

# Are you exotic enough?



Essential advice for people  
with diabetes from Accu-Chek



# Tips for exotic eating

- ✓ When eating exotic foods, it's still important to eat healthily and look after your heart
- ✓ What you cook and how, can affect your health in the future
- ✓ Simple changes can make a big difference
- ✓ Good planning and preparation are essential

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# Spicing up your diet

...the changes aren't dramatic,  
but the results are!

Ashanti, 35

Whether your cultural roots are in another country, or you simply have adventurous taste buds, eating exotic foods is no different to eating any other.

It's still important that you eat healthily and keep meals low in fats and salt.

If you have diabetes you will, however, need to take extra care, especially looking after your heart, your waistline and keeping an eye on the carbohydrates you eat.

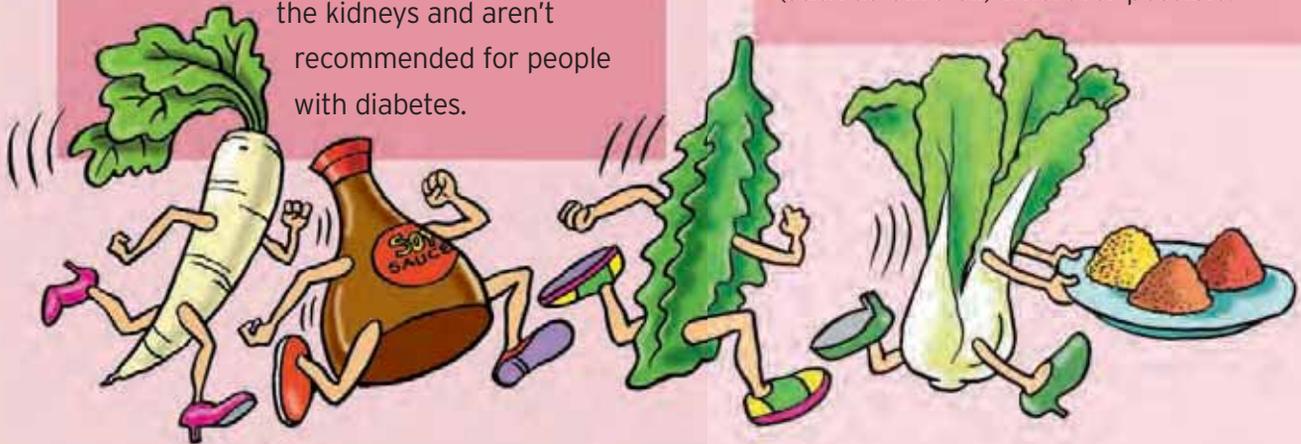
**This booklet highlights and discusses different ingredients to consider at mealtimes.**

# You are what you eat

**Pak choi, turmeric, karela, jalapeno, soy sauce, wasabi, yams and plantain are among the many ingredients used in foods from around the world. No doubt some are better for you than others, but it's often their preparation, serving size and the overall balance of proteins, fats and carbohydrates that has a bigger impact on your health.**

## Proteins

Found mainly in meats and pulses, proteins are needed to grow and maintain your body. High-protein diets can, however, strain the kidneys and aren't recommended for people with diabetes.



## Carbs (carbohydrates)

Found in most foods, carbohydrates are broken down into sugar (glucose) and used for energy. Different carbohydrates have a different 'Glycaemic Index' which describes how quickly they are digested. The quicker they're digested, the higher your blood glucose peaks. To find out more about how this can help you plan your meals, visit the Diabetes UK website ([www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)) or NHS choices website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) and search for 'Glycaemic Index'.

## Fats

Found mainly in meats, dairy produce, oils and margarines, small quantities of fats are essential for a healthy body, but keep animal fats to a minimum and use unsaturated fats (such as olive oil) wherever possible.

# What's on the menu?

...I love different foods and with the right approach, my diabetes hasn't changed that!

Dave, 28

**Food is an integral part of a region's identity and culture. If you're worried that managing your diabetes will mean making big compromises, you needn't be.**

**Your dietician will be able to give you specific advice and can help develop a menu that will work for you.**

**Japanese diets** use large amounts of fish, making them low in fats, but high in protein.

**Chinese diets** generally use meats to flavour a low-fat, fibre-rich menu based on grains and vegetables.

**Indian diets** are regional, highly spiced, high in pulses and generally low in meats - but the preparation often uses lots of fats/oils.



