

# Restaurant Guide for Chefs: Strategies for Reducing Sodium in Filipino Food



Shake Off  
the Salt  
and Keep the  
Flavor





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# Shake Off the Salt



## Salt versus Sodium – Are they the same?

The terms salt and sodium are used interchangeably but they are not the same. Table salt is made up of two minerals, sodium plus chloride. Salt in processed or restaurant foods are the primary source of sodium in many of our diets. We need sodium for muscles and nerves to work properly but only a small amount is needed.



## Why should I care?

An increasing number of people are developing **high blood pressure** which can result in **heart disease** and **stroke**, and may be related to the amount of salt in the diet. Many consumers are aware of this fact and search for healthy options at their local restaurants. This can pose a challenge for Filipino restaurant visitors, who often have a large intake of high-salt foods. Many chefs with Filipino customers are interested in finding strategies to reduce the salt in some or all of their food items.

## Where does sodium in the diet come from?

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of sodium intake is not from the salt shaker – many people indicate they never use salt. Over 75% of the salt in our diet comes from packaged and restaurant foods, including canned items and sauces.

A single tablespoon of soy sauce has 1,000 mg, while a tablespoon of patis (fish sauce) has 1,300 mg of sodium. Together, these two items provide a whole day's worth of sodium.

1 tsp. salt =  
2,300 mg sodium



1 Tbsp. shoyu =  
1,000 mg sodium



1 Tbsp. patis =  
1,300 mg sodium



## Why Worry?

According to the 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 28.7% of Hawaii adults aged 18 and older have high blood pressure. Among Filipino adults, the prevalence of high blood pressure is 29.6%. Of Filipino adults with high blood pressure, 79.2% reported cutting down on salt to lower or control their high blood pressure. This means that your Filipino customers may be looking for low salt menu options.



## What Can I Do?

Eating less salt while dining out at restaurants can be difficult for many Americans. Some restaurant meals even go over the recommended 2,300 mg per day.

Since people are consuming more food outside of the home, you can help reduce the risk for their future health problems by decreasing the salt content in menu items.

*If you are concerned about increases in health care costs and the health of Hawaii's people, you can be a part of the solution!*



## Cultural Influences

Filipino food can be described as a mixture of many different cultures such as the vegetables from the Chinese, coconut and coconut milk from the Malaysians, and flavors from Spanish influence. The Filipino diet has distinct characteristics which can include many salty ingredients. Patis (fish sauce) and bagoong (fermented shrimp paste) are often used to achieve the salty Filipino flavor, along with shoyu, anchovies, and anchovy paste. The use of these ingredients can increase the content of salt in the diet.



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## How Much salt Is Too Much?

Experts recommend that people consume less than 2,300 mg sodium per day. This is equal to a teaspoon of table salt. People who are African American, have high blood pressure, kidney diseases, or are middle-aged and older should consume less than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.

# 9

Simple Ways to

Shake Off the Salt and Keep the Flavor



## #1

### Use More Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Fresh fruits and vegetables are naturally low in salt. Using a large amount of a variety of these items can help to decrease salt content. Also, fresher products taste better! This can attract more customers and therefore profit for your business.



What's the Difference?



1 ½ cups red tomatoes  
14 mg sodium



1 ½ cups canned, diced tomatoes  
660 mg sodium



"Sodium Free"

Less than 5 mg per serving

"Very Low Sodium"

35 mg or less per serving

"Low Sodium"

140 mg or less per serving

"Reduced Sodium"

Sodium is reduced by at least 25%  
\*May not be low in sodium\*

# #2

## Choose the Product with Less Sodium

Since the majority of the salt in our diet comes from processed and canned food items, comparing nutrition facts of all items is an important step to reduce sodium.

■ Look for labels such as "No Salt Added," "Sodium Free," or "Very Low Sodium."

■ Compare levels of sodium between brands to **select the product with less sodium.**

### What's the Difference?

1 tbsp. Patis  
1,300 mg sodium



1 tbsp. Thai fish sauce (Nam Pla)  
690 mg sodium



■ Use the **5-20 Rule** when deciding which ingredients to purchase:

5% Daily Value (120 mg) of sodium or less per serving is a low salt choice

20% Daily Value (480 mg) of sodium or more per serving is a high salt choice

Make sure the serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts Label matches the amount of the product you plan on serving per meal.

This product has 480 mg of sodium and 20% Daily Value of sodium. Therefore, it is **HIGH** in sodium.





