

Eating Healthy Pie

The New Zealand meat pie is sacrosanct. However, just how healthy and nutritious is this New Zealand icon? The answer is that it depends on the pie. Most pies have a reasonably high level of saturated fat. Those with more meat tend to provide a better source of other nutrients such as iron.

One reason pies and sausage rolls are popular with hungry children is that they satisfy hunger. A reason they satisfy hunger is that they tend to carry hidden fat. The fat can be in both the pastry as well as the filling. If the fat is not fully trimmed off meat, it hides in the flour used to thicken the filling. In a sausage roll it is common to add bread to sausage meat filling to prevent shrinkage. However, the downside of this is that the bread in the sausage meat absorbs the fat and you may not know it's there!

In recent times the pie industry has been working hard to create healthier pies and some good alternatives have been developed. Check the food label on the back and choose pies with less fat and salt. Looking for pies with the National Heart Foundation 'Tick' can make your choice easier.

A balanced, healthy diet can of course contain all foods, including fat in moderation – and may even include a pie now and then. However, advice that a pie once a fortnight can do no harm is not helpful when combined with the advice that it is also all right to eat fish and chips, hamburgers, pizza, chocolate or pastries once a fortnight. Pretty soon you are eating one of these products everyday! Consuming a food high in fat, sugar or salt should be kept to once or twice a week, regardless of what form it is in.

Check out www.ccdhb.org.nz for previous monthly articles and healthy recipes



There is no question that a home-made pie is superior as you are in control of the amount of pastry and meat in it.

How to make a pie healthier

Bread casings with a tasty filling provide a healthy alternative to the traditional sausage roll.

Make home-made pies in small moulds, or a large dish. Cook in the oven and place into the freezer when cool. The bonus of making a home-made pie is that you can ensure the pastry is not too thick and there is plenty of filling.

Try making a pie with layers of filo pastry. It doesn't need oil on every layer, just lightly brush the top layer with oil.

Another way to make a healthier pie is to make it into a Cottage Pie or Shepherd's Pie with a potato topping, and no pastry.

Consider adding garlic, curry or herbs to the meat sauce for flavour. A chicken filling with herbs and a little carrot is a very tasty alternative.

Why buy when you can make a pie? And there are some healthier alternatives. If you don't know how to make them, find someone who does and ask them to teach you. Cooking can be fun!

Savoury Bread Cases

Bread casings

Sliced bread
Oil (for greasing muffin tray)

Grease muffin tin with a little cooking oil. Cut bread into rounds and line each cup of the muffin tray with the bread. Bake at 190°C degrees for 10 minutes until crisp and lightly golden. Fill with hot filling and serve.

Ham and Corn Filling

1 small onion, chopped fine
2 teaspoons oil
1 (310 g) can cream-style corn
2 slices ham
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Prepare 10 slices of bread and bake in muffin tin (see above). Heat oil in a frying pan and sauté onion until clear. Add the corn. Chop ham into small cubes and add to corn with the parsley. Heat until bubbling. Fill bread cases.

Salmon Filling

1½ tbsp butter
3 tbsp flour
salt and pepper to taste
¾ cup milk
1 cup flaked salmon, drain but set aside ¼ cup of the salmon liquid
¼ cup chopped gherkins
1 cup flaked salmon
2 tbsp mayonnaise
1 tbsp lemon juice

Prepare the casings using sandwich bread (see instructions above). Melt butter in a pan, add flour and seasoning. Cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat and gradually add combined milk and the salmon liquid. Return to heat and stir constantly till the mixture boils and thickens. Add remaining ingredients and mix through. Fill with hot filling and serve.