



A BETTER BRAAI

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As you know, the 24th of September is Heritage Day, otherwise known as National Braai Day. Braaiing is a wonderfully South African activity, but not necessarily always the best for our health and waistline. I have put together some tips to make your braai friendlier to your flab and healthy for your heart.

SNACKS

A braai inevitably takes longer than expected and we end up getting hungry and turning to whatever snacks we can get our hands on. Ditch the chips and dip by trying these healthier snack alternatives:

- Home-popped popcorn. A saucepan of popcorn only requires a drizzle of oil making it a low fat, high fibre snack. To avoid an unnecessary sodium overload why not swap salt for other exciting toppings such as parmesan, paprika, Cajun spice or even wasabi.
- Vegetable snack platter. Slice up raw veggies of your choice and serve with a hummus or cottage cheese dip for a delicious and nutritious treat. Tip: try to select veggies of different colours for visual appeal and a bigger variety of nutrients.

SEASONING

Although salt is usually the go-to seasoning for braai meat it is definitely not the only (or best) option. Here are the best spices to use with various braai items

- Beef: Basil, Bay Leaf, Black Pepper, Cayenne, Cumin, Curry Powder, Dry Mustard Powder, Garlic, Green Pepper, Lemongrass, Onion, Oregano, Rosemary, Sage, Thyme
- Fish: Bay Leaf, Cayenne, Curry Powder, Celery Seed, Chives, Dill, Fennel, Lemongrass, Lemon Zest, Marjoram, Mint, Dry Mustard Powder, Onion, Paprika, Parsley, Red Pepper, Saffron, Sage, Sesame Seed, Tarragon, Thyme, Turmeric
- Lamb: Basil, Cinnamon, Cumin, Curry Powder, Garlic, Marjoram, Mint, Onion, Oregano, Rosemary, Sage, Sesame Seed, Thyme
- Poultry: Basil, Bay Leaf, Cilantro, Cinnamon, Curry Powder, Garlic, Lemongrass, Mace, Marjoram, Mint, Onion, Paprika, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Saffron, Tarragon, Thyme
- Ostrich: Coriander, onion, pineapple, tomato, chilli
- Pork: All spice, Caraway, Celery Seed, Cloves, Coriander, Fennel, Ginger, Juniper Berries, Dry Mustard Powder, Paprika, Sage.
- Potatoes: black pepper, nutmeg, parsley, paprika.



BRAAI MEAT

Who doesn't love a juicy chop or piece of boerewors, however, the sad fact is that these braai favourites are usually loaded with saturated fat. Some better and equally tasty options include:

- Fish: wrap your favourite fillet of fish in foil with some lemon, onion and spices.
- Homemade chicken sosaties: made with skinless chicken breasts.
- Ostrich: a delicious, low fat, red meat alternative.
- You could also ask your butcher to prepare you sausage with your preferred lean cut of meat and spices.

SIDES

Salads and sides are usually considered to be healthy but often hide plenty of calories and fat. Here are some changes you can make to your usual braai sides.

- Potato salad: Why not mix your ordinary potato with sweet potato for a lower GI salad with a broader nutritional profile. Leave the potato skins on where possible. Switch your full-fat mayonnaise and cream for lite mayonnaise and low-fat yoghurt. Mustard, paprika and black pepper work very well as seasonings. Onion and eggs add interest without fat or sodium.
- Salad dressing: Most commercial salad dressings are high in fat and sodium, corrupting a nutritious tossed salad. Try making your own delicious dressing with Bulgarian yogurt, olive oil and mixed herbs- a little garlic won't hurt either.
- Braai broodjie: Switch to low GI bread such as FUTURELIFE® Smart Bread™ with tomato, onion and mozzarella or low-fat cheddar. Use only a thin scraping of margarine on the outside of the sandwich.
- Roast vegetables: Wrap your favourite vegetables in foil with a bit of olive oil and spice and put them on the fire for the most delicious, healthy, braai side.

DRINKS

Too many of the 'wrong' drinks have the ability to destroy even the best planned meal. They often contain loads of empty or hidden calories and far too much sugar. Try making your own fruit punch with pure fruit juice, sparkling water and fruit pieces.

Beware of alcohol, it is loaded with calories and has the tendency to impair judgement when it comes to your food choices. If you do consume alcohol, limit this to 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. One alcoholic drink is equivalent to:

- 1 can or bottle (330ml) of beer
- 120ml of wine
- 25 ml / 1 shot of spirits



Now that you know how to have a better braai, get that fire going and celebrate Heritage Day and National Braai Day!

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.spicesinc.com/p-510-what-spices-go-with-what-meat.aspx>