

Guiding choices for Healthy Eating



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Guia para escolhas
alimentares saudáveis

स्वास्थ्य खानाको विकल्पहरुका
लागि मार्ग निर्देशन

健康饮食的选择指南

स्वस्थ भोजन के लिए सुझाव विकल्प

স্বাস্থ্যকর খাবারের
জন্য নির্দেশিকা



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Introduction:

► Daily habits and healthy eating to foster well-being

The idea of keeping healthy is widely accepted throughout the population in general: Daily habits and food play an enormous role in one's health, both individually and as a community. **Cultural and traditional factors have an essential influence in each person's selection of meals** that not only comfort by satisfying hunger, but also provide a sense of kinship. Further, for most people, more than a source of nutrition, food is a cultural reflection of their values, attitudes, habits, and customs. Food and eating habits carry an emotional association, and are a channel of love, heritage, pride, and identity, and usually have symbolic regency. The sharing of food symbolizes social intimacy and acceptance.

Therefore, usually, people **subconsciously choose ingredients and meals they have grown up eating** and have known most of their life, due to inherent emotional reasons, supporting spaces of belonging, comfort, and necessary self-affirmation.

With busy schedules and time shortage, selection may have shifted to more processed or ready-made food, which may not always carry equal nutritive values compared to freshly prepared home-cooked meals. This is one amongst several other factors, such as financial reasons, geography of origin (rural/urban), openness to other influences for example, that may affect choices and selection of ingredients and food.



Mindful of this, **this content is aimed at helping you opt for healthier eating habits and guide you towards making choices that support your health.**



▲ A balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health and can help you feel at your best. This means eating a wide variety of foods and drinks in the right proportions.

▲ **Healthy dietary practices start early in life** by breastfeeding the new-born and should be maintained throughout childhood and adulthood. A healthy diet helps to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, as well as diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer...

▲ People with special dietary needs or a medical condition should ask their doctor or a registered dietitian for advice.

In order to achieve and maintain well-being, it is also important to **keep active**, have **good sleeping habits**, **refrain from smoking**, refrain from using drugs and from **excess alcohol consumption**. To stay active, you don't need to go to the gym, you just need to move more in your day-to-day life with activities such as **taking the stairs instead of the lift**, brisk walking, gardening, dancing, cycling, housework like vacuuming, etc...

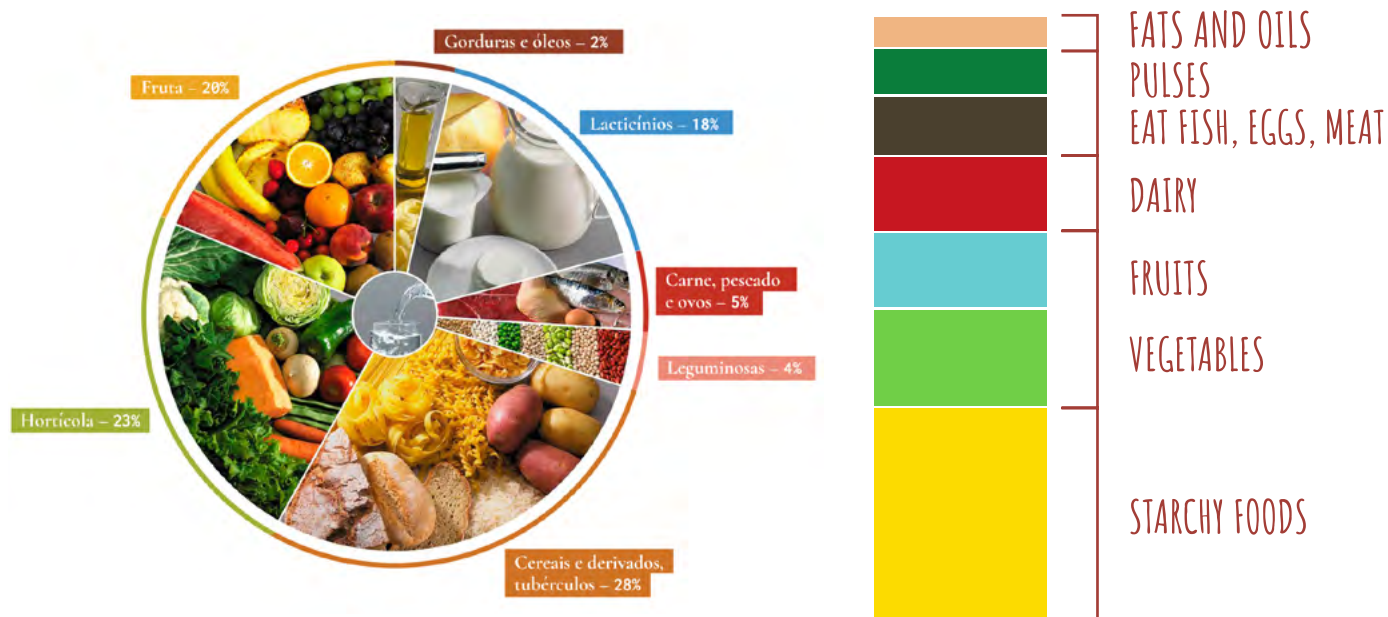


1. What is a healthy and balanced diet?

► Food Wheel

The Food Wheel can be useful to understand what a healthy and balanced diet is. Each food group is represented according to the proportion we should eat every day or throughout the week to achieve a balanced diet. This should be taken into account bearing in mind specificities, and general trends, and how they may shift when people move to a different geography and may not be aware of how access to ingredients changes.

We can divide food and drinks into **7 main groups, according to their different nutritious values**: fruits; vegetables; dairy; meat, fish, and eggs; pulses; cereals; fats and oils. And water at the centre.



Fonte: DGS - <https://alimentacaosaudavel.dgs.pt/roda-dos-alimentos/>

Eating a variety of different foods from each group to get a wide range of nutrients is recommended:

▲ Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of **fruit** and **vegetables** every day

- As well as vitamins and minerals, important to prevent diseases, fruit and vegetables provide fibre, which can **help digestion and prevent constipation**.
- You can choose fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or juiced.
- Choose vegetables from all colours of the rainbow. Each colour provides a different range of nutrients.
- Examples of fruits: apricots, apple, bananas, berries of different varieties, cherries, lemons, coconut, dates, dragon fruit, lychee, mandarins, mangoes, melon, milk fruit, oranges, pears, tangerines, durian, jackfruit, watermelon, custard apple, papayas, grapes, pomegranate, pineapple, kumquats, chilli, nuts (almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts).

- Examples of vegetables: mushroom, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, beetroots, bitter melon, bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, carrots, chillies, daikon, eggplant, leeks, lettuce, lotus root, kale, kombu, mustard greens, peppers, pumpkin, scallions, seaweed, spinach, other leafy vegetables (saags, quin cai), taro root, turnips, water chestnuts, tomatoes, onion, garlic.

▲ Base meals on higher fibre **starchy foods** including cereals like potatoes, bread, rice, or pasta

- Starchy foods are a good source of energy and the main source of a range of nutrients in our diet. As well as starch, they contain fibre, calcium, iron, and B vitamins.
- This group of foods should represent over a third (33% or more) of the food we eat.
- Choose wholegrain food whenever possible, such as wholegrain bread, pitta, chapati and brown rice. It contains more fibre and more of other nutrients. **We also digest wholegrain food more slowly so it can help us feel full for longer.**



- Examples: wheat flour (also known as atta and maida used for example to make roti, jian bing, paratha, steamed momos dim sum and dumplings, barley, breads (mantou, naan and roti), rice (including rice powder, used to make Pithas – rice cakes of different types, including baked or steamed Nian Gao new year rice cakes), puffed rice and flattened rice flakes, millet, pasta and noodles (including soba, udon), semolina, tapioca pearls, potatoes, sweet potatoes, couscous, bulgur.

▲ Have some **dairy** or **dairy alternatives**

- They're good sources of calcium - important for bone health and growth, of protein - important for our muscles/strength, and of vitamins A and B12 which are important to prevent anaemia and neurological disorders.
- Choose lower fat and lower sugar options because they're healthier

- Prefer yoghurt without cream and low fat
- Examples: cheeses, yoghurt (also used in chaas and lassi), milk and other milk products
- Alternatives to dairy products such as soy milk, almond milk, non-dairy yoghurts (it does not contain any dairies).



An eye on diverse cultures

A dairy drink that is commonly consumed amongst Chinese groups and that is not recommended due to containing additives is *Nǎichá*. 奶茶 (*nǎichá*)” is essentially tea with milk, sweetener and other additives.

Similarly, bubble tea, also available in Lisbon, is not considered a healthy drink for similar reasons – high in sugar and additives and detrimental for teeth.



▲ Eat some **pulses, fish, eggs** and/or **meat**

- These foods are a source of protein, vitamins (such as vitamin B12) and minerals important for muscle development and strength and to prevent diseases
- **Pulses, such as beans, peas and lentils are good alternatives to meat** because they are very low in fat, and high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals
- Examples of pulses: peas, beans, adzuki, edamame, mung, lentils of several varieties (daal)
- Examples of fish: sea bass, cod fish, hake, salmon, tuna, eel, king fish, roe, yellowtail, several varieties of Bengali fish and dry fish.
- Examples of shellfish: mussels, octopus, oysters, scallops, shrimp, squid, clams, cockles, crab, whelk.
- Examples of meat: chicken, duck, pigeon, pork, beef, lamb, organs, bone broths
- Other examples of protein sources: tofu, hawaijar.



▲ All types of **fat** are high in energy and should be eaten sparingly.

- Try choosing healthier (unsaturated) fats when cooking, such as fats from plant sources. Examples may be olive oil, sunflower oil, mustard oil or palm oil instead of ghee or butter.



▲ Use **herbs** and **spices** to season your dishes

- For example: basil, bay leaves, amchoor, caram, cardamom, chilies, clove, cinnamon, coriander, curry leaves, ginger, ginseng, kafir lime leaves, lemongrass masala, mint, parsley, pepper, scallion, star anise, turmeric, wasabi.



▲ If you follow a strictly **vegetarian or vegan diet**, remember:

- vitamin B12 is needed for growth, repair and general health and it's only found naturally in animal products.
- Therefore, you can find vitamin B12 in fortified yeast extracts, such as Marmite, fortified breakfast cereals and fortified soya products.
- Other supplements may be advised, contact your doctor for further information.

▲ **Water**

Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid every day. **Water**, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks including tea (without added sugar or sweeteners such as condensed milk) and coffee (without added sugar or sweeteners such as condensed milk) all count.



Drinks

Fruit juice and smoothies also count towards your fluid consumption, nevertheless they are a source of free sugars and so you should **limit consumption** to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day (1 glass)

When drinking **alcoholic beverages** (wine, beer, sake, Bai jiu, Mi jiu rice liquor), moderation is recommended.

Drinking alcohol contributes to accidents and injuries and can lead to liver disease, high blood pressure, various cancers (such as cancers of the head and neck, digestive tract, and breast cancer), dementia and birth defects, among other health problems. Consult a healthcare provider to determine if you can drink alcoholic beverages and what drinking in moderation means for you, according to your health situation.

Some people should not drink alcohol at all such as:

- women during pregnancy or trying to conceive.
- before or while driving or operating any potentially dangerous equipment;
- if you are under the legal age for drinking (which in Portugal is 18 years old);
- if you have certain medical conditions or are taking certain medications that can interact with alcohol;
- if you are recovering from an alcohol use disorder.

Even though **sweets** are widely consumed in every culture especially during festivities and celebrations, they have high quantities of sugar and fat and **aren't essential in a healthy diet**. Ideally, **they should only be eaten from time to time**.



- That is why sweets are depicted outside the food wheel.
- They should be eaten rarely - generally just on special occasions, and on average just once a month.
- For example: Chinese mooncakes, Indian rice puddings, Japanese sugared sweet potatoes, Thai mango-coconut pudding, ice cream,

faluda, sweet yoghurt, sweet balls (misti of various forms like Rasgula, gulab jamun, kale jam, shondesh, ras malai), kheer rice porridge, sweet milk drinks made of chunks of colourful gelatine, sherbet, glass noodles, tapioca pearls, egg custard, rice pudding, chocolate, condensed milk.

Rice

The food we consume hugely relates to the geographical area we have been brought up in, also due to ingredients that grow abundantly in a specific region of the world, thus more easily available.

Rice being widely grown in many Asian geographies, as well as in Portugal, makes it a mainstream meal for people who live in these geographies, even though there might be different types of rice and a wide variety of ways to cook it.

Different forms of rice are consumed as snacks, such as Flattened rice flakes (*Cheera/Poha*), Puffed rice (*Muri*), rice powder used for making different cakes (*Pitha*), new year rice cakes (*Nian Gao*).

Therefore, Rice is another good example of how cultural aspects essentially impact a person's food consumption, which is very much part of people's identities throughout life and applicable in whichever geography they end up living in.