**West Indian diets** are also highly spiced, but generally contain a lot of meat and salt.



**African diets** vary a lot from region to region, but can involve a lot of fried and starchy foods high in fats and carbohydrates.



# Meats, pulses and dairy

...cutting down on meat has given my meals more variety.

Sefu, 56

## Meats

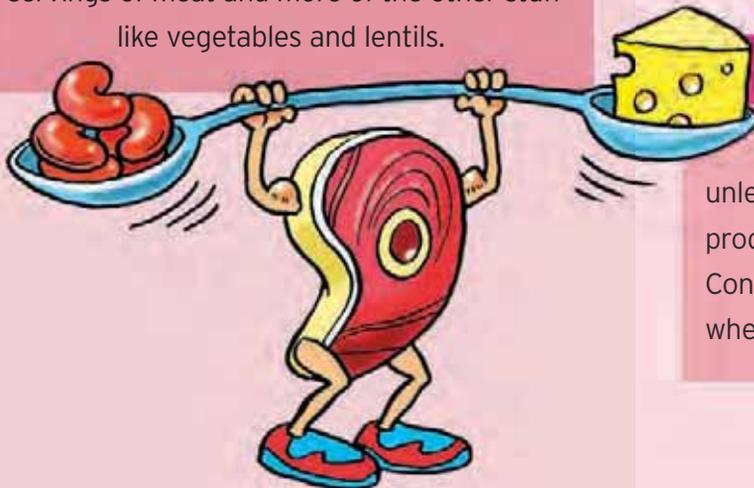
Fatty meats are high in the saturated fats that can lead to heart disease and should be eaten sparingly. Try cooking with leaner cuts of red meat, skinless chicken or turkey, and fish wherever possible. Adjusting the balance of your meal can also help. Go for smaller servings of meat and more of the other stuff like vegetables and lentils.

## Pulses

A fantastic substitute for meats, pulses are high in protein, fibre and carbohydrate. Beans, peas and the chickpeas used to make dhals, tagines and houmous are cheap, easy to cook and very tasty.

## Milk products

A valuable source of calcium, but unless made with skimmed milk, dairy products are high in saturated fats. Consider low-fat and fat-free alternatives wherever possible.



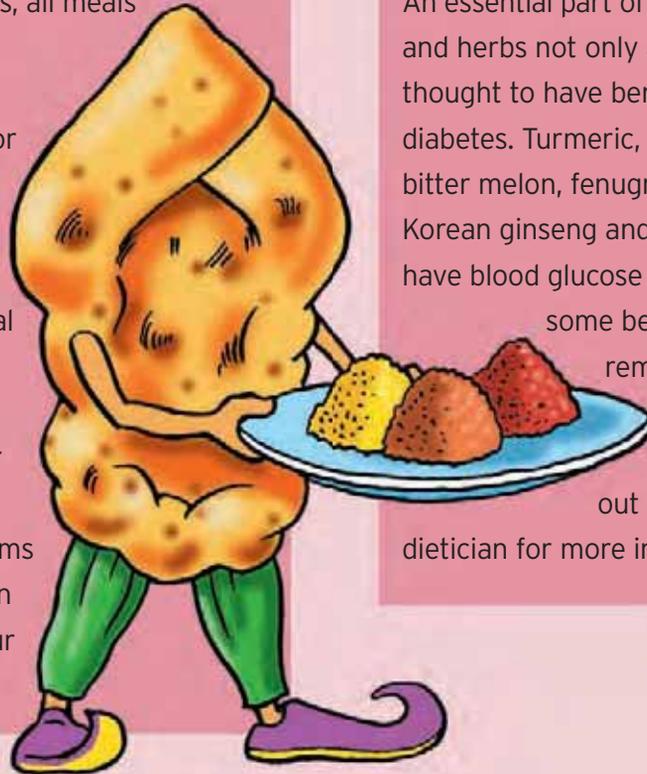
# Breads and spices

...I've always eaten spicy foods, and was relieved to know that wouldn't change.

Onita, 48

## Cereals, breads, rice & noodles

For people with diabetes, all meals should be built around carbohydrates - a slow, steady energy supply for your body. However, it's better to go for less processed options, such as brown rice, wholemeal flour/breads and grains with their husk. Also watch out for instant or glutinous rice, as these are rapidly digested forms of carbohydrate and can cause high peaks in your blood glucose.



