



Photo Credit: Dietlicious

CASE STUDY

A new way for meal producers to improve health



Dietlicious has successfully reduced the sodium content in their meals by using a novel, low-cost technology that overcomes the typical barriers of cutting sodium – the solution being the switch to potassium-enriched salt.

There is increasing demand for easy, convenient meal options that are both delicious and nutritious. In Australia, the prepared meal delivery market is expected to continue to grow¹ due to the convenience and time-saving benefits it offers to busy individuals as well as its essential service for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those living with a disability.

In Australia, 70–90% of the sodium consumed comes from salt in packaged and processed food and food cooked outside the home. Most people eat too much sodium (in the form of regular salt) and not enough potassium, both of which contribute to high blood pressure.² Currently, 1 in 3, Australian adults have high blood pressure, a major cause of premature death and disability.³

To reduce the harms caused by poor diet, The George Institute is leading an initiative to switch the world's salt supply from regular salt to potassium-enriched salt.

Switching to potassium-enriched salt across the prepared meal delivery sector would help improve the nutritional value of meals without compromising on taste and convenience.

POTASSIUM-ENRICHED SALT – BENEFITS

Potassium-enriched salt is a healthier alternative to regular salt that contains less sodium and more potassium, but looks and tastes like regular salt.

Potassium is an important mineral that supports heart health, regulates blood pressure, and maintains fluid balance.⁴ Switching to potassium-enriched salt has the dual effect of reducing sodium – a key risk factor for disease – while increasing potassium, which has the opposite effects of sodium. Since salt is a common ingredient used for enhancing flavour, incorporating this simple switch into packaged foods, home-delivered meals and home cooking promotes healthier eating habits without sacrificing taste preferences.

CREATING HEALTHIER MEALS BY USING POTASSIUM-ENRICHED SALT

Dietlicious is one meal delivery service provider working to reduce the sodium content in its foods. The company has partnered with Neptune Bio-Innovations, an Australian company that developed and manufactures Heart Salt, a potassium-enriched salt that contains 56% less sodium than regular salt. Heart Salt contains a combination of sodium chloride and potassium chloride, both naturally occurring minerals. Dietlicious made the switch to potassium-enriched salt for several reasons, including in-house research indicating a global interest in the switch, a desire to align their meal portfolio with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and a commitment to enhancing the healthfulness of meals available in the market.

1 IBIS World. Prepared Meals Production in Australia - Market Research Report (2014-2029) [Prepared Meals Production in Australia - Market Research Report \(2014-2029\)](#)

2 Drewnowski A, Rehm CD, Maillot M, Mendoza A, Monsivais P. The feasibility of meeting the WHO guidelines for sodium and potassium: a cross-national comparison study. *BMJ Open*. 2015;5(3):e006625.

3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/risk-factors/high-blood-pressure/contents/summary>

4 World Health Organization. (2012). Guideline: potassium intake for adults and children. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/77986>

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The main concerns in making the switch included whether it would affect the flavour of meals, whether consumers would accept or notice the change, and managing any costs.

Extensive in-house and consumer taste testing showed no negative impact on consumer perception (**Box 1**) and indicated potential cost increases were negligible as so little salt is added to each meal to achieve the preferred flavour profile.

Box 1. Consumer taste testing results and feedback

97% ★★★★★
gave the meals made with reduced-sodium potassium-enriched Heart Salt a satisfaction **rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 stars.**

97% 
said they would **prefer to eat lower sodium meals** if the taste was the same.

“

So impressed with your initiative for reducing salt, the meals are so very tasty that additional salt is not necessary.

I think it's a great initiative. We should all eat less sodium without giving up the pleasure of great tasting food.

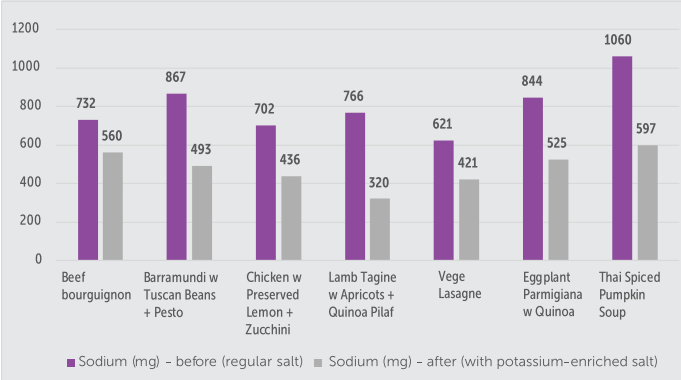
The resounding response from customers encouraged Dietlicious to review all their recipes and incorporate potassium-enriched salt exclusively. The timeline for transitioning to potassium-enriched salt was three months. This involved taste testing, recipe reformulation, meal stock outs, website content, and labelling revisions. Notably, the ingredients list was updated to feature “potassium-enriched Heart Salt.” While the recipe changes would mean a small proportion of consumers – people with advanced chronic kidney disease, severe heart failure, or on medication that impairs potassium excretion – would need to consult their health professionals before consumption, the overall health benefits of the switch were considered to outweigh any potential disadvantages, and the labels make it clear the product contains potassium.

The cost implications of the switch were minimal due to the relatively low cost of the ingredient and established business practices, such as batch labelling, which facilitated immediate label changes without generating waste.

The largest expense incurred was the provision of free meals to consumers during the taste testing phase.

Owner and founder, Janel Horton said, “We have wholeheartedly embraced Heart Salt in our kitchens. The salt content of our meals has dropped dramatically, and we are thrilled to say we now have more than 50 low-salt diet meals (**Fig 1**). Even better, customers are loving the taste, and we feel great knowing we're part of the solution to building a nation of heart healthy Australians.”

Figure 1. Sodium content (mg/serve) across a sample of meals before and after the switch to potassium-enriched salt.



Building on this success, Dietlicious is now exploring the use of potassium-enriched sauces, like soy sauce, for their Asian meals to further expand their range of low-salt options.

RECOMMENDATION TO ALL MEAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PRE-PREPARED MEAL PRODUCERS

All meal service providers are urged to make the switch from regular salt to potassium-enriched salt. The Dietlicious example shows switching is feasible, acceptable by consumers and aligns with growing consumer demands for healthy meal options. Additionally, proactively addressing sodium levels can help providers comply with existing sodium regulations and future changes to health regulations that require reduced sodium levels as part of a global movement to address high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

By embracing this change, meal service providers can enhance their offerings, improve public health outcomes and strengthen their market position.

Australian suppliers of potassium-enriched salt can be found [here](#).

FIND OUT MORE

For more information, please contact potassiumsalt@georgeinstitute.org.au