## #3 Cook More From Scratch

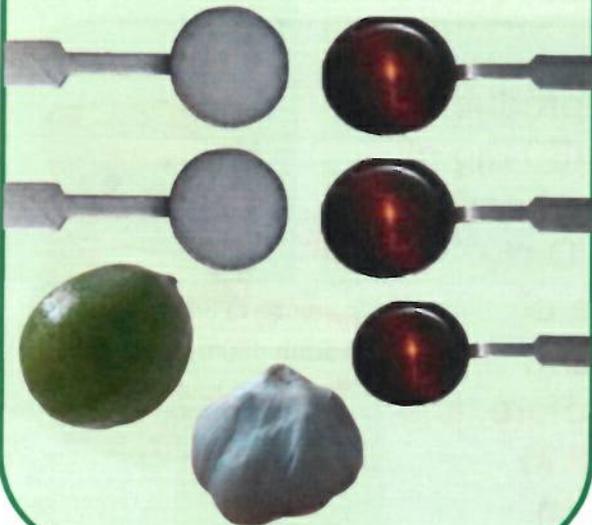
Cooking from scratch allows you to manipulate the specific ingredients in your dishes, including how much salt is in your food. In addition to decreasing the amount of salt in your food, cooking from scratch can help decrease your food cost by eliminating the marked up costs of processed food items.



Try It Yourself!

### Alternative Fish Sauce Recipe

1.5 tbsp lime juice  
 2 tbsp sugar  
 ½ cup water  
 2.5 tbsp fish sauce  
 1 garlic clove



■ Make marinades, sauces, soups, and salad dressings with **fresh, lower sodium ingredients** and **less added salt**.

### What's the Difference?



¾ cup store bought fish sauce  
**15,600 mg sodium**



¾ cup Healthy Lower Sodium Alternative fish sauce  
**8,300 mg sodium**



## #4

### Add Flavor Without Adding Salt

Experiment with a wonderful array of herbs, spices, juices, and oils in your dishes. These substitutions can provide a **powerful flavor without adding salt**.

- Use larger amounts of **ginger**, turmeric, bay leaves, lemongrass, rosemary, **garlic**, and **onions**.
- Try out tart flavors such as **vinegar** and a variety of citrus juices, such as freshly squeezed lemons, limes, **tamarind**, and **calamansi**.
- **Spicy flavors** can pack a punch without salt. Experiment with chilis, peppers, chili water, and chili oil.
- **Various vegetable and nut oils** such as olive oil, toasted sesame oil, macadamia nut oil, and walnut oil can add flavor to food.

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## #5 Tweak Your Cooking Methods

Altering cooking methods can enhance the flavor of foods. Common Filipino cooking techniques include barbequing, broiling, frying and stewing. Small changes in these techniques can help reduce sodium content.

- Try roasting vegetables to bring out their natural, caramelized flavors.
- Use raw ingredients with a strong natural flavor, such as green onions, pimento, shitake mushrooms and sesame seeds.

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### Salt Substitutes – Are They Dangerous?

Potassium containing salt substitutes are usually not recommended since they can give a bitter after taste to food, especially after heating. Too much potassium can be dangerous for people on certain medications or with kidney problems.



