



## Make better choices for healthier chili

### I love to make chili in the fall. Is it very nutritious?

Chili can be very nutritious, but as with any homemade dish, it all depends how you make it. There are probably as many chili recipes out there as there are chili-lovers.

One consideration is whether you use meat in your chili or if you opt for vegetarian style. If you do use meat, the type you choose, obviously, will affect the end product. The leaner the meat, the leaner your chili: ground sirloin, at 90 percent lean, would be a healthier choice than ground round (85 percent lean), ground chuck (80 percent lean) or ground beef (as low as 70 percent lean).

If you use cubed beef instead of ground, choose top round, bottom round or chuck. Those cuts are less tender, which makes them leaner than more marbled cuts. But don't worry about tenderness: Just cut the chunks into small pieces and let the chili cook slowly, and the meat will become more tender as it cooks.

You could also use ground poultry instead of ground beef to reduce fat and calories, but be sure to check the label. Extra-lean ground turkey and chicken may be 98 percent or 99 percent lean, but other types of ground poultry may have up to 15 percent fat — the same amount as in ground round.

For a vegetarian option, you might try using tofu instead of meat. Tofu absorbs the flavors in your chili and mimics the texture of meat. A 14-ounce container of firm tofu has just 350 calories and 3 percent fat.

Other ingredients in traditional chili offer great nutrition boosts. A half-cup of canned kidney beans, for example, contains more than 8 grams of cholesterol-lowering fiber — about a third of the fiber you should get in a day. And a half-cup of tomato sauce can offer as much as one-quarter of the vitamin C you need each day while also being a good source of vitamin A, potassium and lycopene.

Of course, if you like to load your chili with extras, watch out. If you're the type to toss an ounce of shredded cheddar cheese on that bowl of chili, you're adding more than 100 calories and 9 grams of fat. A tablespoon of sour cream would be a better choice — it contains about 25-30 calories and 2.5-3 grams of fat, or you could try reduced- or non-fat options.

Onions and peppers are also nutritious elements commonly found in chili. But don't stop there. Boost nutrition benefits even more by sautéing some zucchini and summer squash and adding it to the mix, plus some canned pumpkin to add some substance as well as vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K, iron and manganese.

The bottom line? Chili can be one of the most nutritious items you serve this fall. But as with everything else, watch your portions — and your recipe. They can make all the difference between healthful and over-indulgent.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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For the week of  
Oct. 3, 2010

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By Martha Filipic  
614-292-9833  
[filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu)

**Editor:**  
This column was reviewed by  
Stephanie Hillman, dietetic  
intern in the Department of  
Human Nutrition in the College  
of Education and Human  
Ecology.

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**Section of Communications  
and Technology  
News and Media Relations**  
2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1044  
614-292-2011

208 Research Services  
Building  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
330-263-3780

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TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868