

healthy soul food, your way

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Ages: Toddler, Preschooler, Gradschooler, Teen

Topics: Disease Management, Healthy Weight, Heart Health, Special Occasions, Dairy, Fats, Fruits, Grains, Proteins, Vegetables, Cooking Methods, Meal Planning, Preparation, Breakfast, Dessert, Dinner, Lunch, Snacks



Soul food is a traditional African American cuisine with roots in the Deep South. Typical dishes include fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, greens cooked with pork and many desserts. Traditional soul food can be high in calories, saturated fat, salt, and sugar, which can negatively impact health. But you can embrace the healthier roots of soul food—greens, sweet potatoes and beans—by following these tips to create healthier soul food, your way.



Rethink your plate

- Fill up on veggies first.
- Serve small portions of high calorie dishes like macaroni and cheese.
- Cherish your most decadent dishes. Save them for special occasions.

Make meaningful swaps

- Swap solid fats for heart-healthy canola, olive or peanut oils.
- Turn down the calories in macaroni and cheese with sharp, reduced-fat cheese and low-fat milk.
- Make Hoppin' John (black-eyed peas and rice) with brown rice.
- For potato salad, substitute half the mayonnaise with plain, nonfat Greek yogurt to slash the fat and maintain creaminess. Add a touch of mustard for extra flavor. Sneak in extra veggies with diced onion, celery and bell pepper.

Reinvent family favorites

- Skip the candied yam sugar rush. Bring out the natural sweetness of sweet potatoes by oven roasting with cinnamon, vanilla and a little maple syrup or brown sugar. Kids will love them.
- Create juicy, crispy "oven-fried" chicken by soaking it in buttermilk then coating with a blend of panko breadcrumbs, paprika, garlic powder and cayenne pepper before baking with a spritz of canola oil.
- Slow cook greens in vegetable broth with a drizzle of canola or peanut oil. Sweeten the pot with honey and apple cider vinegar. For the adults, add red pepper flakes or hot sauce. If collard or turnip greens are too bitter for your child's palate, try a cabbage which cooks up a bit sweeter. Serve with skinny, baked cornbread sticks for a fun and nutritious meal.
- Instead of fried okra, roast fresh whole okra until crunchy and dip into your favorite marinara sauce. Kids will enjoy dipping these.
- You don't have to give up peach cobbler. Bake peaches with honey and top with oats, toasted almonds and a dollop of vanilla Greek yogurt.

Try something new

- Use smoked paprika or a sprinkle of smoked salt for savory, smoked flavor instead of ham, bacon or salt pork.
- auté kale or chard greens in olive oil and garlic for a quick and satisfying side dish.
- Experiment with vinegars. Apple cider and rice vinegars work with a variety of greens.
- Try fresh herbs. Instead of smothered chicken, marinate chicken in fresh rosemary and lemon juice overnight. Bake or grill it for a flavorful main dish.
- Test new recipes with your immediate family before serving at big gatherings.

Remember: Soul food traditions are passed down from generation to generation. Create new traditions. With the starring role in your child's life, you can shape how they eat.

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