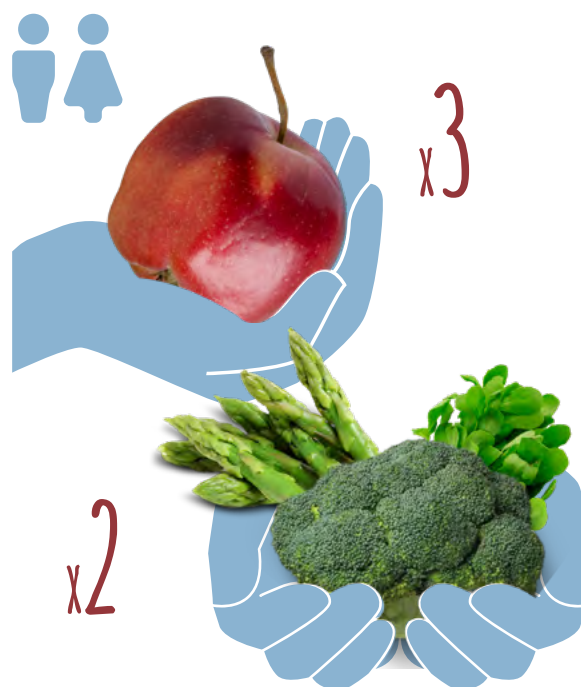


► Hand portions for your food intake

Now that you know which foods are important for everyday consumption, it is also important to know what a food portion is. Using your hands is an easy way to measure food portions. Let's see how many food portions of each food group you should have each day and what a food portion corresponds to:

▲ **Fruits and vegetables:** men and women should have 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day

- One portion of vegetables can be measured with your two hands cupped together of non-starchy vegetables like carrots, broccoli, beetroot, cauliflower, or eggplant, etc.
- One portion of fruit can be measured with one cupped hand.



▲ **Carbohydrates:** Women should have around 4-6 portions per day and men 6-8 portions per day, depending on your daily physical activity

- A closed fist is a good guide for a portion of starchy carbohydrate foods like taro, potato, kumara, rice, pasta, and bread.



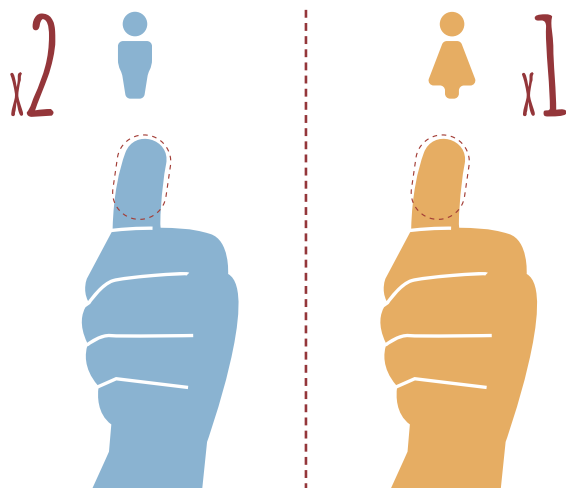
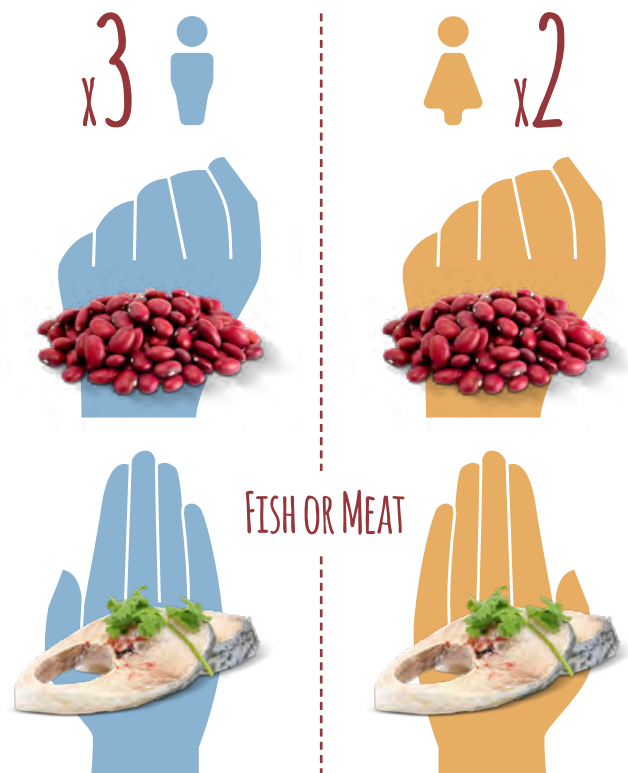
Tip – if you want more than one type of carbohydrate in your meal, reduce the amount of each one, so the total is the size of one fist.

▲ **Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, and other proteins:** Women should have 2 portions per day and Men, 3 portions per day

- Pulses: A closed fist is a good guide for a portion of legumes, such as chickpeas, lentils, or beans.
- Fish: The whole of your hand is a good guide for a portion of fish (instead of meat in your meal).
- Meat: The palm of your hand is a good guide for a portion of red meat or chicken (instead of fish in your meal).



Tip – The thickness of the meat should be about the same thickness as the palm of your hand.



▲ **Dairy and alternatives:** Women and men should have 3 portions per day

- 1 cup of milk or 2 fingers if you're eating hard cheese represents 1 portion of dairy products

▲ **Fat:** Women should consume 1 portion and Men, 2 portions

- One portion can be measured with 1 thumb-sized amount of fat such as butter, oil or ghee.



If you're afraid your plate will look a little empty, why not fill it with more vegetables.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands using a large chef's knife to chop fresh green herbs on a wooden cutting board. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The background features a horizontal bar with five colored segments: purple, dark red, red, pink, orange, and green.

2. Tips on preparing healthy meals

Keeping track of nutritive proportion while selecting and preparing meals can be daunting for many. Depending on their occupation, people may find daily management challenging as work schedules may be hard to juggle and time available to cook may be limited. Effective solutions to modify meal plans may help to better look after health and well-being.

We all need different amounts of energy (or calories) from food to maintain a healthy weight. How much you need depends on lots of factors, including how active you are. **When we eat and drink more calories than we use up, our bodies store the excess calories as**

body fat. If this continues over time, we may put on weight and put our health at risk in other ways.

The way we cook can also increase the number of calories in food. Here are some tips for when you choose food and prepare your meals.

▲ Remember to diversify what you eat

- Eating foods from all the different groups included in the food wheel and adapt your food consumption to your age and specific health conditions. Talk to a Health professional/nutritionist if you need advice.





