



500

15-Minute

Low Sodium
Recipes

FAST AND FLAVORFUL LOW-SALT RECIPES
THAT SAVE YOU TIME, KEEP YOU ON TRACK,
AND TASTE DELICIOUS

DICK LOGUE

AUTHOR OF *500 LOW SODIUM RECIPES*

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FAIR WINDS
PRESS
BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

Contents

INTRODUCTION Why Another Low-Sodium Cookbook?

CHAPTER 1 The Keys to Fast, Great-Tasting, Low-Sodium Meals

CHAPTER 2 Ingredients and Sources

CHAPTER 3 5-Minute Make-Aheads that Make 15-Minute Meals Easy

PART I 15-MINUTE MEALS FROM START TO FINISH

CHAPTER 4 15-Minute Snacks, Appetizers, and Party Foods

CHAPTER 5 15-Minute Breakfasts

CHAPTER 6 15-Minute Poultry Dishes

CHAPTER 7 15-Minute Beef Dishes

CHAPTER 8 15-Minute Pork and Lamb Dishes

CHAPTER 9 15-Minute Fish and Seafood Dishes

CHAPTER 10 15-Minute Vegetarian Dishes

CHAPTER 11 15-Minute Salads

CHAPTER 12 15-Minute Side Dishes

CHAPTER 13 15-Minute Desserts and Sweet Things

PART II FIX-IT-IN-15 AND LET-IT-COOK MEALS

CHAPTER 14 Fix-It-in-15 Make-Aheads

CHAPTER 15 Fix-It-in-15 Breakfasts

CHAPTER 16 Fix-It-in-15 Poultry Dishes

CHAPTER 17 Fix-It-in-15 Beef Dishes

CHAPTER 18 Fix-It-in-15 Pork Dishes

CHAPTER 19 Fix-It-in-15 Fish and Seafood Dishes

CHAPTER 20 Fix-It-in-15 Vegetarian Dishes

CHAPTER 21 Fix-It-in-15 Side Dishes

CHAPTER 22 Fix-It-in-15 Desserts and Sweet Things

CHAPTER 23 The Joys of the Bread Machine

CHAPTER 24 Cooking Terms, Weights and Measurements, and Gadgets

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

Why Another Low-Sodium Cookbook?

Some of you may be wondering why there is a need for another low-sodium cookbook. If you stop in at your local bookstore or visit an online bookseller, you'll see that there are already a number of books on the subject. And a quick search online will reveal a number of websites focusing on low-sodium cooking. I've contributed to this existing information myself. I have a website at www.lowsodiumcooking.com, and in 2007 I wrote *500 Low-Sodium Recipes*. So what made me think that there was a need for another low-sodium book? The main reason was what I hear from people who have visited my website or who are readers of my email newsletter. They tell me that they know they would be healthier if they lowered the amount of sodium in their diet, but it's not as easy as it sounds.

In listening to people, I have found there are a couple of recurring themes that seem to be the most common reasons why people find it difficult to stick to a low-sodium diet. And as I thought about my previous books and other low-sodium books that I have collected, it became more obvious that no one has really tried to specifically address these difficulties. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed like a new book might be what was needed.

What Makes Low-Sodium Cooking Difficult?

The reasons people identified seemed to group into a few key areas.

- Low-sodium food doesn't taste as good. There is a pretty much widely accepted belief that low-sodium food has no taste, or at least very inferior taste.
- Low-sodium cooking costs too much. People believe that because they need to buy ingredients that they haven't bought before and that may only be available online, low-sodium cooking is going to be more expensive.
- Low-sodium cooking is difficult. The main complaints here are that people don't know where to find low-sodium ingredients or how to make food that tastes good without using high-sodium ingredients.

And the big one . . .

- Low-sodium cooking takes too much time. Everyone is busy these days. There is work, family commitments, and generally busier-than-ever lives. People don't want to spend a lot of their precious time preparing food, so fast food restaurants and convenience foods fill that need, but at the cost of high sodium levels.

How Can We Solve Those Problems?

The purpose of this book is to help people overcome these difficulties and find a way to make the transition to a lower sodium diet easier. Let's take a quick look at how we'll do that.