## Spices and herbs

An essential part of most exotic foods, spices and herbs not only add flavour, but are also thought to have benefits for people with diabetes. Turmeric, cinnamon, curry leaves, bitter melon, fenugreek, gurmur, stevia, Korean ginseng and nopal are all thought to have blood glucose controlling properties - some being used in eastern remedies. They're also a handy way to cut down on salt without cutting out the flavour. Ask your dietician for more information.

# Fruits and vegetables

...I vary these as much as possible as there's so many available in the UK now.

Jun, 35

## Fruits and nuts

A good source of vitamins and minerals, fruits are essential for a healthy diet. But tropical fruits like mangoes, jack fruit and lychees can be very sugary, so should be eaten in moderation.

Take care when using fruits in cooking and pickles as the sugar content is as high as when eaten raw.

Nuts make handy snacks when you're a bit peckish, but their high calorie content could spell trouble for your waistline.

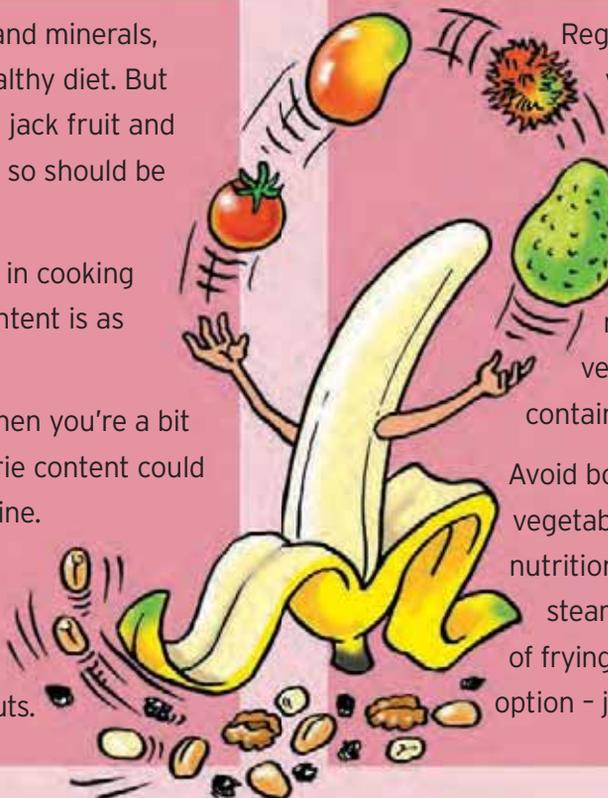
So eat them in moderation and go for heart-friendly unsalted options, such as almonds, cashew and pine nuts.

## Vegetables

Regional and seasonal, vegetables are essential and the more varied, the better.

Try to eat at least five portions a day, but remember that starchy vegetables, like potatoes, contain carbohydrate.

Avoid boiling or overcooking vegetables as this reduces their nutritional value. In fact, steaming or grilling, instead of frying is an all round healthier option - just ask your heart.



# Snacks and desserts

...if I do have a dessert, it's usually just a spoonful to taste.

Kofi, 67

## Sweets/desserts

Desserts from around the world have one thing in common, sugar. The high sugar and mostly high fat content of sweets like jalebi, ice creams and kulfi mean you should eat small portions once in a while - but if this is difficult, avoid them altogether.

## Snacks

Keep fried snacks, like plantain crisps, Bombay mixes, samosas and pakoras to a minimum. These can be high in saturated fats.

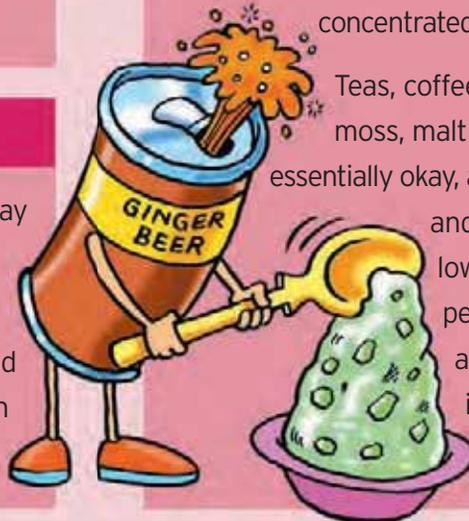
Also watch out for salty snacks, like nuts and crisps, remembering that salt is used as an additive and preservative all over the world.

## Drinks

Fizzy pops and squashes are usually very sugary - a handy boost if your blood glucose is low, but not otherwise.

Fruit juices are very good for you, but with up to 8 oranges per glass, you can see how very concentrated and sugary they are.