▲ Spread meals throughout the day

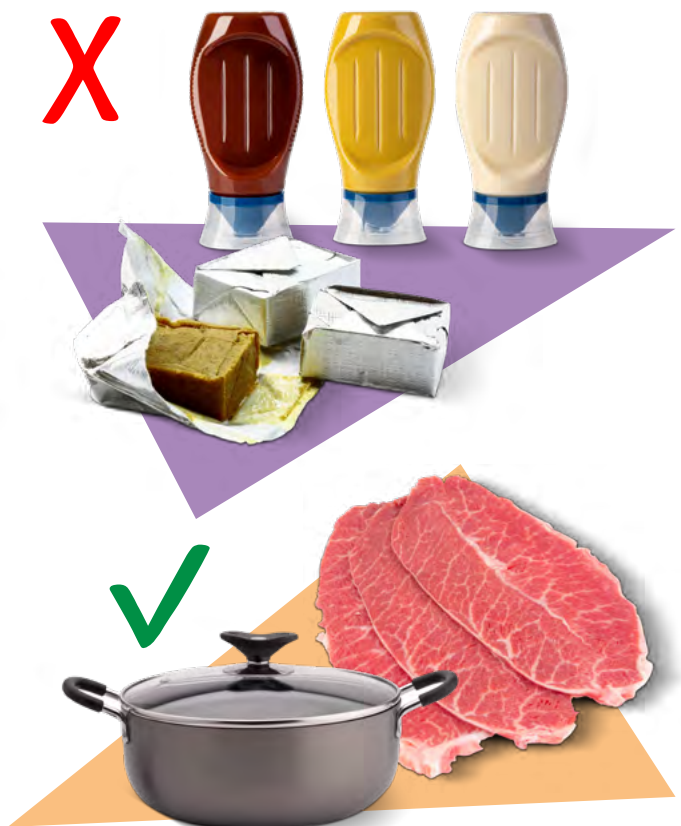
Distribute meals throughout the day: try eating small amounts of food on a regular schedule

- If possible, try to have 5 to 6 meals per day, with a 3-4 hour interval between meals;
- You can try to have 1 small or lighter meal/snack between 2 big meals;
- Maintain regular eating hours: try to eat at the same time each day;
- First meal of the day after you wake up, before going to work or school, is very important for your energy throughout work,
- School or daily activities;
- Avoid heavy meals just before going to bed.

▲ When cooking ... consider:

Reducing fat intake by:

- Avoiding adding high fat sauces/dressings (such as mayonnaise, ketchup, salad dressing) to your dishes.
- Avoiding taste enhancing cubes and stock (vegetable, chicken, beef stocks, etc.), as they contain high levels of fat, salt and sugar
- Choosing lean cuts of meat and leaner mince
- Cutting the fat off meat and the skin off of chicken
- When cooking, try steaming, boiling, or grilling your food instead of frying
- Using non-stick pans and air fryers, since you can use less or no oil when cooking





Limiting salt intake:

- Use up to 6g of salt a day which is about a teaspoonful. Most of the salt we eat is already in everyday foods such as bread, breakfast cereal, ready meals; processed meats; cheese.

You can **reduce salt intake** by:

- replacing salt with pepper, herbs, and spices to add flavour to your favourite dishes.
- limiting the amount of salt and high-sodium condiments, such as soy sauce, fish sauce and bouillon, when cooking and preparing foods
- not having salt or high-sodium sauces on the table
- cutting down processed meat such as sausages, bacon, cured meats and reformed meat products

Reducing sugar intake

- Consuming free sugars/excess sugars increases the risk of tooth decay and unhealthy weight gain, which can lead to overweight and obesity. A reduction in free sugars intake reduces risk factors for many health issues, such as heart diseases, stroke, kidney problems, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes.



You can **reduce sugar intake** by:

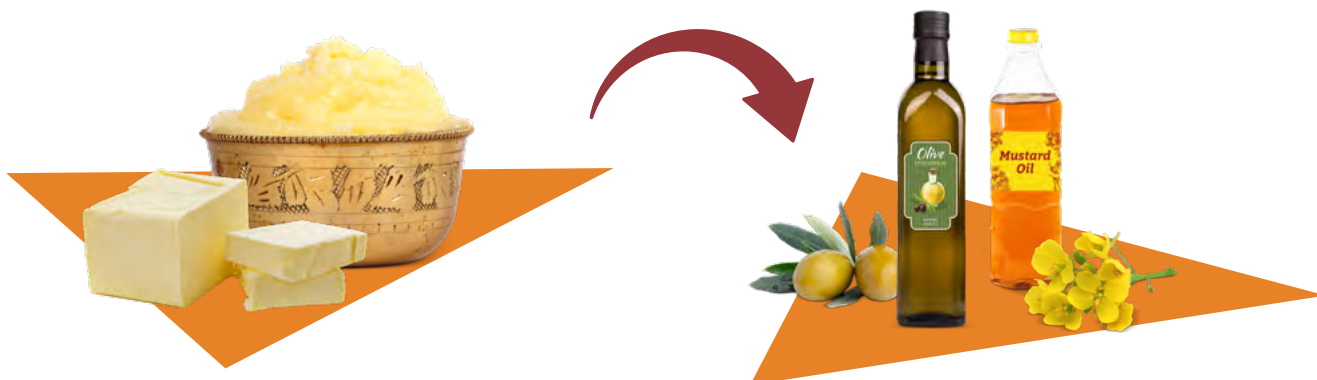
- limiting the consumption of foods and drinks containing high amounts of sugars, such as sugary snacks, candies, and sugar-sweetened beverages (these include soft drinks, fruit or vegetable juices and drinks, liquid and powder concentrates, flavoured water, energy and sports drinks, ready-to-drink tea, ready-to-drink coffee, flavoured milk drinks and condensed milk).
- eating fresh fruit and raw vegetables as snacks instead of sugary snacks.
- When preparing meals, you can also consider avoiding having tea/milk/coffee with iron rich food since it can reduce iron absorption.
- Use **herbs and spices** to season your dishes
- Examples: amchoor, basil, bay leaves, cardamom, chilies, clove, cinnamon, coriander, curry leaves, ginger, ginseng, kaffir lime leaves, lemongrass masala, mint, parsley, pepper, scallion, star anise, turmeric, wasabi

Healthy swaps when you are cooking

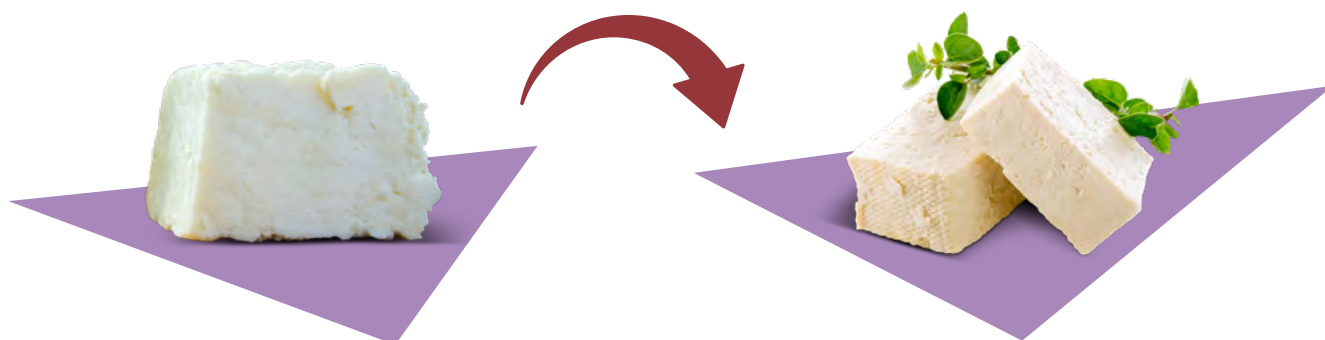
Some foods are healthier than others.