- Taste. While it's true that it does take some time to get used to the taste of food without added salt and high-sodium ingredients, I have heard from a number of people how surprised they were at the taste of the recipes in my first book. But to get to that point does sometimes require being creative, experimenting and tweaking recipes until they taste the way you'd like. Many people don't have the time or the desire to do that, so I've done it for you.
- Cost. This is one of the areas where being informed and making smart choices makes all the difference. Yes, it's true that you may need to buy some ingredients that you didn't buy before, but you also can make a lot of meals for a lot less money than buying prepared dinners. Instead of spending fifteen dollars for a delivery pizza, you can make one that is healthier, tastes just as good, and costs maybe half that.
- Difficulty. There are several keys here. One is knowing which ingredients are available and where to find them. That's something that has changed a lot since I started my low-sodium diet in 1999. And it has even changed since my first book came out. So it's time for an update. The other key here is knowing how to easily make the things you can't readily buy. I've included a chapter here on make-ahead items that you can just pull off the shelf and use. And that helps to solve . . .
- Time. There's no way around it—you are going to have to cook more things from scratch to maintain a low-sodium diet. Not as many as in 1999, when I was making my own mustard and ketchup, but it's still difficult to find really low-sodium versions of a lot of things, which is where my make-aheads chapter comes in. You will no longer be able to stop at the fast food place or microwave a frozen entrée. And *that* is the real focus of this book. It is filled with 15-minute recipes: main dishes, side dishes, and desserts that you can have on the table in about a quarter of an hour. There's also a section of recipes that you can prepare in 15 minutes and then let them cook on their own. Many of these involve appliances such as slow cookers and bread machines.

So the bottom line is that you can have tasty, inexpensive, easy, low-sodium meals without spending your life in the kitchen. And that is what people tell me they need in order to successfully transition to a low-sodium diet.

A Little Bit about Me

Some of you may already know me from my Low-Sodium Cooking website and newsletter or from my other books focused on low-sodium and other heart-healthy recipes. For those who don't, perhaps a little background information might be useful.

I started thinking about heart-healthy cooking after being diagnosed with congestive heart failure in 1999. One of the first, and biggest, things I had to deal with was the doctor's insistence that I follow a low-sodium diet . . . 1,200 mg a day or less. At first, like many people, I found it easiest to just avoid the things that had a lot of sodium in them. But I was bored. And I was convinced that there had to be a way to create low-sodium versions of the foods I missed. So I learned all kinds of *new* cooking things. I researched where to get low-sodium substitutes for the things that I couldn't have anymore, bought cookbooks, and basically redid my whole diet. And I decided to share this information with others who may be in the same position I had been in. I started a website, www.lowsodiumcooking.com, to share recipes and information. I sent out an email newsletter with recipes that now has more than 20,000 subscribers. And I wrote my first book, *500 Low Sodium Recipes*.

Perhaps the best way to start in telling you who I am is by telling you who I'm not. I'm not a doctor. I'm not a dietician. I'm not a professional chef. What I *am* is an ordinary person just like you who has some special dietary needs. I have enjoyed cooking most of my life. I guess I started it seriously about the time my mother went back to work when I was twelve or so. In those days, it was simple stuff such as burgers and hot dogs and spaghetti. But the interest stayed. After I married my wife, we got pretty involved in some food-related pursuits—growing vegetables in our garden, making bread and other baked goods, canning and jelly making, that kind of thing. She always said that my “mad chemist” cooking was an outgrowth of the time I spent in college as a chemistry major, and she might be right. So creating the kind of food that people said couldn't be done, low in sodium and high in taste, was a fun challenge for me.

Along the way, I also learned about other things that make a diet heart healthy. I became more aware of cholesterol, fiber, and the glycemic index and began incorporating what we learned into the recipes. So you will find that the recipes here are not only low in sodium, but they also tend to be low in saturated fat, contain whole grains and other high-fiber foods, and tend to focus on fresh ingredients. This all actually comes together nicely, because in many cases the same foods that fit those requirements are also low in sodium and taste better than the less healthy alternatives.

How Is the Nutritional Information Calculated?

The nutritional information included with these recipes was calculated using the AccuChef program. It calculates the values using the latest U.S. Department of Agriculture National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. I've been using this program since I first started trying to figure out how much sodium was in the recipes I've created. It's inexpensive, is easy to use, and has a number of really handy features. For instance, if I go in and change the nutrition figures for an ingredient, it remembers those figures whenever I use that ingredient. AccuChef is available online

from www.accuchef.com. They offer a free trial version if you want to try it out and the full version costs less than twenty dollars.

Of course, this implies that these figures are estimates. Every brand of tomatoes, or any other product, is a little different in nutritional content. These figures were calculated using products that I buy here in southern Maryland. If you use a different brand, your nutrition figures may be different. Use the nutritional analysis as a guideline in determining whether a recipe is right for your diet.

1

The Keys to Fast, Great-Tasting, Low-Sodium Meals

Perhaps the first questions I need to answer are why we should be interested in following a low-sodium diet and what I mean by one. Even if your doctor hasn't specifically told you to lower your sodium intake, there is a lot of research and recommendations that says it's a good idea.

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium daily for healthy adults.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that individuals with hypertension, African Americans, and adults fifty years old and above should consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- The United Kingdom's Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) is 1,600 mg daily.
- The National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences recommends 1,100 to 1,500 mg daily for adults.
- Studies have shown that many people in the United States and Canada routinely consume two to three times these amounts daily.

Given these figures, it's pretty safe to say that many of us consume more sodium than is good for us. If you already have a history of heart disease, or have a family history of it, it's even worse. I know I sound a bit like a zealot in this, but I can honestly say that I felt much better when I first started my low-sodium diet more than ten years ago. And I'm probably in a better position now medically than I was then. All I can say is, it's worked for me and lots of other people I've talked to.

As I said in the introduction, I started off being interested in low-sodium meals that I wanted to eat every night. There is only one recipe in this book with more than 300 mg of sodium (the pork fajitas have 314, and that's basically a whole meal). I later became interested in other things that contribute to heart health. There are a couple of general principles that I have come to believe are important in maintaining a heart-healthy diet.

- Eat foods low in sodium. We've already talked about this.
- Eat foods low in saturated fat. Fats such as those found in olive and canola oils do have some health benefits and you will see them specified whenever a recipe uses

oil. Generally, most studies seem to support the idea that both saturated and trans fats represent health risks, so I have tried to limit them as much as possible. I feel that trans fats are the bigger hazard, and so I use butter whenever solid fat is called for. It just seems to me that the more we eliminate manufactured and highly processed foods the better.

- Eat foods high in fiber. Eating foods high in fiber is another of those things that has multiple positive effects. I haven't always specified ingredients such as whole-grain pasta and brown rice here, but that is what I usually eat. If nothing else, I think it has more flavor.
- Focus on fresh, minimally processed foods. There has been an increased focus on avoiding processed foods in recent years. The Canyon Ranch spa cookbook I own suggests, "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother didn't," and that seems like a reasonable approach to me. In general, raw is better than cooked and fresh is better than frozen, which is better than canned.

Tip and Tricks

So, given that information from abundant sources suggests that we need to eat healthier, low-sodium meals, my goal is to show you how to get one on the table in 15 minutes. We need to be conscious of a few things to make that happen. In the next few paragraphs, we'll look at how things such as being careful in your choice of ingredients, planning, and buying or making the things you are going to need ahead of time can have a big impact on how long it takes to prepare a low-sodium meal.

- Ingredient choices. The ingredients we choose are important for several reasons. First of all, as obvious as it seems, if we choose high-sodium ingredients, we are not going to end up with a low-sodium meal. So no matter how quick it is to prepare, it's not going to be as healthy as we might want. It's easy to prepare quick meals using canned, frozen, and boxed products that are meant to save you time, but from a sodium standpoint, you might as well just stop at McDonalds. The next chapter will give you a lot more information on finding and selecting low-sodium ingredients. Ingredients are also important in terms of how long they take to cook. This is probably also obvious, but it does require a different way of thinking about meal preparation. If you have a really busy evening and it's important to get a meal ready in 15 minutes, there are some choices that just aren't going to work. You'll notice that the pasta recipes in this book call for angel hair pasta or spaghetti. Now I happen to love fettuccini and linguini, and from the standpoint of the recipe, they would work just as well. The problem is that they can take 14 to 16 minutes to cook, and that's after you get the water boiling. So I save that for days when I have more time. There are a number of things that fall into that category: rice that takes 20 minutes or more to cook (although the "Instant" Rice recipe in [chapter 14](#) solves that problem); vegetables or meats that must be braised; roasts and baked items; and so on. But that doesn't mean you can't still have a wide variety of great-tasting meals. The notes at the beginning of each chapter will help steer you in the right

direction. And there are almost 400 recipes that can be on the table within 15 minutes of the time you walk into the kitchen.