## #6 Add the Salt Last

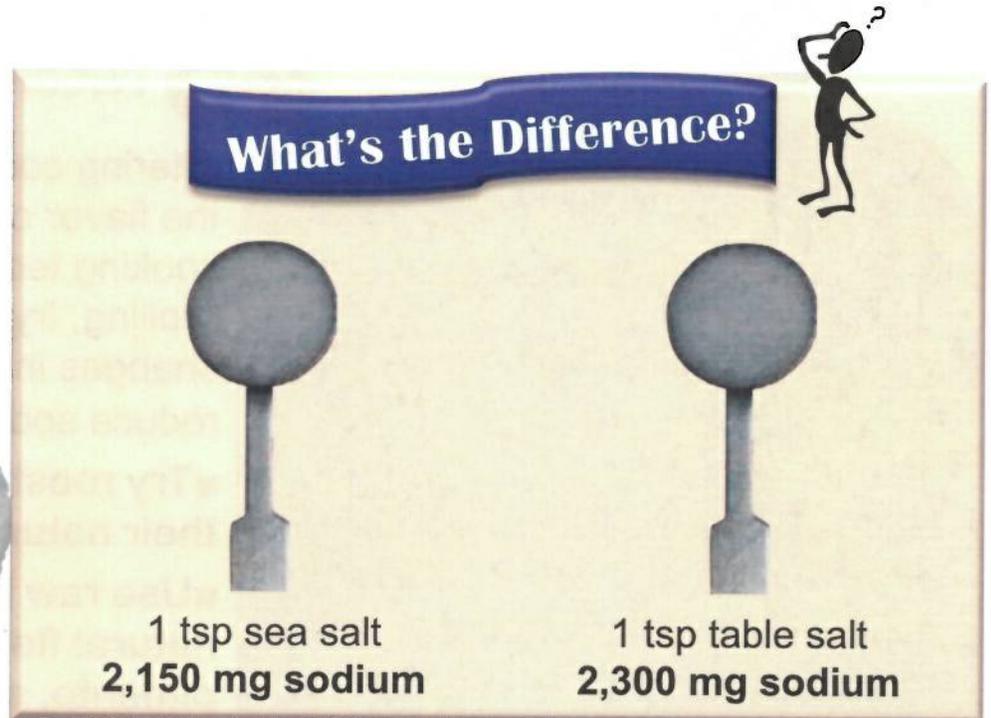
Adding the salt in the final step of preparation can reduce the salt content without losing the salty flavor. A tiny amount of salt on the surface of foods enhances the salty taste more than if salt were added during the cooking process.

- Reduce the salt in cooking by **rinsing canned foods**
- **Add only a small amount of salt** or high sodium ingredients such as fish sauce **at the end.**

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## #7 Use Sea Salt Instead

Salt can be obtained from mineral rock salt deposits or from evaporation of sea water. Mineral salt deposits are formed and are refined into table salt. Table salt and sea salt are both primarily sodium chloride and differ in the amount of refinement. Since sea salt is not as refined as table salt, it contains other trace minerals such as calcium, magnesium and sulfate, which add flavor. Sea salt granules contain 70-97% sodium chloride. Sea salt used in small amounts in place of regular table salt can reduce the sodium content without reducing the salty flavor.



## #8 Beware of Condiments

Although condiments may seem to be an extra ingredient, they can make a dish much higher in salt. Make your condiment sizes smaller and use sparingly.



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### Will My Food Taste Bland?

Although the salty flavor of food is favored by the Filipino culture, the good news is that the less salt we get used to eating, the more salt we can taste on our food! When asked to try regularly salted food items, people following a low salt diet for two - three months found the food items too salty and unappealing.

## #9 Change Your Portion Sizes – Up the Low-Salt Items and Reduce High-Salt Foods

Eating a smaller serving of a salty food item will reduce your salt intake. Changing the relative sizes of your portions can help your customers fill up on more low-salt foods and still have a small amount of high-salt foods.

What's the Difference?



1 serving of Tinola  
753 mg sodium



½ serving of Tinola  
377 mg sodium



# Controlling Diabetes

## Why Worry?

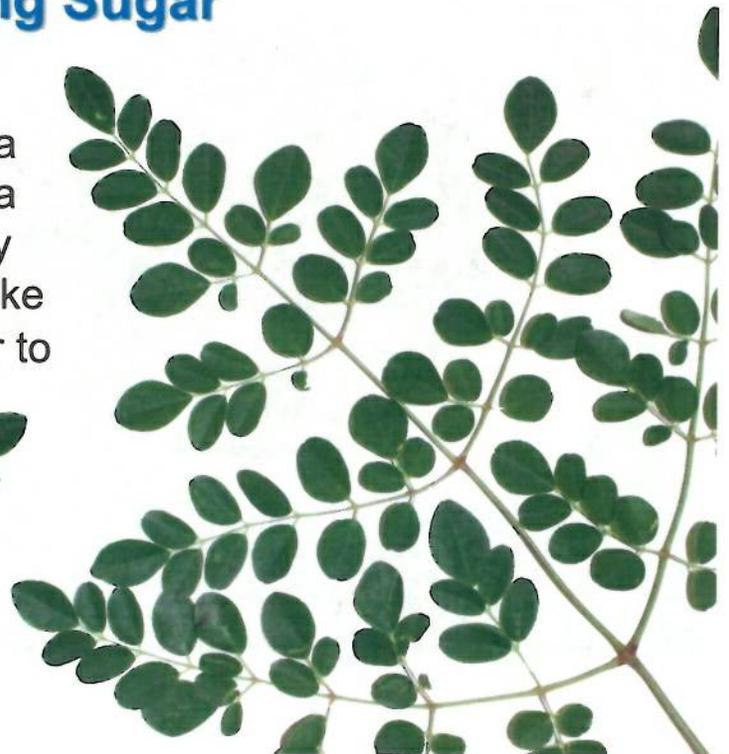
Over **113,000 individuals in Hawaii** have diabetes. Individuals with diabetes have high blood sugar or blood glucose. **Filipinos are a high risk group** for diabetes. Uncontrolled blood sugar levels can increase the risk of serious health issues such as kidney disease, nerve damage, blindness, limb amputations, heart disease, and death. Many customers in Hawaii may have diabetes and could be looking for appropriate menu options.

