



MINDFULLY SEASONING YOUR MENUS

Enhancing the flavors of your menu is essential to maintaining student acceptability while lowering sodium content. Build a flavorful menu that is low in sodium by purchasing or creating lower-sodium or sodium-free seasonings, condiments, sauces, and spice blends.

CONDIMENTS, SAUCES, AND SEASONINGS

Lower-sodium condiments, sauces, seasonings, and spice blends are fantastic complements to the variety of cuisines offered in today's school nutrition programs. They allow you to add flavorful variety to your menu while using many of the same core ingredients. For example, seasonings can transform the rice on your menu into Spanish or Mexican rice, cilantro-lime rice, or Asian-style stir-fried rice. However, condiments, sauces, and seasonings can also be a hidden source of sodium. The following strategies will assist you in adding flavor to your menu while keeping sodium in check.

CONDIMENTS AND SAUCES

Condiments are here to stay, from the classic ketchup and mustard, to the always popular ranch dressing, and the hot sauces students often request. As students are exposed to more diverse cuisines and sauces, they are interested in pairing those sauces with other foods. Think about the different types of condiments and sauces in your cycle menu. Review the table below and check the condiments and sauces you currently offer.

Condiments and Sauces			
BBQ sauce	Buffalo sauce	Cheese sauce	Chili sauce
Curry	Dipping sauce	French dressing	Guacamole
Hoisin sauce	Honey mustard	Italian dressing	Ketchup
Mandarin sauce	Marinara sauce	Mayonnaise	Mustard
Ranch dressing	Salsa	Sweet-and-sour sauce	Soy sauce
Sriracha sauce	Szechuan sauce	Taco sauce	Teriyaki sauce
Tomato-based sauces	Other:	Other:	Other:

Consider the condiments and sauces you currently offer and answer the following questions:

Are lower-sodium versions available for purchase?

- Identify the sodium levels of your current condiments and sauces.
- Conduct market research to identify potential lower-sodium versions.

NO

YES

Can you create a lower-sodium version using a recipe?

To get started, check out the recipes listed on the following page.

Discuss your menu needs with your vendors.

Review ICN's [Working With Your Procurement Partners](#) worksheet to learn more about working with your vendors to procure lower-sodium products.

Condiment and Sauce Recipes*

Child Nutrition Recipe Box (CNRB)	Healthy School Recipes
Creamy Dip for Fresh Vegetables Ranch Dressing Stir-Fry Sauce Teriyaki Sauce Tomato Sauce White Sauce	Classic Roasted Red Pepper Hummus Cucumber Tzatziki Pesto (Nut Free) Peanut Butter Vanilla Yogurt Dip Southwestern Black Bean Dip Tangy BBQ Sauce

**Only a sample of the condiment and sauce recipes available on the CNRB and Healthy School Recipes websites are listed above. Explore each website for additional ideas.*

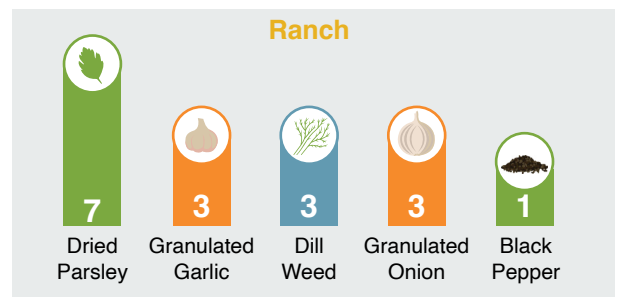
SEASONINGS AND SPICE BLENDS

Seasonings, such as garlic salt, taco, and chili seasoning, are often used to flavor meats, vegetables, rice, and beans. Consider reducing the use of these items or substituting seasonings with lower-sodium or sodium-free options:

- Purchase lower-sodium or sodium-free versions of seasonings.
- Purchase or make your own “spice blends”—spices and/or herbs with no added salt.
- Replace garlic salt with chopped garlic or garlic powder.
- Replace onion salt with fresh or frozen chopped onions, onion powder, or dried onions.