- **Substitutions.** There are some decisions you can make about substituting one ingredient for another that affect both the speed of preparation and the sodium content. Some are the kinds of things we talked about in the last section, such as substituting thin spaghetti for thick, instant rice for long-cooking rice, and so on. But there are also a lot of choices you make that, more importantly, affect the sodium content. If there were one piece of advice I could give people who are trying to reduce the amount of sodium in their diets, it would be this: Become a label reader. If you just pick a few categories and look at the options in your favorite store you will quickly see why I say this. Canned tomatoes may have as little as 20 mg per serving or as much as 200 mg. The last time I bought bacon, I found a brand with 120 mg of sodium per two slices right next to a brand with almost three times as much. Chicken, turkey, and pork often come “enhanced” with broth to make them juicier—and with three to four times the sodium. If you are aware of these things when you are buying your groceries, you can either make it easier to produce fast, healthy meals or set yourself up for failure.
- **Planning ahead.** How many times have you thought of the perfect idea for dinner only to find that you don’t have the ingredients on hand? I know it has happened to me. Or do you arrive home and have no idea what you are going to fix? The way to avoid that is planning ahead. This becomes especially important if you are trying to make quick meals. If you look at your upcoming week, you’ll often see that there are nights when things are going to be especially hectic. Maybe it’s a night when you have activities with the children or you know you are going to be late getting home from work. That’s the night you want to know ahead of time what you are fixing and not end up staring into the freezer wondering what you can thaw in time or whether you just need to order pizza delivery. I’ve learned to look at my upcoming week on the weekend when I have more time (and more energy than in the evening). Then I can plan what each night’s dinner is going to be and see whether I need a trip to the grocery store in order to have everything I need.
- **Make ahead.** I have two chapters in this book of make-ahead recipes because I’ve found that to be key in getting healthy meals on the table fast. There are some things that you really need to have available when you start. Many of these are the kinds of things you would normally just buy in a can or bottle. Salad dressings are a good example of this. Other than a few fruit-flavored dressings, it’s really difficult to find any in a regular grocery store that are low in sodium. They typically run from about 250 mg per serving up to almost 400 mg. That means you could end up with a third of the sodium you’d like to have for the day in just one serving of salad dressing. You know you can make dressing, but sometimes you don’t want to spend that extra 5 or 10 minutes to do it. So I’ve included a number of low-sodium ones that you can make ahead of time and have ready to use in the refrigerator. Half an hour when you have the time will get you a good assortment that you can just pull out and use. That’s true of many of the recipes in [chapter 3](#), which include things such as low-sodium soy sauce and salad dressings that are

used in other recipes later in the book.

Chapter 14 addresses a little different situation. If you look at books and websites with quick meals, they often rely on meat or rotisserie chicken from the deli section. But those items also contain a lot of sodium. The solution? On the weekend, while you are running errands or doing chores around the house, take a few minutes to put a chicken, turkey breast, or beef roast in the oven. It doesn't really take much, if any, attention, and it gives you that head start on 15-minute meals. One other recipe in chapter 14 has become a real favorite of ours. We like rice with a lot of meals, but steaming it takes 45 minutes. There are a couple of ways around that. You can buy instant rice like Minute Rice that cooks in 5 minutes, but I'm not really as fond of the flavor and texture as I am of long-cooked rice. You can buy the little microwavable bags of precooked white or brown rice that cook in 90 seconds. I like those; they are easy, quick, and taste great. The only problem is they cost two to three dollars for two servings. Or you can buy a 5-pound bag of long-cooking rice and get fifty servings for about the same price as three of the microwave bags. But now we're back to the 45-minute problem. So I steam a batch as big as my steamer will hold when I have the time, pack it 2 cups at a time in freezer bags, and when I want some I pop it in the microwave and have the taste and convenience of the microwave bags without the cost. This same technique works well with some vegetables. Things such as broccoli, cauliflower, and green beans can be bought in quantity when they are cheap and fresh, steamed for a few minutes, plunged into cold water to keep them from cooking further, and packed in freezer bags to be microwaved later. You have frozen veggies with all the taste and nutrition of fresh ones, and all you have to do is punch a little hole in the top with the point of a knife and you have the convenience of the microwave bags at a fraction of the cost.

