



## Three Tips to Follow the Trend of Healthy Eating

**Denise Luk**

Registered  
Dietitian  
RD, HKDA

**C**hristmas is just around the corner. When it comes to celebrating the festive season, Western cuisine is usually the public's first choice. In recent years, healthy eating became more and more popular. How can restaurants take advantage of this trend and prepare healthier Western dishes? To help restaurants establish a healthy brand image, registered dietitian Denise Luk shared the following tips on preparing healthy dishes.

### “Choose” Appropriately to Follow the Trend

To take advantage of customers' tendency of trying out something new, Denise recommended restaurants to take note of the latest food trends and provide new and healthier options, such as serving wholemeal bread with guacamole or balsamic vinegar and providing baked nachos with “salsa” made with fresh vegetables. Regarding cooking skills, Denise suggested that restaurants make use of popular and low-fat cooking methods such as air frying and slow cooking. “Although air-frying requires a lot less oil to achieve a similar taste and texture to deep-fried foods, it is still a high-temperature cooking method. As such, do not overcook the food. For example, when air frying French fries and sweet potato sticks, one should aim for a golden colour,” said Denise. Preparing meat by slow cooking results in less water evaporation and flavor loss, and helps preserve its original flavor. In addition, slow cooking enables precise control of the temperature and makes the meat tender. Denise reminded chefs to

strictly control the cooking temperature and time to ensure food safety.

### “Smart” Ingredient Choices

Creating healthier dishes can be easy. Besides using lean cuts such as pork loin, sirloin steak, beef chuck, and skinless chicken to replace processed meats, Denise suggested that restaurants select high-quality protein options such as shrimp, mussels, scallops, clams, salmon, and low-fat vegetarian meat substitutes as ingredients of pizza or pasta dishes.

### “Nutritious” and Appealing Dishes

A typical Western meal consists of a few courses. In order for restaurants to provide a balanced meal, Denise suggested including vegetables and fruits in each course, such as adding beetroot, fresh fruits and kale to salads. This not only provides phytochemicals with antioxidant properties but also enables customers to increase their dietary fiber intake. Many weight-conscious people hope to reduce their intake of carbohydrates, especially high glycemic-

index (GI) foods such as white rice and white bread. Denise pointed out that, in addition to using multi-grain rice, whole wheat bread and quinoa, restaurants can add finely chopped cauliflower to white

rice to increase vegetable intake as well as lower the GI and energy content of the dish. In addition, bell peppers, asparagus and zucchini can be added to grilled seafood skewers.

Making good use of natural herbs for seasoning is another technique to improve the nutritional value and reduce sodium (a main component of salt) content in dishes. Denise shared with restaurant tips on pairing different ingredients with natural seasonings to reduce the use of salt, sugar and other seasonings. “Garlic, ginger, lemon, herbs and pepper are ideal natural seasonings. For example, oregano and basil go well with tomatoes; chicken can be seasoned with rosemary and paprika; while dill is the perfect match for fish. On the other hand, some novel herbs or edible flowers such as saffron, butterfly pea and roselle can add colours to dishes!”

Denise believes that, by adjusting the recipes slightly, restaurants can easily prepare appealing, aromatic, tasty and nutritious Western dishes to attract customers.



## Keeping Pace with Trends Using New Ingredients to Attract Customers

### Henry Chan

Senior Restaurant  
Training Manager,  
alfafa



With a decade of experience specialising in light Western dishes, alfafa is committed to creating healthy and innovative dishes with new ingredients, which has successfully made classic Western dishes healthier. alfafa became a three-star EatSmart Restaurant (ESR) in 2019, which proved that its development strategies were successful.

### Clear Positioning is the Route to Success

Clearly positioning itself as a restaurant serving healthy Western dishes, alfafa successfully attracted health-conscious customers. Mr Henry Chan, Senior Restaurant Training Manager of alfafa, said, “We value customers’ preferences and feedback the most. A questionnaire survey conducted by us revealed that customers patronised alfafa for our ‘healthy and delicious dishes’.” The research and development team of alfafa is highly sensitive to customers’ preferences and is aware that “superfoods” are appealing to customers. The “alfafa Super Salad” is the restaurant’s signature dish and one of its “3 Less” dishes. It contains a variety of healthy ingredients which are high in dietary fibre and low in calorie, such as avocado, kale, broccoli, romaine lettuce, almond slices, organic chia seeds and organic tricolour quinoa. The lemon chia seed dressing is thoughtfully served on the side.

Although the restaurant has a clear positioning and has gained customers’ recognition, its business was not always smooth. “The supply of many imported ingredients was affected by the pandemic last year. Our team has to maintain close communication with the suppliers and monitor the quality of the ingredients. We adjusted the menu when necessary to ensure stable supply of the popular “EatSmart

Dishes” and meet customers’ strong demand.”

### Cater to Customers’ Needs by Offering Diversified Options

alfafa has launched healthier versions of classic Western dishes to satisfy the needs of vegetarian customers. “Oven Baked Veggie Lasagna with Gratinated Mashed Potatoes”, one of the “More Fruit and Vegetables” dishes, is prepared with a lot of ingredients such as eggplants, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, zucchini as well as mozzarella cheese. The mouthful of vegetables enable customers to have sufficient dietary fibre intake even when they are eating out. This vegetarian lasagna is healthier than the classic dish “Baked Meat Lasagna”, but the appearance and taste of the two lasagnas are almost the same. This has successfully changed customers’ impression on vegetarian dishes and attracted more customers to try the “EatSmart Dishes”.

Henry observed that customers were becoming more and more aware of healthy eating. He added, “When ordering meals, many customers proactively requested that we use ‘less oil’, ‘less salt’ or ‘less sugar’ for the dishes. We therefore envisage that healthy eating will become the trend in the future. I believe offering ‘EatSmart Dishes’ that surprise customers is the key to alfafa’s success.”

### alfafa Super Salad



A signature dish for a refreshing and pleasant encounter



### Oven Baked Veggie Lasagna with Gratinated Mashed Potatoes



A brand new dining experience with mouthful of vegetables







## Putting Heads Together for Creating Healthy Dishes

**Vicky Lee**

Superintendent,  
Café Lohas



**Café Lohas, a training restaurant under the LOHAS Garden of the Spastics Association of Hong Kong, offers hands-on catering training for persons with disabilities. As a three-star ESR under the “EatSmart Restaurant Star+” Campaign, Café Lohas is also dedicated to promoting healthy eating. At Café Lohas, instructors and trainees work together to develop “EatSmart Dishes” with an aim of bringing customers healthy dishes with new flavours.**

According to Ms Vicky Lee, Superintendent of Café Lohas, the regular briefing sessions organised by the Department of Health (DH) help restaurants interested in becoming ESRs understand how to provide “EatSmart Dishes” in their actual operation. These sessions allow them to take the first step in becoming “EatSmart Restaurants” at ease.

### Healthy Western Dishes to Attract Customers and Surprise Their Taste Buds

When being asked why Café Lohas specialises in light Western dishes, Ms Lee admitted that the restaurant has to meet the market demand. She explained, “Crispy and tasty foods are always popular even though some of them are regarded as unhealthy.” Café Lohas stands out from the crowd because it successfully presents dishes perceived to be relatively unhealthy in a completely different way. The “Cauliflower Burger with Cheese and Portobello Mushroom” is an example of a tasty and healthy dish designed by the restaurant.

Ms Lee said that instructors and trainees are always enthusiastic in adopting delicious foods they have tried elsewhere as the blueprints for creating new dishes. As burger is the favourite dish of many trainees, the instructors decided to create a healthy burger. After the recipe was finalised, they taught the trainees the cooking steps

patiently. It turned out to be a distinctive and appealing healthy dish, in which finely chopped cauliflower, oatmeal and egg white are mixed and kneaded into the shape of burger buns, then slightly pan-fried to become a cauliflower patty. With fillings of cheese, egg, romaine lettuce, tomato and portobello mushrooms, the burger is healthy and nutritious. This dish not only became the champion of the “3 Less” dish category in the “EatSmart Recipe Competition 2021” organised by the DH, but also proved that Café Lohas is forward-looking and keeping up with the trend when designing the “EatSmart Dishes”.

### Tasty and Healthy Homemade Dressings

In general, typical Western dressings are high in fat and sodium. In view of this, Café Lohas formulates its own homemade dressings. The sweet and sour mayonnaise of the ‘Mayonnaise Pasta Salad’ is prepared with fresh lemon juice. The dressing is served separately so that customers can adjust the amount of dressing by themselves. This makes the salad well-received by health-conscious customers.

Ms Lee concluded that Café Lohas has positioned itself as a healthy restaurant. Moving forward, she hopes that instructors and trainees will continue to develop more healthy and delicious dishes together.

### Cauliflower Burger with Cheese and Portobello Mushroom



A creative vegetarian burger that is appealing to customers



### Mayonnaise Pasta Salad



A refreshing and appetising dish with sweet and sour flavours





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EatSmart Restaurant Star+

## Television Announcements in the Public Interest

The Department of Health launched a brand new television Announcements in the Public Interest (API) for the EatSmart Restaurant Star+ Campaign (ESR Star+ Campaign) in September 2021 to encourage the public to put healthy eating into practice by patronising EatSmart Restaurants (ESRs) when dining out or ordering takeaway, as well as call for more restaurants to join the ESR Star+ Campaign.



Please visit the following website for the API of the ESR Star+ Campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwZgNhSy5e0>



## 2021 EatSmart Recipe Competition

The 2021 EatSmart Recipe Competition was conducted successfully. The winning dishes of the “3 Less” and “More Fruit and Vegetable” groups were “Cauliflower Burger with Cheese and Portobello Mushroom” from Café Lohas and “Stuffed Bamboo Fungus with Crab Meat in Pumpkin Sauce” from Dragon Court Premium Hotpot Cuisine, respectively. Artiste Mr Chow Ka Lok, Kalok visited the award-winning restaurants and competed with the chefs in preparing the dishes. Please scan the QR code below to visit the Facebook page of the ESR Star+ Campaign and watch the videos on Kalok battling against the chefs.



“3 Less” dish's video



“More Fruit and Vegetable” dish's video



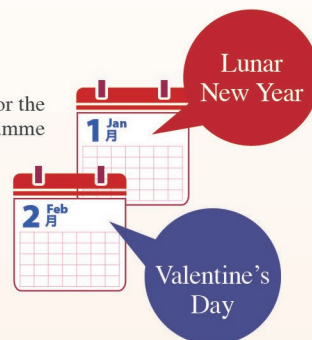
## EatSmart Promotion Programme

The EatSmart Promotion Programme (Promotion Programme) was launched in June 2021 and was well received. Besides providing a social media platform for ESRs to promote their “EatSmart Dishes”, the Promotion Programme has a different theme every month to attract the public. The themes for November and December this year will be “Introducing New ESRs” and “Choices for Winter Solstice”, respectively. The themes for January and February in coming year will be “Choices for Chinese Lunar New Year” and “Choices for Valentine’s day” respectively.

If you would like to join the Promotion Programme or have any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat of the ESR Star+ Campaign on 2835 1910 or 2835 1826.



There are different themes for the EatSmart Promotion Programme each month



EatSmart Promotion Programme