Teas, coffees, sorrell, Irish moss, malt drinks and lassis are essentially okay, as long as their sugar and fat content is kept low (less than 5 grams per 100 grams.) - using artificial sweeteners instead of sugar can help.



# Fats, oils and sauces

## Fats/oils

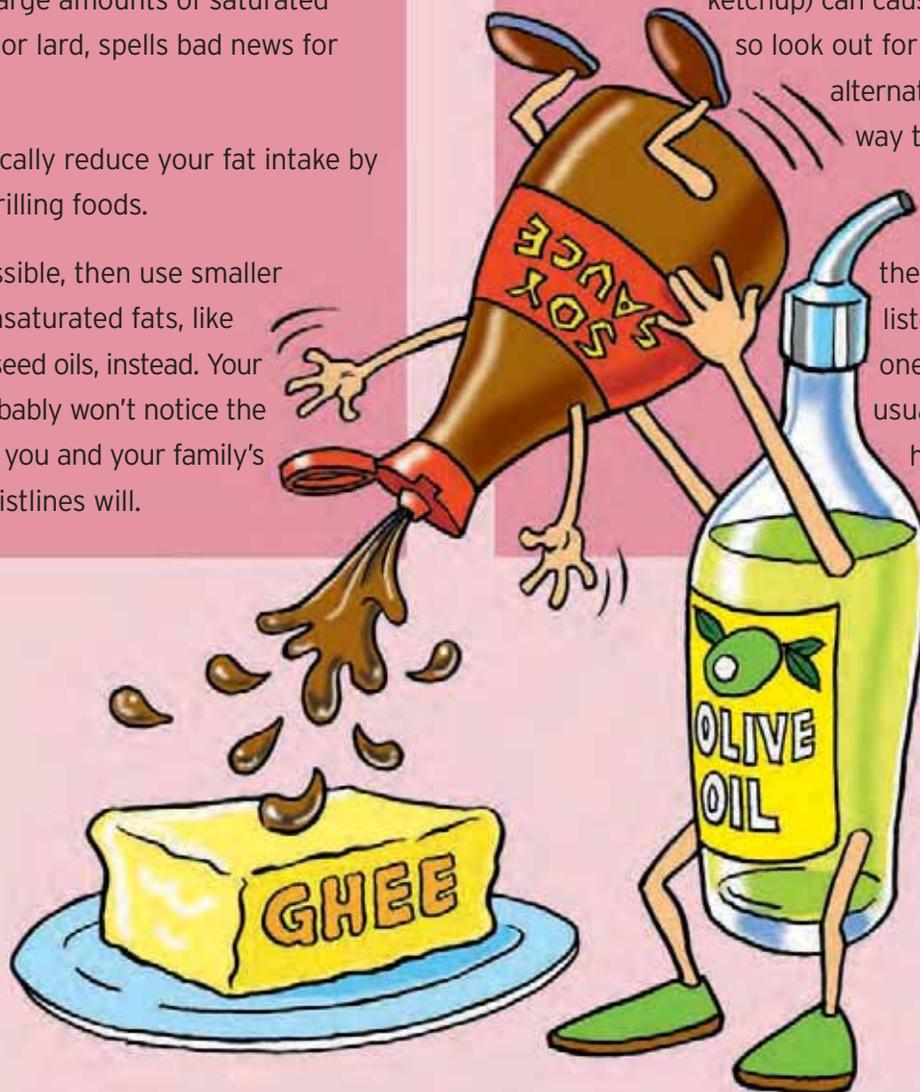
Although fatty foods can be bad for your health, small amounts of the right fats/oils are needed to stay healthy. Just remember, cooking with large amounts of saturated fats like ghee, or lard, spells bad news for your heart.

You can drastically reduce your fat intake by steaming or grilling foods.

If this isn't possible, then use smaller amounts of unsaturated fats, like olive and rapeseed oils, instead. Your taste buds probably won't notice the difference, but you and your family's hearts and waistlines will.

## Condiments and sauces

In small amounts, these are usually fine, but read the nutritional information to be sure. High salt (soy sauce) or sugar content (chilli ketchup) can cause problems, so look out for low-sodium alternatives. A good way to tell is by looking at the order of the ingredients listed - the first ones listed are usually in the highest quantities.



# Food and family

...my family really support me and that gives me the confidence to stay in control.

