Sodium in the Asian Heritage Diet

Asian cuisine often relies on sodium-heavy sauces like fish sauce and soy sauce as flavor enhancers. Today, a typical Asian diet can contain more than 4,600mg of sodium in one day's worth of food.[1]

High-sodium diets can put people at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. Current dietary guidelines say most adults should eat **less than 2,300mg of sodium per day** (that's about 1 teaspoon of salt).

	Sodium in 1 Teaspoon		Sodium in 1 Tablespoon	
	mg	% Daily Value	mg	% Daily Value
Table salt	2,330mg	101%	6,980mg	303%
Fish sauce	470mg	20%	1,410mg	61%
Soy sauce	290mg	13%	880mg	38%
Miso	210mg	9%	630mg	27%
Low-sodium soy sauce	160mg	7%	510mg	22%

4 Tips for Keeping Sodium in Check

Here are four ways to enjoy Asian heritage cuisine without depending on salty condiments as your primary source of flavor.

1 **Add flavor with fresh herbs and aromatics.**
Ingredients like ginger, garlic, lemongrass, scallions, turmeric, cilantro, basil, chile peppers, and citrus juices are all staples in Asian heritage cooking.

2 **Turn up the umami.**
Best described as "savory" or "meaty," *umami* is often called the "fifth taste" (after sweet, bitter, sour, and salty). Mushrooms, seaweed, ripe tomatoes, and anchovies all add this savory flavor that's characteristic of Asian cuisines.

3 **Add sodium-heavy sauces *after* cooking.**
America's Test Kitchen found that "if you add salt only at the end, it provides a more concentrated, superficial coating that immediately hits your tongue."[2] Thus, you can get away with using less sauce.

4 **Balance your plate.**
Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and unsaturated fats are essential parts of the Asian Heritage Diet. Research shows that eating a diet filled with these foods may help reduce high blood pressure, stroke risk, and heart disease risk.[3]

1 "Asian Diets: Health Benefits and Risks." Asian Diabetes Prevention Initiative. http://asiandiabetesprevention.org/how-to-reduce-your-risk/asian-diets-benefits-risks
2 "Science: When Should You Add Salt During Cooking?" Cook's Illustrated. https://www.cooksillustrated.com/how_tos/9161-science-when-should-you-add-salt-during-cooking
3 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf