

Healthy Snacking

Snacks are an essential part of good nutrition. Eating between meals is a healthy way to get in extra nutrients when you're hungry. Over-snacking can be a problem if grazing so much that we don't allow ourselves to get hungry enough or give ourselves the time to eat true meals, which is the best way to get in optimal nutrients from a variety of foods and support a healthy digestive tract.

Identifying how, when, and why you choose certain snacks can help you choose the healthiest options. Typically, we may be craving a certain texture or flavor (salty, sweet, tangy, crunchy, or smooth)? Sometimes we want a bite to eat because we're feeling low energy and need something quick. Or maybe you're really hungry and not ready yet to have a full meal.

Nuts are a fantastic option that stay fresh including heart-healthy fats, protein, fiber, and much-needed minerals. Look for lightly salted or raw walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, almonds, or a mixture that has minimal ingredients. Better yet, take home a variety that you love, add your own seasonings like Mexican chilis and oregano, cocoa powder with sea salt, or Italian herbs and sumac freshly roasted and ready to nourish.

While dairy can be difficult to digest (the protein and fat molecules are very large, taking longer to break into their individual acids to provide energy to cells), cultured cottage cheese is a great choice for those who are able to eat, like Nancy's brand. Generally, a maximum of 2 servings a day is the most recommended so you don't avoid other nutritious foods.

Fruit is a wonderful choice too but if you struggle with blood sugar balance, mix whole berries to yogurt, add natural peanut butter on apple slices, or blend fruits into a bowl of whole oatmeal for sweetness that will also nourish fully.

There are many pathways towards health. Eating beneficial foods is the start of every path, which will look and mean something different for every person. Remember that wellness is many faceted. Guilt and shame should have no part in food or a healthy diet. Community, movement, and joyful eating are intrinsic to having a vibrant holiday season as well as every day. Choose the foods you love, savoring each bite.

These 3 recipes are filled with essential fiber, vitamins, minerals, proteins, and healthy fats to keep you well-nourished. They are great options easily adapted to meet a craving for something sweet, salty, spicy, crunchy or chewy while also providing essential nutrients the body needs to stay healthy. Get creative and enjoy your food.

Eat well, live well.

Peanut Butter & Jelly Trail Mix Bars

A fantastic, quick-to-make, easy-to-store snack that not only can hit all your potential cravings, they also pack in a lot of essential nutrition with minerals, protein, and fiber. It's simple to swap out for any food allergies, seeds in place of nuts, almond or sunflower butter in place of peanut butter. The optional powders offer a little extra boost if you want. Maca root is perfect for helping with focused energy, get extra protein from an unsweetened powder, or a greens mix (my favorite it Amazing Grass Kidz blend) to boost vitamins. You can even stir in different spices like cinnamon or cardamom or sprinkle on a little flaked sea salt on top before baking if your go-to is salty treats.

Makes 20-30 servings (3-4, 1-inch squares)



9x13 inch pan, Parchment Paper, oil spray

2 cups rolled oats

2 cups chopped nuts, seeds, or trail mix with dried fruit or dark chocolate

3/4 cup shredded unsweetened coconut (read ingredients to make sure it's just coconut)

1/3 cup ground flaxseeds, flaxseed meal, or lightly ground chia seeds

Optional: 2-3 tablespoons protein powder, maca root powder, or greens powder

1/4 cup date syrup (can sub honey or agave nectar)

3/4 cup all-fruit jam (your favorite to go with peanut butter)

3/4 cup all-natural peanut butter (salt-free as needed)

2 tablespoons warmed virgin coconut oil, olive, or avocado oil (coconut gives the best hold)

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

3/4 teaspoon sea salt (if using table salt or white granulated salt, reduce to 1/2 teaspoon or eliminate if choosing add a flaked salt topping)

1. Preheat oven to 355°F. Line the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with parchment paper then spray the parchment paper sides with cooking spray. Set aside.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the oats, chopped nuts/seeds or chopped trail mix, coconut, ground flax seeds or chia seeds, and optional protein, maca root, or greens powder (choose just one if using).
3. In another larger bowl, add honey, jam, peanut butter, oil, vanilla, and salt, stirring until combined. It may help if you lightly warm the bowl to help make it smoother.
4. Pour and stir the dry mix into the wet until combined.
5. Spread the batter into the prepared pan, using a silicon spatula to even out the layers, pressing them into the pan.
6. If you want a salty topping, add a light sprinkle of flaked sea salt. For a spicy touch, lightly sprinkle with chili flakes.
7. Bake 25 to 28 minutes, until the top looks dry and is golden brown. Let cool completely before cutting or the bars will crumble apart if too warm. Once cool, lift out the paper, then slice into 1- to 3-inch bars. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for up to 9 months.