Shanti, 44

Cooking for a family can be complicated enough, even when there are no special dietary requirements. That's why it's important to plan ahead. Keeping a few diabetes friendly ingredients in the fridge and freezer, in case of emergencies, or those times you're too tired to cook can really help - like ready-prepared, home-cooked meals, tinned or frozen vegetables or canned soups.



**Remember, whether you have diabetes, or have children with diabetes, staying in control of your blood glucose is a family effort. That doesn't mean everyone has to change the way they live, but it does mean making a few small compromises - like learning how to cope with a hypo (low blood glucose), eating meals at regular times or agreeing to healthier foods at mealtimes.**

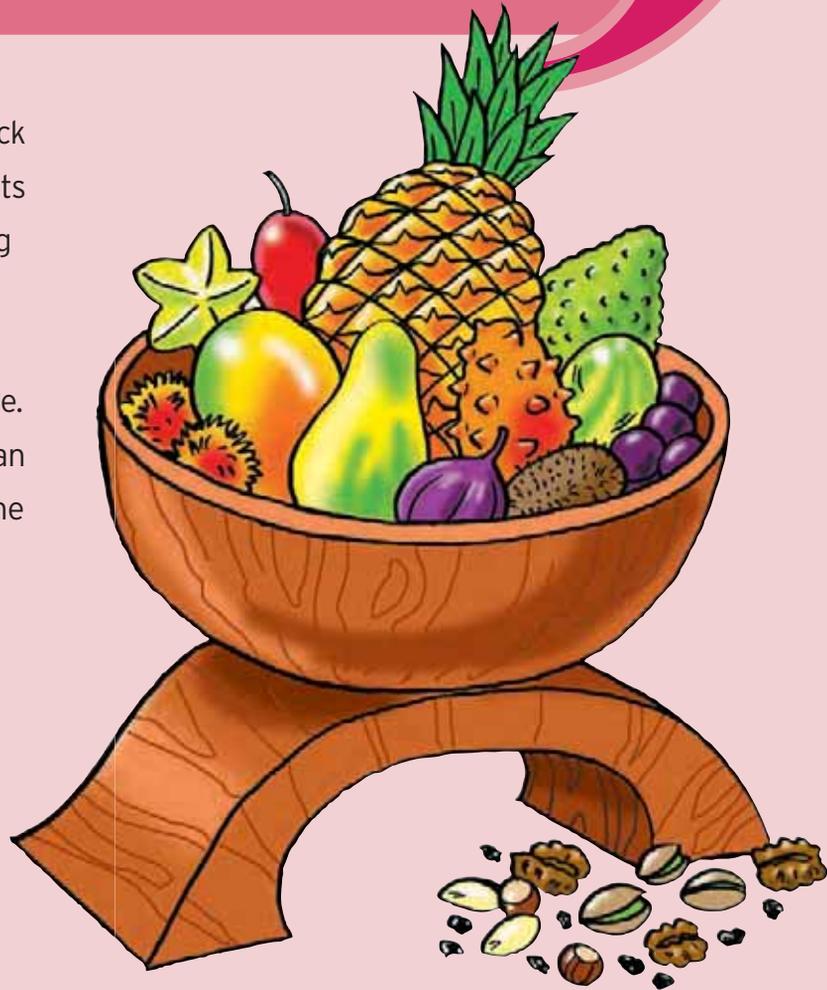
# Planning meals

...having switched to a low-fat diet, I feel more energetic and less bloated too.

**Kessi, 29**

Processed foods and take-aways are quick and easy, but often high in saturated fats and salt. With a little know-how, cooking with fresh ingredients can be just as simple and much better for you. Try to explore recipes that fit with your lifestyle. Thai salad with rice, or noodle stir-fry can make a quick and convenient meal in the week, while recipes that take a little longer, like rogan josh, may be better suited to the weekend.

Steam vegetables whenever possible, this helps keep in the nutrients and reduces your fat intake.



# Special occasions

The thought of eating out can make people with diabetes a bit nervous. Delayed meals, sugary foods and the risk of getting a hypo can take the fun out of a treat or celebration. But with a bit of preparation there's no reason why you shouldn't go out and enjoy yourself.