Consider swapping:

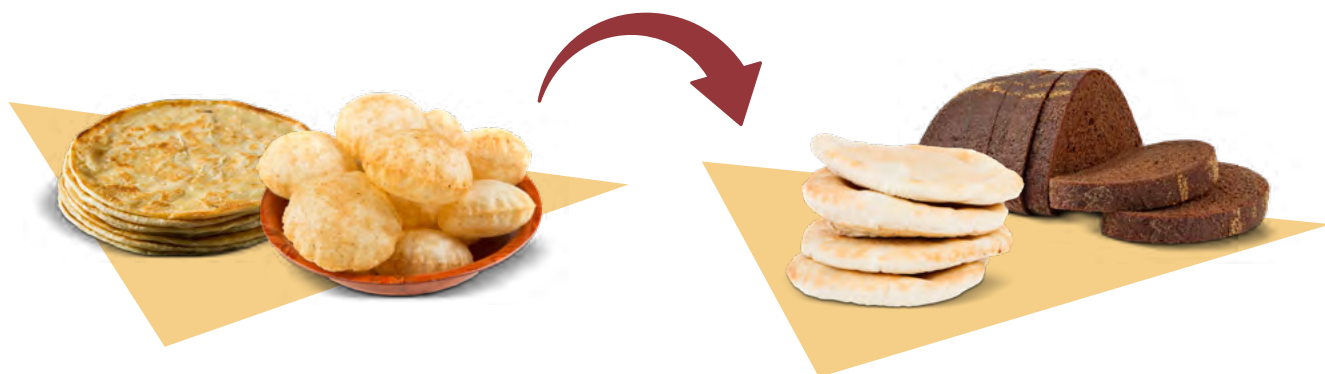
- ... butter, ghee or coconut oil **for** – in moderation - sunflower oil, mustard oil, rapeseed oil, or olive oil. In general, vegetable-based oils are healthier than animal based ones.
- Olive oil should not be used for deep frying, and adding raw olive oil in the final stage of preparing your meal (i.e. uncooked / unheated) is better than risking temperature increase modifies its properties.



- ... Paneer **for** tofu



- ... Paratha or puri **for** chapatti, dark bread or pitta bread



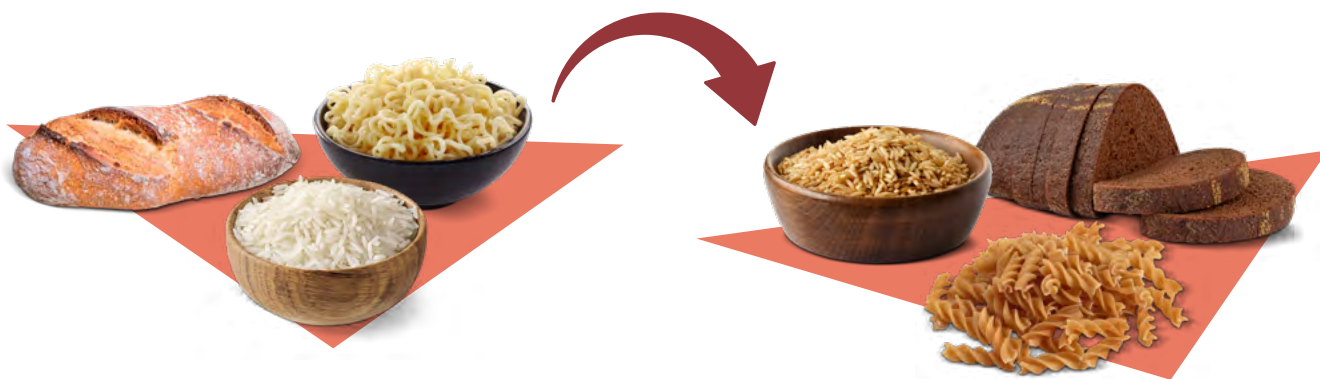
- ... Sugary snacks, halwa or mithai **for** fresh fruit and unsalted nuts, apple chips, or homemade food without added sugar



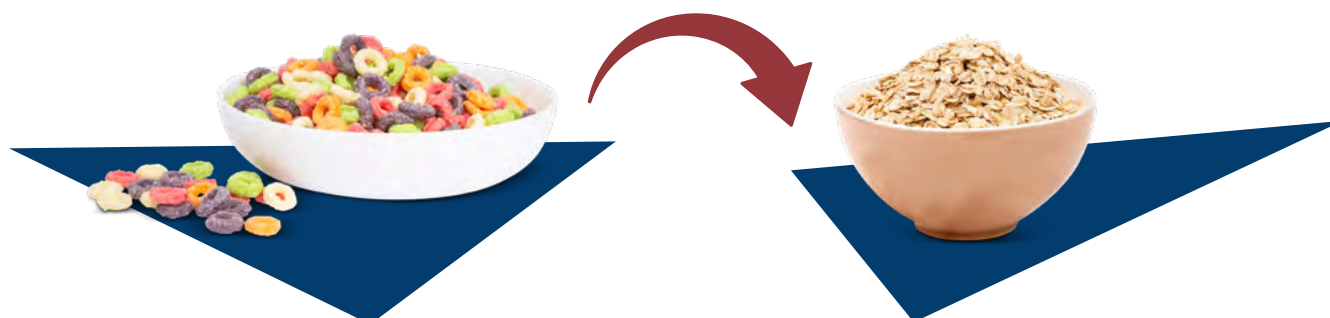
- ... Salt **for** herbs, spices, ginger, chili and citrus juice, garlic, coriander or bay leaf



