

Extension

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Smoothies for healthy meals and snacks

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Peel-Chop-Slice-Whiz-Blend; you have just made a smoothie. Healthy smoothies are not only quick and easy, they are also packed with essential vitamins and nutrients. Smoothies are perfect for our busy lives. We can blend them up quickly and drink them on the go. Healthy smoothies can be incorporated into our diet as a light meal, a snack or even a dessert.

Smoothies can be a tasty and convenient way to eat more fruits and veggies, and children often enjoy them. If dairy products are used, smoothies can provide a good source of calcium, protein and Vitamin D.

Design a Healthy Smoothie

When making a smoothie, it can be easy to add too much sugar and fat. So use caution when adding ingredients. Avoid excess juice and sweetened yogurt. Use low-fat plain yogurt or low-fat milk. Experiment with interesting flavor combinations. The possibilities are endless. Consider a variety of colors and textures. Think about the portion size. The standard serving size is an eight-ounce portion or one cup. Even too much of a good thing can be unhealthy.

Tips to creating healthy 8 ounce smoothies:

- To prevent excess sugars, limit the fruit to ½ cup per serving.
- Green veggies like kale, spinach, parsley, and cabbage surprisingly do not taste very intense in smoothies so load up (1/2 cup per serving) on those!
- Citrus juice, lime especially, can help cut out any bitter taste from vegetables (remember to remove the peels and any seeds).
- High water content vegetables like cucumbers and celery will add volume, nutrients and great flavor.
- Using frozen fruit helps to thicken the beverage without diluting the flavor.
- Adding plain low-fat milk or yogurt can provide a great source of calcium, protein and Vitamin D.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables and chop them into small pieces before adding them to the blender.
- Serve smoothies with a crunchy snack. Instead of adding nuts to your smoothie, chew on a handful; enjoy a rice cake, or a handful of baby carrots.
- Make sure to use a strong blender, or tougher greens like kale may not blend as smoothly as desired.
- Smoothies are best when consumed immediately. They may change color or texture if allowed to stand for a long time.



Let's Talk about how to create a Smoothie

Follow a basic recipe and choose from simple foods to make the perfect smoothie for your taste. Choose an item from each category (fruit, vegetable, dairy, and extras). Chop any large pieces of fruit or vegetables into small pieces. Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Blend on high until smooth. Do not overload blender.

Fruit - ½ cup per 8 ounce serving. Any type of fruit works well. Frozen fruit is a great option since it makes your smoothie extra cold and frosty. If you have over-ripe bananas, peel and freeze them for smoothies.

Veggies - ½ cup per serving. Veggie smoothies can be a good way to get picky eaters to eat their veggies. Green smoothies use leafy greens like kale or spinach to pack in tons of nutrition. This is a good way to increase children's intake of dark green vegetables. Other veggies, like carrots, beets or cucumbers, can be used in smoothies, too. Many dark green vegetables can taste bitter and have a tough and fibrous texture. Blending them with other tastes and textures may make them more pleasant tasting to children than the vegetables in their raw, whole form.

Diary - ½ to 1 cup per serving. Get calcium (and many other vitamins and minerals) for strong bones and healthy bodies by using low-fat milk or yogurt as your smoothie base. Milk alternatives, like soy or almond milk, work well too. Dairy and dairy alternatives help give the smoothie a creamy texture. The protein from dairy will make it more filling too.

Extras - Here is an opportunity to boost the taste of your smoothie and provide an extra dose of nutrition. Be creative and find combinations you like such as a tablespoon of peanut or almond butter, spices or herbs like cinnamon, nutmeg or mint, vanilla extract, ground flaxseed, rolled oats, cooked quinoa, or cocoa powder.

Ice - If the fruit you are using is not frozen, try adding a few ice cubes to the blender. 3 - 4 ice cubes per serving can make a smoothie thick, cold, and frothy.

Recipe for Health: Popeye Smoothie

Ingredients

6 - 8 ounces of yogurt

½ cup skim milk

½ cup fresh or frozen banana

½ cup fresh or frozen fruit

1 cup packed fresh spinach, chopped

Combine all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth.

Yield: 2 - 8 ounce smoothies