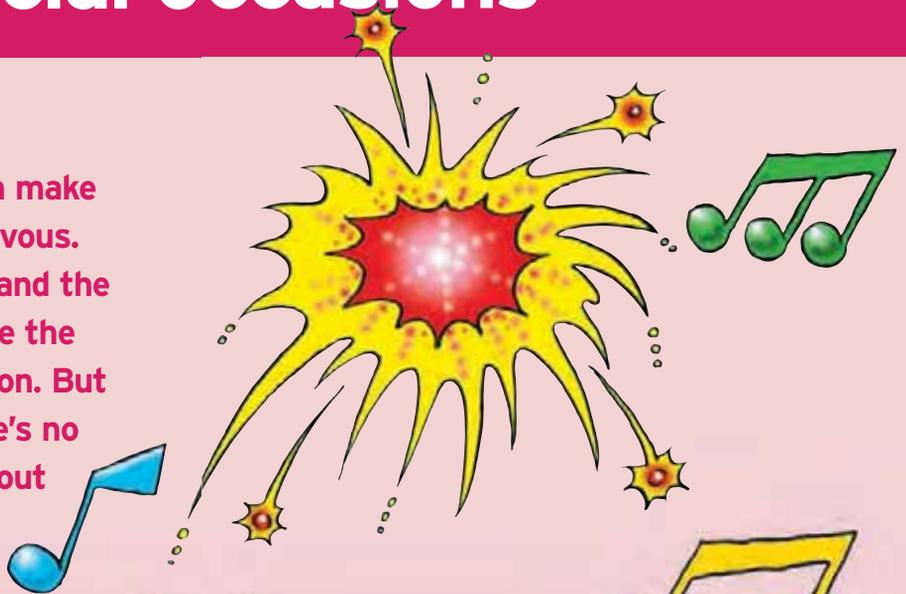
## General advice

- If you're going to a party, tell the host or hostess before to make sure there will be food served, including something with carbohydrate
- If this isn't possible, have something to eat before going or take a small snack with you

- Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach - your blood glucose could fall very quickly
- If you eat out regularly it all adds up, so choose healthy options
- Keep a sugary snack handy in case you're out later than you think

## Treatment advice

- If you are on insulin and there's a chance you may eat later than normal, you can simply delay taking your insulin and have a quick snack to see you through
- If you're at a restaurant, inject your insulin as your food arrives - just in case it gets delayed
- If you're treated with tablets or diet alone, you can be more flexible with your mealtimes



# Fasting for religious reasons



If you wish to fast for religious or principled reasons, then there are some key issues you should be aware of relating to your diabetes and treatment.

Remember, if you are ill, pregnant or have a chronic condition like diabetes, you are exempt from fasting during Ramadan.

## Tablets or insulin

Talk to your doctor as you may need to adjust your dose to avoid getting a hypo (very low blood glucose) and to cope with the sugar from your meal in the evening.

## Diet alone

If you do fast it shouldn't be a problem, but make sure you are careful and eat before and after the day's fasting.

# Quick and easy recipes to try

There are now several recipe books for diabetes friendly menus. Visit the Diabetes UK website, [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk) and search for "recipe books".

## Moroccan carrot soup

Serves: 4

2 pints vegetable stock  
1lb (480g) carrots, peeled, trimmed and sliced  
1 garlic clove  
1/8 tsp cinnamon  
1/4 tsp cumin  
1/2 tsp paprika  
1 pinch cayenne pepper  
Juice of a lemon  
Parsley for garnish

Boil stock and add carrots with the garlic. Reduce heat and simmer until tender. Remove half the carrots and set aside. Purée the remaining mixture and then return it to the saucepan. Add the cinnamon, cumin, paprika, cayenne pepper and sliced carrots. Simmer for one minute. Before serving, stir in the lemon juice. Garnish with chopped parsley.

### 1 serving contains approximately:

Calories	54kcal
Carbohydrate	10g
Protein	1g
Fat	1g
Fibre	3.0g
Cholesterol	0mg

## Spicy szechuan chicken

Serves: 4

4 skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips  
3 tbl cornflour  
1 tbl sunflower oil  
3 cloves garlic, crushed  
5 tbl soy sauce (salt reduced)  
1 1/2 tbl white-wine vinegar  
1 tsp natural honey  
1/8 pint water  
6 spring onions, chopped  
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/4 tsp paprika

Mix cayenne pepper with cornflour and coat chicken. Heat oil in wok then stir-fry chicken and garlic until lightly browned. Add mixture of soy sauce, vinegar, honey and water. Cover and cook chicken through. Add spring onions and paprika. Remove cover and cook for 2 minutes.

### 1 serving contains approximately:

Calories	337kcal
Carbohydrate	22g
Protein	43g
Fat	9g
Fibre	0g
Cholesterol	122mg