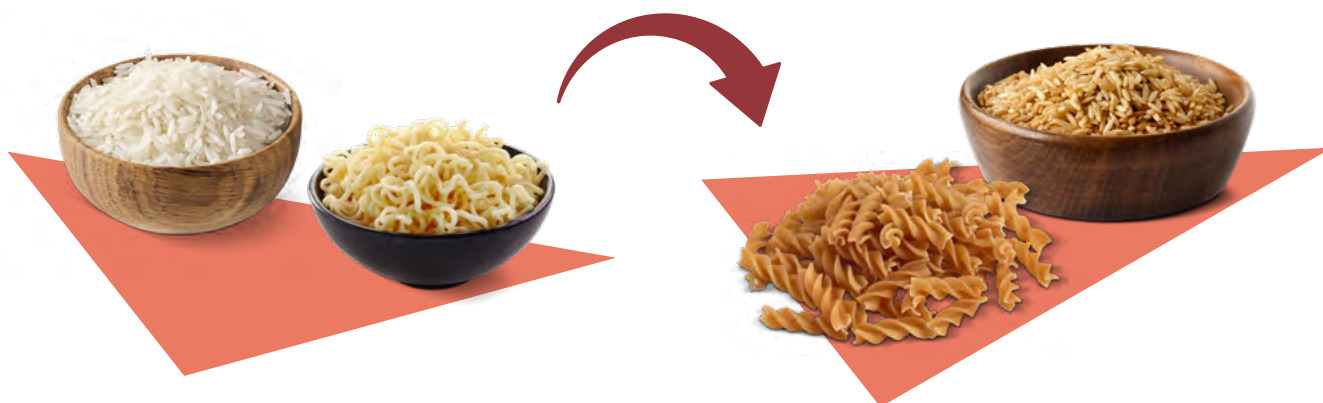
- ... White rice, pasta and bread **for** brown rice, brown pasta and brown bread



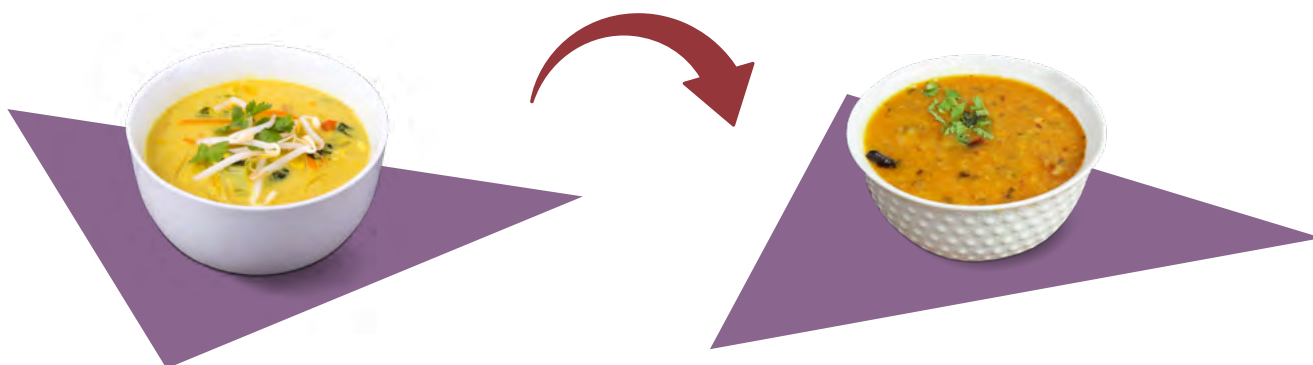
- ... Cereal with added sugar **for** sugar-free, brown or oats



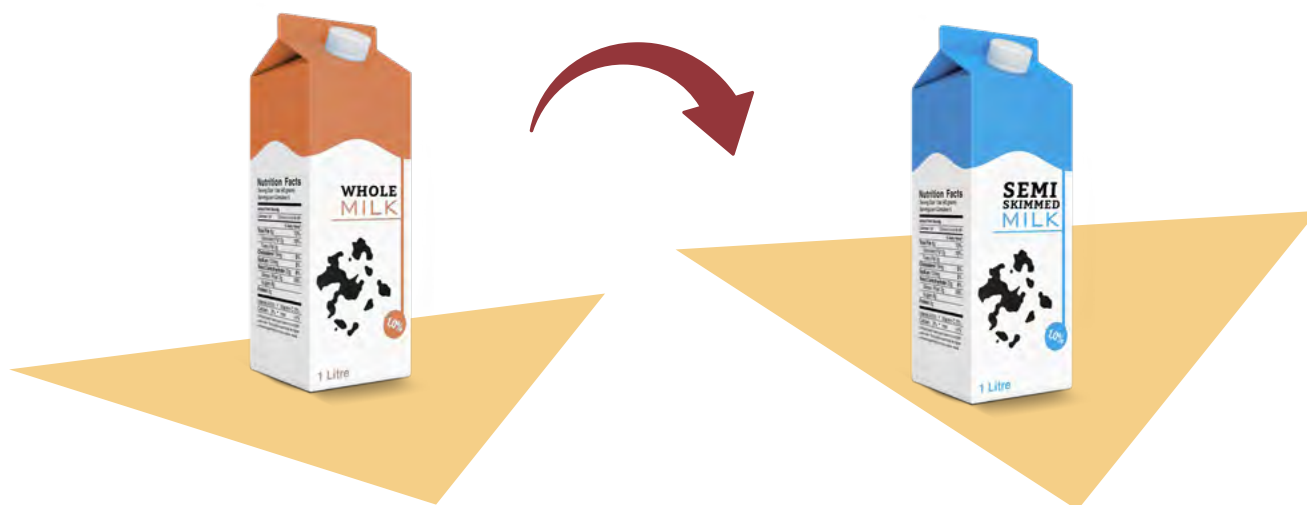
- ... Rice and pasta should be consumed in moderate portions. Try and substitute with wholegrain or brown