The [Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition](#) (CICN) provides a set of Herbs and Spices Posters, found on ICN’s [Shaking It Up!](#) website under “Other Resources.” The posters illustrate methods for using dried spices, dried and fresh herbs, and spice blends. The Spice Blends poster features 12 different spice blend recipes. Each spice blend recipe consists of ingredients with a “part” that references the ratio of each ingredient in the recipe. Using ratios allows you to determine the overall yield of the seasoning mix.

For example, the Ranch spice blend recipe calls for seven parts dried parsley; three parts each granulated garlic, dill weed, and granulated onion; and one part black pepper. You determine the measure you want one part to represent. If one part = ¼ cup, multiply the number of parts for each ingredient by ¼ cup to determine the yield for each ingredient.



Dried parsley	7 parts		1 ¾ c
Granulated garlic	3 parts		¾ c
Dill weed	3 parts		¾ c
Granulated onion	3 parts		¾ c
Black pepper	1 part		¼ c
Yield:			4 ¼ c

EVALUATING SEASONING PACKETS

Seasoning your menu items without a purchased seasoning packet might seem daunting. However, take a detailed look at the packets you are using—you might be surprised by their ingredients! Follow the steps below and fill out the table with the requested information.

1 Choose any two purchased seasoning packet blends from your inventory.
Write the names of the seasonings.



2 Locate the Nutrition Facts label for each packet.
Document the amount of sodium per serving.

3 Read each packet's ingredient list.
Ingredients are listed in descending order from greatest to smallest amount (by weight). In the order listed, write the names of the herb and spice ingredients. Be aware that the manufacturer may use language such as "other spices" for any herbs and spices present in minimal quantities. Do not include the names of food or color additives.

	Seasoning Packet #1	Seasoning Packet #2
Name:		
Sodium amount/serving:	mg	mg
Ingredients:		

4 Evaluate the seasoning packet ingredients. Can these herbs and spices be purchased individually to make your own lower- or sodium-free seasoning blend? Utilize CICN's [Spice Blends poster](#) to help you determine specific ingredient ratios. You can get the same flavor using a blend of spices without adding salt.

[Healthy School Recipes](#) also provides some spice blend recipes!

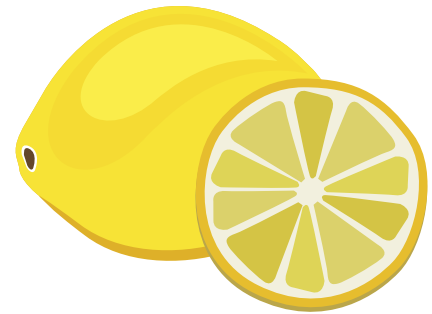
FLAVOR STATIONS

A flavor station can be a creative avenue for students to customize their trays and add as little or as much flavor as they desire. Flavor stations are available from several manufacturers, OR you can create your own. A station can be assembled at the end of your serving line or elsewhere in the cafeteria—any place that is easy for students to access. Some schools have success with shaker containers, while others prefer providing individual portion packets. You can include spices, spice blends, seasonings, condiments, and fresh items (when appropriate). The choices offered at a middle or high school may differ from those provided at an elementary school, but that’s okay!



Your flavor station should accommodate your menu. Consider the following:

- Dried herbs and spices, such as oregano, red pepper flakes, and cinnamon
- Spice blends, including BBQ, chili, jerk, and ranch (review CICN’s [Spice Blends poster](#) for 12 different spice blend recipes you can create on your own)
- Lower-sodium hot sauces, such as chili, hot pepper vinegar, and sriracha sauces
- Dipping sauces such as BBQ, buffalo, honey mustard, and ranch made from lower-sodium recipes
- Fresh ingredients, such as lime and lemon slices and herbs



MEETING STUDENT DEMAND

How can you meet the demand for condiments, sauces, and seasonings AND limit the sodium? Here are some ideas to consider:

- Purchase lower-sodium versions.
- Offer and limit condiment packets vs. using self-serve dispensers.
- Utilize spice blends in your recipes and at flavor stations.
- Save money and make your own in-house “special sauces.” Adjust the flavor profiles to your students’ taste preferences and give them creative names, such as “Tiger’s Tangy Teriyaki” or “Roaring Ranch.”
- Visit local restaurants to survey their menus and specials. Bring back ideas to create a lower-sodium version of these products for your schools.



Enhance the flavors of your menu with lower-sodium or sodium-free condiments, sauces, seasonings, and spice blends.

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