- Cooking techniques. I should probably include just a couple of comments about some of the cooking techniques used in this book to speed the process of making healthy meals. One that is sometimes overlooked is the microwave. I've included a number of microwave recipes here. Some are the kinds of things people have gotten used to microwaving all the time, such as hot breakfast cereal and fruit desserts. Others are ones that people tend to shy away from. However, I've found that if you are careful to cook things until they are just done and not overcooked, you can successfully microwave a number of chicken, beef, and fish dishes. It's the *only* way I know that you are going to get a meatloaf for a family on the table in 15 minutes. The other technique that I discovered (at least I've never seen it anywhere else) is what I call mock kabobs. You'll find these recipes scattered throughout many of the 15-minute chapters. The idea is this: Kabobs are in many ways a great way to get the meat and/or vegetables for a meal cooked quickly, because everything is cut up into small pieces. The only problem is the preparation time tends to be a bit long. Not only do you have to cut them up, but then there's also that tedious job of threading them onto skewers. However, I've found that you can eliminate the second step. Instead of skewering them and putting them on the grill, cut them up and stick them under the broiler or in a heavy frying pan for a few minutes.

2

Ingredients and Sources

The following are general guidelines for reducing the amount of sodium in your diet. Bear in mind that just following these guidelines may not be enough depending on how low the amount of sodium you are targeting. You may also find that you need to pick and choose, eating some higher sodium items that you can't find an easy replacement for. You also still need to be a careful label reader; there are big variations within some categories, with specific products being either better or worse than the average.

- Breads
 - Better: Homemade, English muffins, white, wheat, pumpernickel, other types of regular or unsalted breads and rolls
 - Avoid: Sweet rolls, breads or rolls with salted tops, packaged cracker or bread crumb coatings unless unsalted, packaged stuffing mixes, biscuits, cornbread
- Cereals
 - Better: Regular cooked cereals such as oats, cream of wheat, rice, or farina; puffed wheat; puffed rice; shredded wheat
 - Avoid: Instant hot cereals, any other regular ready-to-eat cereals
- Crackers and snack foods
 - Better: All unsalted crackers and snack foods, unsalted peanut butter
 - Avoid: Salted crackers and snack items, regular peanut butter, prepared spreads and dips
- Pasta and carbohydrates
 - Better: All types of pastas such as macaroni, spaghetti, rigatoni, ziti; potatoes; rice
 - Avoid: Macaroni and cheese mix; seasoned rice, noodle, and spaghetti mixes; canned spaghetti; frozen lasagna, macaroni and cheese, rice, and pasta dishes; instant potatoes unless unsalted; seasoned potato mixes
- Dried beans and peas
 - Better: Pinto beans, Great Northern beans, black-eyed peas, lima beans, lentils, split peas, and so on.
 - Avoid: Any beans or peas prepared with ham, bacon, salt pork, or bacon grease; all canned beans unless no-salt-added
- Meat, poultry, and fish