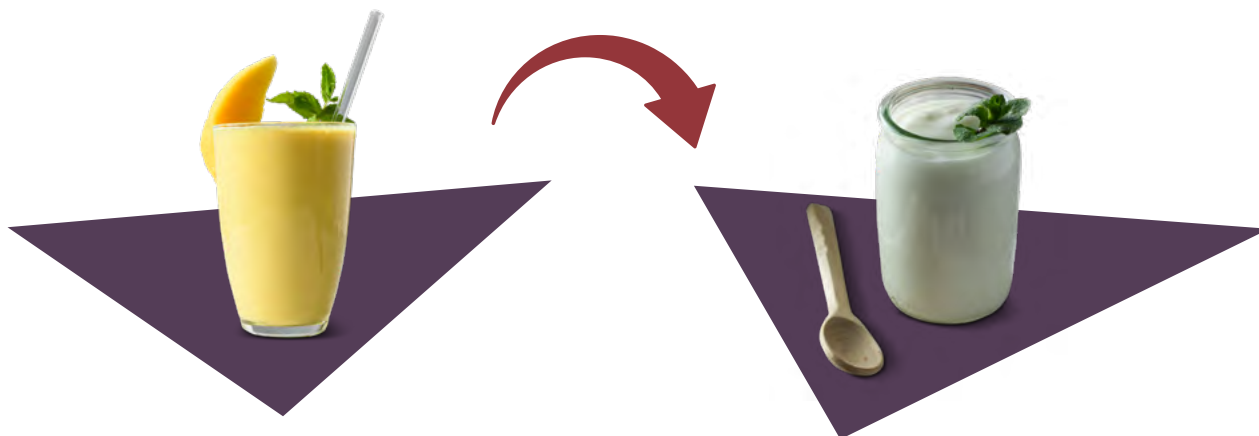
- ... Curry for daal



- ... In order to reduce the amount of fat in your diet, consider substituting whole milk with semi skimmed or even skimmed milk



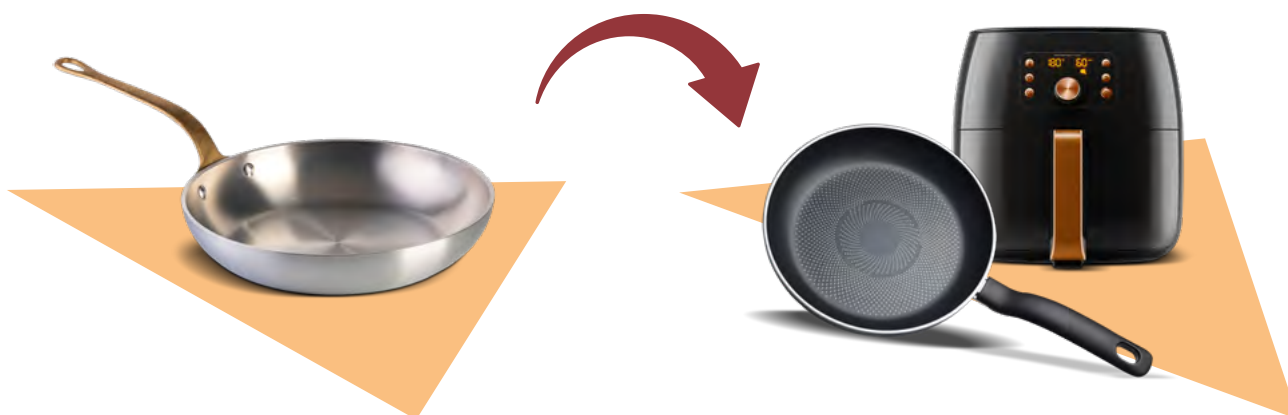
- ... Lassi with sugar for chanch made with sugar-free yoghurt and water



- Avoid milk, tea and coffee with big meals as they will reduce the absorption of iron



- Try using non-stick pans and an air fryer instead of a frying pan if possible



Choosing snacks...

- Nuts without added sugar or salt, natural yoghurt, oatmeal, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables such as carrots, a slice of bread with fresh cheese or cottage cheese are examples of healthy snacks.
- Avoid fried snacks or snacks with added sugar or salt. Foods which are high in salt, fat and sugar, such as cream, chocolate, ghatia, chevra, crisps, chanaru (savory chickpea flour batter fried in oil and mixes with pulses and nuts and

seeds), Jhal muri (crispy puffed rice – a mix of salad and spices), samosa, pakoras, Nimkis, spring rolls, momos, wongtong, maagi noodles (Instant-noodles), biscuits, barfi, penda, pastries, ice cream, kulfi, cakes and puddings, should be eaten sporadically and in small amounts because they mainly provide energy in the form of fats and sugars.

- When preparing snacks, try to re-portion snacks/light food/finger food into individual portions instead of eating straight from the container.

Breakfast... Morning Snack:

Breakfast is the utmost essential meal of the day, with which one starts the days' nutrition. The contents of this first meal of the day widely vary in terms of traditions, culture, place, time, and habits of people globally. Therefore, an amalgam of ingredients is used to satisfy the taste buds of the individual which boosts their energy for the rest of the day.

At the same time, people's eating habits are changing rapidly all over world. This will of course also depend on a person's occupational schedule and time of the day or night they consume most energy, to suit the body's nutritional needs.

Many people from China and from South Asian countries start their day with tea. Tea is very much part of daily routines, and it has significant cultural relevance in food habits. Tea might be prepared in different manners, but it is usually mixed with milk and some people like to add spices such as ginger, black pepper and might even add sugar. Tea is also used for different purposes namely to deal with health problems.



What people eat for breakfast varies a lot depending on the region they come from, on food available, and on their own eating habits. This first snack of the day may include a variety of ingredients such as rice, Sabji (cooked food) and flattened wheat bread (Roti) cooked on skillets with or without oil, eaten with fried eggs, vegetables or some non-veg curries. It might also be common, depending on the region people come from, to eat prantha (wheat flour base) stuffed with cauliflower, or boiled potatoes, radish, or other vegetables, or to eat dosha and idalee.

In some contexts, namely Chinese, people generally also eat rice, eggs and vegetables in the morning, and some might eat steamed savory foods, for example shrimp dumplings, chicken legs and steamed bread with meat inside. Some people with Northern Chinese backgrounds tend to eat pasta or different types of bread, and there are also areas in China where people tend to eat spicy noodles in the morning.

The migration process brings changes to daily routines and very often people do not have that much time to cook in the morning in their new geography. That is why they might eat a more Portuguese or European breakfast that may include cereals with milk, bread with butter and ham or cheese and galão (milk with coffee) as a drink. This is often also true for children who eat Portuguese/Southern-European food in kindergarten or school.

It also implies that sometimes preference shifts to a “lighter” morning snack: a light salty snack with tea or healthier options such as fruits, nuts, juice, milk, cereals or whole wheat breads. Younger people may now drink freshly prepared juice instead of tea. Some people might prefer milk or yoghurt with cereals rich in fibre with a variety of nuts along with fruits or drink tea with biscuit, bread, toast, doughnuts, etc. and sometimes replacing tea with instant coffee.





3. Saving money when shopping for food

At times, low-income households find food prices a barrier to nutritious diets, as vegetables, fruit and dairy products can be particularly expensive in certain geographies, while cereals may be relatively cheaper. Monthly income can have enormous impact on eating habits, whereby people with low income may feel they have to compromise on their food choices. Knowledge of what is available in the new area of residence and cost of different ingredients can support understanding on how a family's diet can be slightly adjusted to keep on pursuing healthy nutrition.

