

NUTRITION RESOURCES | FALL

Comfort Food, Lighter Version

As it gets colder, cravings shift toward rich, cozy meals — and that's worth honoring, not fighting. These simple swaps add nutrition to fall favorites without losing what makes them comforting in the first place.

FAVORITE DISHES, SIMPLE SWAPS

Comfort Food	Simple Swap	Why It Works
Mac and Cheese	Blend pureed butternut squash or cauliflower into the sauce	Adds fiber and vegetables while keeping the creamy texture
Chicken Pot Pie	Use a single top crust instead of a double crust, and load up on vegetables	Cuts refined carbs and saturated fat without losing the comfort factor
Loaded Baked Potato	Swap sour cream for plain Greek yogurt	Adds protein, with the same tangy flavor
Chili	Use a mix of ground turkey and beans, or go all beans	Boosts fiber and lowers saturated fat
Creamy Soup	Puree part of the vegetables instead of adding heavy cream	Naturally creamy texture with less saturated fat

EASY WAYS TO LIGHTEN UP ANY FAVORITE

- Roast vegetables until deeply caramelized — it builds flavor so you need less added fat or salt.
- Use less full-fat dairy rather than more of a fat-free version loaded with additives — a little goes a long way.
- Blend a pureed vegetable (squash, cauliflower, white beans) into soups for creaminess without cream.
- Bulk up any casserole with extra vegetables — it stretches the dish for fewer calories per bite.
- Bake instead of fry — you'll get a similar crisp result with a fraction of the oil.
- Finish a dish with fresh herbs, citrus zest, or vinegar — it brightens flavor without more salt or fat.
- Choose a whole-grain pasta, rice, or bread as a swap — more fiber for the same comfort.
- Stir beans or lentils into soups, chili, or sauces for protein and fiber, so you can use less meat.
- Sauté vegetables in a splash of broth instead of butter or oil for a lighter start.
- Serve rich toppings like cheese, bacon, or sour cream on the side, so everyone can portion their own.
- Aim for vegetables to fill half the plate — it naturally balances the richer parts of the meal.

A NOTE ON BALANCE

Comfort food earns its place, especially in the colder months. These swaps are about adding nutrition where it's easy to, not about restriction — the goal is a favorite dish you still enjoy, not a diet version of it.

SOURCES

American Heart Association. "Saturated Fats." heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/fats/saturated-fats

American Heart Association. "Smart Substitutions to Improve Nutrition Without Sacrificing Taste." heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/cooking-skills/cooking/smart-substitutions-to-eat-healthy

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