- Better: Fresh or frozen meat, poultry, and fish, unless they contain added higher sodium ingredients; low-sodium canned tuna and salmon; eggs
- Avoid: Salted, smoked, canned, spiced, and pickled meats, poultry, and fish; bacon; ham; sausage; scrapple; regular canned tuna or salmon; cold cuts; luncheon meats; hot dogs; breaded frozen meats, fish, and poultry; TV dinners; meat pies; kosher meats
- Fruits and vegetables
 - Better: Fresh, frozen, or low-sodium canned vegetables or vegetable juices; low-sodium tomato products; fresh, canned, or frozen fruits and juices
 - Avoid: Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices, regular tomato sauce and tomato paste, olives, pickles, relishes, sauerkraut or vegetables packed in brine, frozen vegetables in butter or sauces, frozen peas or lima beans with added salt, crystallized and glazed fruit, maraschino cherries, fruit dried with sodium sulfite
- Dairy products
 - Better: Milk, cream, sour cream, nondairy creamer, yogurt, low-sodium cottage cheese, low-sodium cheese
 - Avoid: Buttermilk, Dutch-processed chocolate milk, processed cheese slices and spreads, regular cheese, cottage cheese
- Fats and oils
 - Better: Unsalted butter or margarine; cooking oils; salt-free gravies, cream sauces, and salad dressings
 - Avoid: Bacon grease; salt pork; commercially prepared sauces, gravies, and salad dressings
- Soups
 - Better: Salt-free soups and low-sodium bouillon cubes
 - Avoid: Regular commercially canned or prepared soups, stews, broths, or bouillon; packaged and frozen soups
- Desserts
 - Better: Gelatin, sherbet, fruit ices, pudding and ice cream as part of milk allowance, angel food cake, salt-free baked goods, sugar, honey, jam, jelly, marmalade, syrup
 - Avoid: Regular commercially prepared and packaged baked goods, chocolate candy
- Condiments
 - Better: Fresh and dried herbs; lemon juice; low-sodium mustard, vinegar, and hot pepper sauce; low-sodium or no-salt-added ketchup; extracts (almond, lemon, vanilla); baking chocolate and cocoa; seasoning blends that do not contain salt
 - Avoid: Table salt, lite salt, meat extract, Worcestershire sauce, tartar sauce, ketchup, chili sauce, cooking wines, onion salt, prepared mustard, garlic salt, meat flavorings, meat tenderizers, steak and barbecue sauce, seasoned salt,

monosodium glutamate (MSG), Dutch-processed cocoa

Comments on a Few Specific Ingredients

- Eggs. The recipes call for egg substitute rather than eggs. I started this as a way to reduce the amount of cholesterol I was taking in, especially since I have eggs for breakfast fairly often. The brand I use does have 25 mg more sodium than whole eggs, so there is a tradeoff. If cholesterol isn't an issue for you, it's cheaper and easier to just use whole eggs.
- Milk. Although the recipes call for skim milk, to keep down the amount of fat, there are some lower sodium alternatives, such as low-sodium soymilk products.
- Baking powder and baking soda. In my humble opinion, this is a no-brainer. If you bake anything that uses baking powder with the regular stuff off your grocer's shelves you are eating sodium that can easily be avoided. Given the amount of sodium in standard baking powder, it's likely to be 100 to 200 mg per serving. Some doctors also believe the aluminum in regular baking powder is bad for you. The simple solution is sodium-free, aluminum-free baking powder. There are several brands available, but they have been difficult to find locally. I've found the Featherweight brand at a health food store. It's also available online at Healthy Heart Market. The price is comparable to regular baking powder. Recently Clabber Girl released a reduced sodium version of their Rumford baking powder. It's not sodium-free like the Featherweight, but it does contain significantly less sodium than regular baking powder and is widely available at many grocery chains. Like baking powder, regular baking soda is unnecessary sodium intake. The only brand of sodium-free baking soda I'm familiar with is Ener-G and the only place I've seen it is online at Healthy Heart Market. The manufacturer does recommend doubling the amount of baking soda called for in your favorite recipes when using this product. The recipes in this book already have the amount doubled. I've used both products for more than eleven years. The baking powder has never failed to produce the desired results. The baking soda sometimes doesn't seem to rise as much as I would have expected. I don't know whether that's because mine has gotten old or whether it has to do with particular recipes, but it's something to be aware of.
- Seasoning blends. You'll likely be able to find some salt-free versions of these on your regular grocer's shelves. Mrs. Dash makes a number of different blends that are widely available, and major spice manufacturers such as McCormick do also. Many spices come in bottles small enough to be exempt from the usual labeling requirements in the United States, so you'll need to read the ingredient list and look for added salt. Health food stores often stock salt-free spice blends, and there are a number of places to get them online. You'll also find recipes for making some of your own in [chapter 3](#).
- Sauces and condiments. In looking at products like barbecue sauce, Asian sauces, ketchup, mustard, and salsa, you'll find a wide range of sodium levels. Most of the

low-sodium varieties are made by companies in the organic and specialty foods area, so you'll have a better chance of finding them in health food stores or markets with large organic food sections. Many of the products you'll find on regular grocery shelves contain high amounts of sodium. Low-sodium varieties are also available for sale online, or you can make your own using the recipes in [chapters 3 and 14](#).