Per Serving Estimate: 7g protein, 3.5g fiber, 60mg sodium, 0g cholesterol, 4g fat

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Nourish-Me Brownies

There are a thousand ways to make sweet treats but when you can do it while still giving your body the nourishment it needs, then you have a winner of a snack! The beans create a luscious brownie that still has essential fiber and minerals. Adapted from the Fiber Fueled Cookbook. 12 servings.

- 1, 15 ounce can black beans drained and rinsed (around 1 2/3 cups)
- 1/2 cup peanut butter, almond butter, sunflower butter, or raw tahini
- 1/4 cup oat flour or almond flour or whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/4 cup pure cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup pure maple syrup (can sub dark agave nectar or do partial syrup of honey or date syrup but maple gives the best flavor)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 tablespoon apple cider or white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- Optional: 1/2 teaspoon cayenne or chili pepper powder and/or 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup chocolate chips (preferably dark chocolate but use your favorite)
- Optional: 1/3 cup walnuts, hemp seeds, or pumpkin seeds



Preheat oven to 350. Spray/grease an 8x8 baking dish or line with parchment paper.

In a food processor, start by pulsing the beans a few times to get them chopped. Scrape down the sides then add in remaining ingredients EXCEPT chocolate chips and optional nuts. Blend until smooth and creamy.

Add 2/3 of the chocolate chips to the batter (saving some for topping) and if using, the optional nuts. Pulse a few times to get stirred into the batter.

Spread batter out into the prepared baking dish. It should be a thick batter so use the back of a spoon or spatula to spread into corners evenly. Sprinkle remaining chocolate chips and any additional optional seeds, then lightly press in to the batter on top (if they're just placed on top they will burn).

Bake 28-30 minutes or until a toothpick or thin knife inserted comes out clean (try to avoid the big chocolate chip pieces as this will look like batter). There isn't concern with under-baking as there are no eggs so if you think it is close to done it is okay to remove from the oven then!

Allow to cool completely before slicing into squares. Stays fresh in a sealed container for 2-3 days, in the refrigerator 5-6 days, or sealed tightly in the freezer for 4-6 months!

Gingerbread Smoothie

Being on restricted diets means you may miss out on some of your favorite holiday treats. This gingerbread smoothie recipe is gluten-free, dairy-free, and has anti-inflammatory ingredients that not only taste great but are healthy for you as well. This recipe uses soy milk for higher protein and calcium content. If you prefer, you can substitute this with coconut milk (extra creamy goodness) or even coconut water (super hydrating); oat or almond milk blends well with the other ingredients if this is your preference. Increase or decrease spices according to your preferred taste.

Makes 1 larger or 2 smaller servings, Freeze leftovers for a frozen treat later!

- 1 cup of nondairy milk like soy (or other one without carrageenan)
- 1 large or 2 small frozen bananas (peel first then freeze in chunks or use fresh and add some ice after blending to chill and thicken)
- 1 teaspoon (or so) blackstrap molasses (a great source of minerals)
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla (may want to add ¼t almond extract if you like)
- 1 ½ teaspoons (or so) fresh ginger or roughly ½ teaspoon powdered
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg or cardamom
- A pinch of ground cloves



Optional ingredients: 3-8 baby spinach leaves; a few drops stevia liquid to make extra sweet; crushed ice; 1 spoonful of peanut butter or a scoop of protein powder

1. Place all ingredients into your blender and puree until your mixture has a smooth and creamy consistency. Don't add ice, it just dilutes the flavors at this point.
2. Taste and adjust seasonings to your preference. For extra spice add in a few more pinches of your favorite clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, or ginger. Add in some ice or a little more milk to thin or make it milder.
3. Drink directly after blending or if you have leftovers, keep refrigerated for 1 day or place into popsicle molds for a tasty treat later. If drinking after a few hours in the fridge, you may wish to shake well to re-combine any ingredients that have separated, or pop it back into the blender to froth the mixture up again.