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## 5 Simple Ways to Control Diabetes

### #1 Add Flavor without Adding Sugar

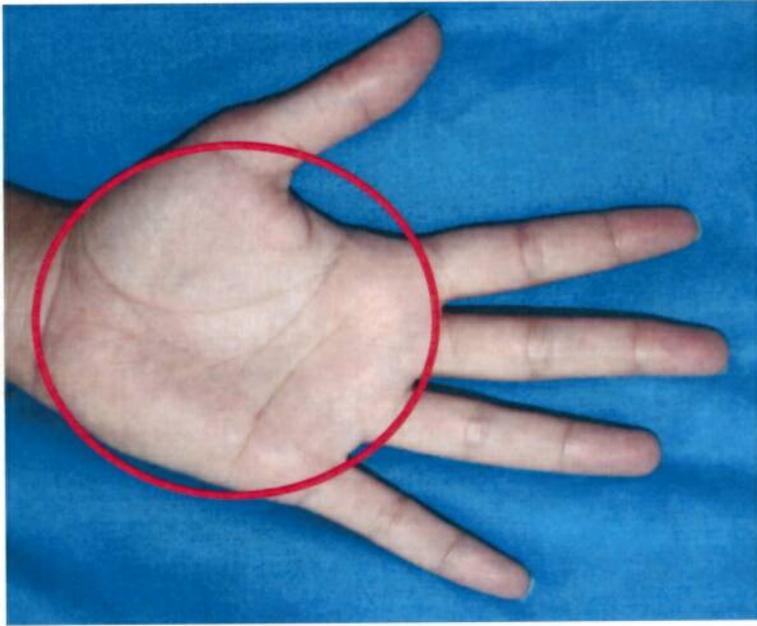
Sugar can mask the salty taste in food. Therefore, reducing the amount of sugar in a recipe can increase the salty flavor. Adding a splash of vinegar can also enhance the salty flavor in foods like *Adobo*. Add ingredients like marungay leaves and tamarind to add flavor to food.



## #2 Watch Your Portion Sizes

Portion control is important for everyone but especially for people with or at risk of having diabetes. Smaller portions mean less sodium too.

These figures can be used to help you estimate portion sizes.



■ 1 portion of meat is 3 ounces which is about the size of the palm of your hand.



■ 1 portion of fruit is about the size of a fist.

## #3 Make Whole Grains Available

Foods that have soluble fiber, such as oatmeal, celery, and beans, can help people at risk for or who have diabetes keep their blood glucose levels within a healthy range. Making oatmeal and menu items containing beans available in your restaurant is a great way to accommodate these customers.

Making whole grain items, such as brown rice and whole wheat bread, available in your restaurant is a great way to add fiber to a meal.

Having *hapa* rice, which is half brown rice and half white rice, is an alternative to just white rice.



## #4 Offer Sugar-Free Beverages

Drinks with added sugars such as sodas and many juices may cause high spikes in blood sugar levels. Having other beverage options that are sugar free can help those at risk for diabetes or with diabetes manage their health in addition to being a healthy option for all customers.

## #5 Encourage Employee Exercise

To lower healthcare costs for you and your employees, you can hold weekly walks for your company and their families. The goal is to have 30-60 minutes a day of physical activities you enjoy. This will help keep weight in check and help keep blood glucose levels in a healthy range. Exercise can help you, your employees, and your families maintain a healthy weight and decrease stress.

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**For more information on reducing sodium and preventing cardiovascular disease, please visit the Department of Health's Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention webpage.**

<http://health.hawaii.gov/heart-disease-stroke/home/what-you-can-do/>