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# *Salt shockers*

**THESE FOODS PACK AS MUCH SODIUM AS SOYA SAUCE!**

BY ESTELLE LOW





**A**s any bloat-fearing girl knows, it's always a good idea to ask for low-sodium soya sauce when ordering that spicy tuna roll, as just one tablespoon (15ml) of the regular kind can contain a whopping 1,022mg of sodium. But besides the popular condiment, there are other foods that are surprisingly high in salt, says Jaclyn Reutens, a dietitian at Aptima Nutrition and Sports Consultants.

Though the Health Promotion Board of Singapore recommends no more than 2,000mg (one teaspoon) of sodium a day, Jaclyn advises keeping it below 1,500mg. Setting a lower limit is the safer bet as we tend to underestimate the amount we're eating. "It's not easy to track the amount of sodium in your diet as most foods come with pre-added salt," she says.

In addition to that jeans-don't-fit feeling, a high-sodium diet raises your risk for high blood pressure and heart disease, so trimming salt from your diet is a smart move. Here are some places to start.

#### SMOKED FISH AND SEAFOOD

Before salmon is smoked to derive that delightful oaky taste, it needs to be cured. The curing process involves slathering the fish with salt, a major sodium contributor, and other ingredients. Just one slice of smoked salmon contains 317mg. By comparison, a slice of salmon sashimi has about 5mg. If you must have smoked fish, limit yourself to three slices, says Jaclyn.

#### BOTTLED SALAD DRESSING

Yes, it may seem easier to buy it rather than make it, but most commercial brands of salad dressing can have up to 300mg of sodium per two tablespoons.

Sugar- and fat-free varieties, which seem like the healthier option, tend to compensate for the loss of flavour by amping up the saltiness. You can choose low-sodium or no-salt-added varieties, but they probably won't taste good. A better idea: Use lemon juice or a vinaigrette dressing on your salad. One tablespoon of each contains less than 1mg of sodium, says Jaclyn.

#### FAST FOOD SALADS

Having chicken caesar salad instead of a cheeseburger may save calories, but the sodium content of fast food salads is amped up by the ready-made dressing. Plus, that sachet of ranch isn't the only culprit. High-sodium meats, croutons and other additions add to the salt ▶

**Besides the salt we add to food, about 75% of salt is hidden in processed foods.**

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count. For example, the charbroiled chicken salad at Carl's Jr. has 850mg of sodium with dressing. If this is your only lunch option, skip the dressing and toss out some croutons.

### BREAD AND CROISSANTS

Flaky, buttery pastries like croissants are known as fat bombs, but they also have a lot of sodium – about 400mg for just one. Another sodium-laden item: bagels. Some larger ones contain nearly 700mg!

Even wholemeal bread has a fair amount at about 150mg per slice. "This is always a shocker for our clients because they think bread doesn't contain much salt at all," says Tammy Lakatos Shames, a US-based dietitian and author of *The Secret To Skinny: How Salt Makes You Fat, and the 4-Week Plan to Drop a Size and Get Healthier with Simple Low-Sodium Swaps* (US\$12.44 or S\$16.66, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

"It actually has nearly the same amount of sodium as a serving of potato chips, but as the salt is on the surface of the chip, it's easier to taste. With bread, it's baked in," she says. As a guide, have no more than two slices of wholemeal bread each time, says Jaclyn.

### PROCESSED MEAT

You might want to think twice about filling your morning sandwich with luncheon meat, ham or another processed cold cut. These artificially derived items – reconstituted from ground meat, bread crumbs, pepper and salt – are saturated with sodium.

A slice of canned luncheon meat has 390mg, chicken ham 241mg, and a chicken sausage has 669mg. Even a really thin slice of bacon packs 192mg, so forget about second helpings! Where possible, use fresh or frozen meat and tofu. They're great in soup and stir-fries, and have way less sodium than their processed counterparts, says Jaclyn.

## BE SODIUM-SMART

*Cut unnecessary salt from everyday meals with these tips from Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition and Sports Consultants.*

### WHEN EATING OUT...

- Ask for less gravy
- Request for sauces to be served on the side
- Resist dipping meats into soya sauce
- Don't add salt to food
- Avoid finishing soups

### WHEN COOKING...

- Use flavour-boosting herbs and spices like thyme, paprika and basil
- Use freshly squeezed lemon and lime juice to marinate food or as salad dressings





## WHICH IS SALTIER?

*In general, soya sauces come with staggering amounts of sodium. That's why they make everything taste so savoury. Here's a comparison of brands available here.*

	Brand of soya sauce	Sodium (mg) per 15ml (1 tbsp)
DARK (STANDARD GRADE)	Tai Hua	1,022
	Tiger Brand	769
	Fairprice	623
	Kwong Cheong Thye	534
	Thai Sing	175

	Brand of soya sauce	Sodium (mg) per 15ml (1 tbsp)
LIGHT (STANDARD GRADE)	Tai Hua	968
	Thai Sing	996
	Fairprice	965
	Tiger Brand	759
	Kwong Cheong Thye	624

**For every 1g of salt we cut from our average daily intake, there could be 4,147 fewer deaths from strokes and heart attacks each year.**

SOURCE [WWW.WORLDACTIONONSALT.COM](http://WWW.WORLDACTIONONSALT.COM)

**FETA CHEESE** While it's a good source of calcium and protein, feta cheese can be loaded with sodium – 1,376mg per 150g cup. If you love feta cheese, look for low-sodium versions whenever possible. A better choice is plain yogurt with about 150mg, or a slice of Swiss cheese, which has just 20mg. Jaclyn suggests using light spreadable cream cheese, which contains 396mg per cup.

### CANNED SOUP

In general, canned or preserved products are higher in sodium, due to the addition of preservatives, sauces and seasonings. Ready-made soup may be instantly gratifying on a dreary day, but one serving of cream of seafood has over 1,000mg of sodium – two-thirds of your daily quota! The solution? Prepare your own broth. For instance, boil celery, carrots, onions, garlic and mushrooms for a few hours, adding chicken bones if you want more flavour, suggests Jaclyn. If you're using stock cubes, pick those with less than 200mg sodium per 100g. **S**

