Unfortunately, if you think you're saving calories by just eating appetizers, think again. A plate of six steamed pork dumplings has 500 calories, and there's only a difference of ten calories per dumpling between steamed and pan-fried. The CSPI says there is no safe harbor from sodium on the Chinese restaurant menu, but it offers several tips for making a meal healthier: - Ask for dishes featuring vegetables, instead of meat or noodles. Ask for extra broccoli, snow peas or other veggies. - Steer clear of deep-fried meat, seafood or tofu. Order it stir-fried or braised. - Hold the sauce, and eat with a fork or chopsticks to leave more sauce behind. - Avoid salt, so stay away from the duck sauce, hot mustard, hoisin sauce and soy sauce. - Share your meal or ask for a doggie bag. - Order brown rice rather than white rice. Almost everyone likes Chinese food. But, like everything else in life, moderation is important. If you're a healthy, young individual who lives in Dallas, Houston or anywhere else in Texas and you love Chinese food, eating a lot of it may not seem like it will affect your health now, but it certainly could in the long run. And as you'll discover, what affects your health also will eventually affect your bank account.

### About the Author

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