

Soya Sauce – Dark or Light Side?

DASHING DIPS

Three main variations of soy sauce exist: light (lighter in colour, non-viscous and with a saltier flavour), dark (aged longer than light, thicker, richer and slightly sweet) and sweet (a thick, sweet sauce usually used for dipping) – each with varying nutritional content, says Vivianna Wou, a nutritionist from the Food Advisory Group (www.foodadvisory.sg).

Light soy sauce is the most salt-rich. It contains 1,241mg of sodium per tablespoon compared to 689mg and 561mg for dark soy and sweet soy sauces respectively, according to the Health Promotion Board. For light soy sauce, that level comes very close to our recommended daily allowance, which stands at 1,650mg. So, dip in moderation.

SOY YEAH

You'd probably think we're nuts if we say soy sauce can be healthy. Impossibly healthy, it seems: Research from the National University of Singapore discovered that dark soy sauce can actually contain 10 times more antioxidant levels than red wine.

Credit this to soybeans being very high in fibre, protein and essential amino acids, says Wou, though she also notes that up to 70 per cent of the vitamins in soybeans are destroyed during the fermentation process. (Those that remain are still pretty wholesome, though.) Some reports have also stated that adding soy sauce to vegetables can increase the amount of iron the body can absorb, although its exact workings are still unknown, Wou adds.

DON'T GET BEANED

Here's one main downside to soy sauce: It's sometimes flavoured with free glutamates, which is essentially monosodium glutamate (MSG), says Wou. "Although moderate use of MSG or glutamate in foods poses no significant risk, a small percentage of people are sensitive to it, which may cause them to experience problems such as tightness in the chest and dizziness," she says. If anything, soy sauce is nearly 18 per cent salt, so it's wise to limit your intake.