- Canned tomato products, vegetables, and beans. In the United States, most of the large food companies such as Hunt's and Del Monte make salt-free versions of these products. I have no trouble finding a good selection of no-salt-added tomato products and a more limited selection of other no-salt-added vegetables in any large supermarket. Beans are less common and are another area where organic food producers are leading the way. With a little more effort you can cook your own dried beans without salt for a fraction of the cost of the canned ones. I usually cook a 1-pound (455 g) bag at a time and freeze what I don't need for future use.
- Soups, broths, and bouillon. Like other products, low-sodium versions of these are available, but not as widely as we might like. Again, organic food producers are the best bet for finding a truly low-sodium item. There are recipes in [chapter 14](#) for making your own stock to use in place of canned broth. There are also some very low-sodium soup bases from companies such as Redi-Base available online. These come in a variety of flavors and have a much more natural taste than the sodium-free bouillon cubes.
- Bread. Low-sodium bread is hard to find in many places. I highly recommend a bread machine so you can make your own. The notes in [chapter 23](#) go into this in detail, and the chapter contains a number of recipes to get you started.
- Meats. These days, many fresh meats are "enhanced" by injecting them with a broth solution to make them juicier. Unfortunately, it also increases the sodium level from 75 to 80 mg per serving to more than 300 mg. This is especially true of chicken and turkey and increasingly true of pork. There is still unadulterated meat around, but you have to be careful and look for it. I've also seen several instances of pork that was marked as being "enhanced" but that didn't contain a nutrition label to let you know how much sodium had been added.
- Salt substitutes. You won't find any salt substitutes listed in the ingredients in this book. I know that some people really like them as a way to get that salty flavor without the sodium, but I'm not fond of them myself. There are two reasons. One is that the potassium chloride they contain tends to have a metallic aftertaste. The other is that I'm concerned that using the substitute will make it harder for your body to adjust to the taste of food without salt. If you are considering using one you should check with your doctor first to make sure the increased potassium will not be an issue.

Where Do I Find These Ingredients?

The first place to look for low-sodium ingredients is in your local grocery stores. I can't tell you what may be available at your local market, wherever in the world you may be, but I find a number of low-sodium ingredients locally. And at least here in southern Maryland, it's gotten easier to find products since I first started this diet twelve years ago. At that time, there were a lot of things I couldn't find. I spent quite a bit of time trying to come up with a good low-sodium recipe for ketchup. Now Hunt's and Heinz both market it nationally. I shop at several of the large supermarket chains, a couple of discount clubs, and one local store. I buy many of the items I use at one of these places. They all carry different things, but between them I find quite a few low-sodium items. I also stop by my local health food store occasionally. Because many of the manufacturers that are involved in organic products also tend to make salt-free versions, you'll find health food stores to be a good source, especially for spices and canned products. Any of these stores, either grocery or health food ones, carry what they think will sell, and the store manager has some discretion in choosing those items. So letting your local store manager know that you want low-sodium items stocked *may* help. I've seen cases where managers will order something new if asked and ones where they won't, because they feel the space could be used for something that more people want. It never hurts to ask.

Another great source for low-sodium foods is stores that specialize in organic and gourmet foods, such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. They are kind of like mainstream health food stores. If you live near one of these, or a similar store, you should definitely check them out. You can get a list of locations from their websites. Be on the lookout for local stores that cater to similar clientele. I have one that carries all the salt-free seasoning blends from several organic suppliers.

There are online sources that specialize in low-sodium products, but you need to be careful. Some just offer this as a sideline to another business and aren't as careful as they could be about what they label as low sodium. There is one online site that was founded by a heart transplant recipient and carries only low-sodium products: Healthy Heart Market at www.healthyheartmarket.com. They carry some things that you probably didn't even know came in low-sodium versions. Healthy Heart Market ships to the United States and Canada. The service is great, the prices and shipping costs are reasonable, and the selection is extensive. Besides that, it makes good sense to patronize places that are striving to make a living by providing the products that we all need but often find difficult to locate. It's a win for both sides.

Portion Control

One final comment that I want to make is that you need to be careful about portion sizes. I know that's something everyone thinks goes without saying. But I know that I sometimes struggle with it, so I just thought I would mention it. I find it particularly an issue with things such as dairy products. If you carefully read the label and it says there are 100 mg of sodium in a cup of milk and you fill a 12-ounce glass, that is 150 mg, not 100.

3

5-Minute Make-Aheads that Make 15-Minute Meals Easy

Because some things are difficult (or impossible) to find in low-sodium versions, the easiest way to obtain them is to make them yourself. These are quick recipes that you can make in a few minutes in quantities that will allow you to make multiple meals. Having these kinds of items on hand is one of the keys to making the other recipes in 15 minutes or less. Some of them, such as the soy and teriyaki sauces and the soup and dressing mixes, are used in a number of recipes throughout the book to boost flavor without adding sodium. Others, such as the salad dressings, are simply good things to have in the refrigerator so you have a low-sodium option available when you want it.

Buttermilk Baking Mix

Use this baking mix in any recipe that calls for Bisquick. It's a lot lower in sodium than even their heart-healthy version.

10 1/2 cups (1260 g) all-purpose flour
1/4 cup (60 g) sodium-free baking powder
1/2 cup (100 g) sugar
1 cup (120 g) buttermilk powder
1 1/2 teaspoons sodium-free baking soda
2 cups (400 g) shortening

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients with an electric mixer or pastry blender until pieces are small and uniform in size. Store on a shelf in a tightly covered container for up to 1 year.

Yield: About 14 cups, 1/2 cup per serving

Per serving: 358 calories (41% from fat, 8% from protein, 51% from carbohydrate); 7 g protein; 17 g total fat; 4 g saturated fat; 7 g monounsaturated fat; 4 g polyunsaturated fat; 46 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 256 mg phosphorus; 162 mg calcium; 27 mg sodium; 361 mg potassium; 8 IU vitamin A; 2 mg ATE vitamin E; 0 mg vitamin C; 3 mg cholesterol

Salt-Free Seasoning

This blend comes close to approximating the flavors in the typical seasoned salt blends like Lawry's, without the sodium. Use it anywhere seasoned salt is called for or when you want to give food a little extra flavor. I like it in soups and egg dishes.

1 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon celery seed
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon coriander
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon turmeric

Mix all the ingredients well and store in an airtight container. Will keep indefinitely, but the flavor will be best if used within 6 months.

Yield: 5 1/2 teaspoons, 1/4 teaspoon per serving

Per serving: 2 calories (28% from fat, 11% from protein, 60% from carbohydrate); 0 g protein; 0 g total fat; 0 g saturated fat; 0 g monounsaturated fat; 0 g polyunsaturated fat; 0 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 0 g sugar; 2 mg phosphorus; 2 mg calcium; 1 mg sodium; 9 mg potassium; 82 IU vitamin A; 0 mg ATE vitamin E; 0 mg vitamin C; 0 mg cholesterol

Salt-Free Mexican Seasoning

Add to chili, beans, or other Mexican dishes or sprinkle on grilled vegetables such as potatoes or onions.

1 tablespoon (6 g) ground chile pepper

2 teaspoons garlic powder

2 teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon paprika

1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin

1 teaspoon celery seed

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/4 teaspoon ground bay leaf

Mix all the ingredients well and store in an airtight container. Will keep indefinitely, but the flavor will be best if used within 6 months.

Yield: 11 teaspoons, 1 teaspoon per serving

Per serving: 7 calories (20% from fat, 14% from protein, 65% from carbohydrate); 0 g protein; 0 g total fat; 0 g saturated fat; 0 g monounsaturated fat; 0 g polyunsaturated fat; 1 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 0 g sugar; 7 mg phosphorus; 10 mg calcium; 1 mg sodium; 28 mg potassium; 193 IU vitamin A; 0 mg ATE vitamin E; 1 mg vitamin C; 0 mg cholesterol