Furthermore, choosing healthier options doesn't mean you have to spend more money. Here are some tips on how to save money when buying food:

▲ Check the supermarkets special offers ("Promoções"), but don't forget to:

- Compare those special offers to own-label brands which can still be cheaper and maintain product quality
- Check the expiry or "use by" date
- Compare price by kilogram

▲ Sometimes "ugly" fruit and vegetables can be cheaper and has the same amount and type of nutrients.

▲ Plan your/ your household's meals ahead (including snacks)

- Make a shopping list and purchase only what is on your list
- Choose seasonal fruit or vegetables that grow in Portugal at different times of the year

▲ Vegetables and fruits available in supermarkets and markets usually vary throughout the different seasons of the year.



Although nowadays we can find almost any type of fruit throughout the year, fruit which is produced in a specific season tends to be cheaper and easier to find, and in some cases, it is also healthier due to how it is produced and stored in a more natural way. In the table below you can find some examples of Seasonal fruit in Portugal.

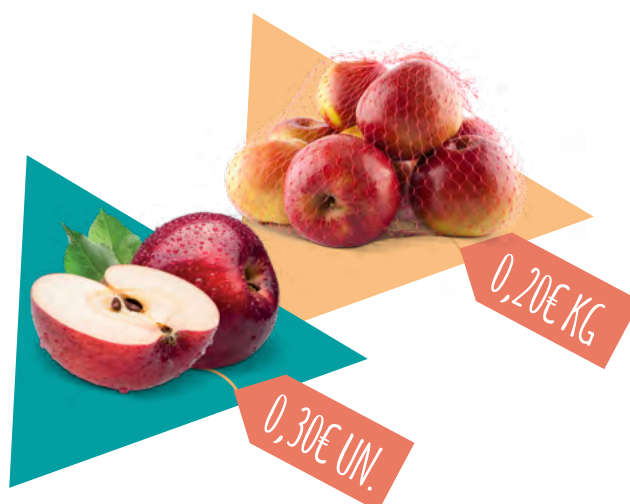
January	Winter	Apple, Pear, Tangerine, Clementine, Oranges, Kiwis, Pineapple, Grapes, Papaya, Lychees, Mangoes, sugar cane; Guava; green dates; star fruit;
February		
March		As above + Strawberries and snake gourd
April	Spring	As above + Cucumber and plums
May		Peaches, Plums, Lychees, Loquats, wax apples
June		Papaya, Kaki, Cherries, Melon, Watermelon, figs, Lychees, Mangoes, Jackfruit, Pitaya, Durian
July	Summer	July: Longan too
August		Custard apples
September		Kaki, Pomegranate, Grapes, Egg fruit
October	Autumn	As above + Orange, Kaki and Chestnuts and Sapodilla
November		Oranges and Chestnuts and Sapodilla
December		Apple, Pear, Tangerine, Clementine, Oranges, Kiwis, Pineapple, Grapes, Papaya, Lychees, Mangoes, Oranges, Chestnuts, Sapodilla

**Tomatoes
and Bananas**

▲ If you have the means to store the food, you can buy larger amounts of food, which sometimes have better prices on special offer based on quantity



▲ Compare the unit price with the packet price, and unit price with price per kilogram. The latter might be more favourable, but always check the expiry or “Use by” date.



X

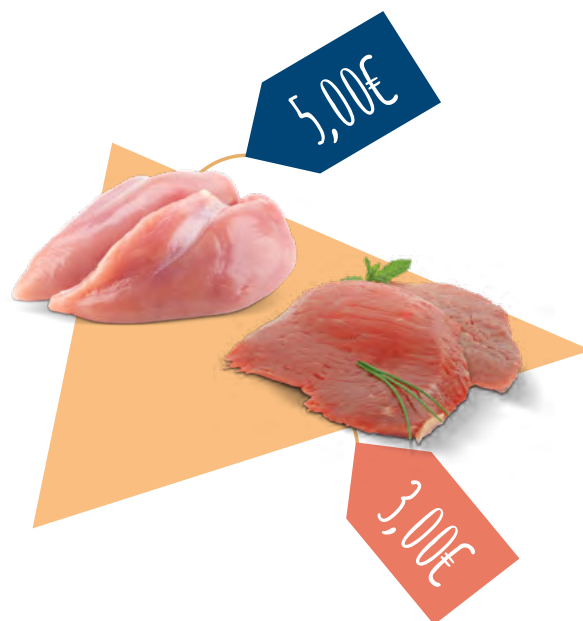


▲ Avoid processed or ready meals. They also contain high levels of fat, salt and sugar. Prefer homemade meals (which you can also take to work).



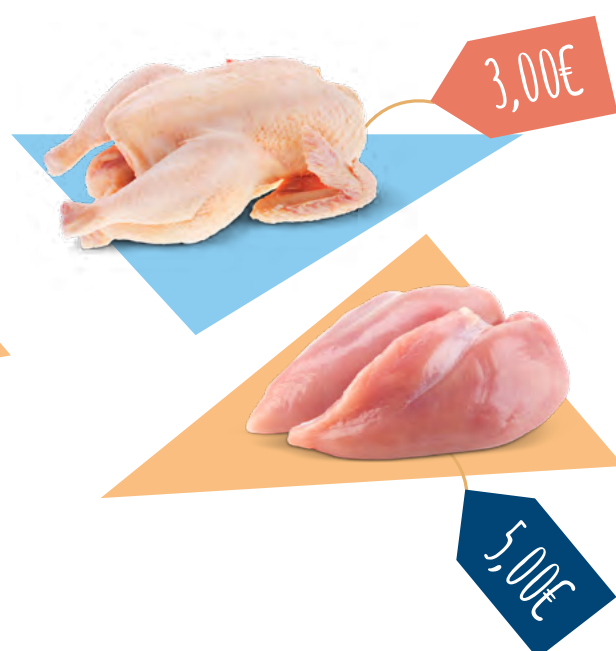
✓

▲ The price of fish and meat can vary according to the type of animal and cut – you can compare the price tags



▲ Frozen fish can be cheaper than fresh fish and maintains the same nutritional value and product quality

▲ It can also be cheaper to buy the whole instead of parts, for example, the whole chicken instead of just chicken wings or the whole fish instead of fish slices, and freezing the rest does not take away nutritional value



▲ Tap water in Portugal is safe to drink – there is usually no need to buy bottled water.



▲ If you don't have enough money to buy food you can speak to a social worker from your Health Centre/ the health unit of your area of residence, from Santa Casa da Misericórdia Lisboa, or from your Local Borough (Junta de Freguesia).





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Funding Support:

