



Cooperative Extension

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

Luanne J. Hughes, MS, RDN: FCHS Educator, Gloucester County

Yara Helmy, MS, RDN, Intern, St. Elizabeth University

Kelly Hughes, MPH, Intern, Montclair State University

An All-Around Healthy Smoothie

With a busy schedule, it can be challenging to eat all the foods you need to stay healthy. Smoothies can be a great option for a healthy, on-the-go breakfast, snack, or dessert for kids and adults. The ingredients you choose influence the nutrient content of your smoothie. Not all smoothies are a nutritious choice; some are loaded with sugar, fat, and extra calories. A smoothie that includes ingredients like vegetables, fruits, protein foods, and dairy or dairy alternatives is nutrient-rich and packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and more.

With a little planning, you can build a nutrient-packed smoothie that is both tasty and healthy. Use MyPlate, the USDA's nutrition guide to help you build a "better" smoothie. Try these tips to incorporate as many of the MyPlate food groups as possible:

- **Fruits & Vegetables:** Most Americans do not eat all the daily recommended fruit and vegetable servings needed for optimal health. Both fruits and vegetables support digestion, help reduce cholesterol, and lower the risk of developing heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Adding fruits and vegetables to smoothies can be a great way to get the vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants you need to support many important functions in the body, including immune health, bone strength, and cellular repair. Choose a smoothie recipe that combines both fruits and vegetables. Sweet fruits blend nicely with many vegetables to create a tasty, nutrient-packed smoothie.

Vegetables typically have fewer calories than fruits. Calorie for calorie, vegetables add more nutrients and less sugar to a smoothie. Use fruits to enhance the flavor of your smoothie. Rely on vegetables to balance out the flavor and boost the nutrient density of your smoothie. Select recipes that use at least a 1:1 vegetable to fruit ratio, meaning at least equal parts vegetables to fruit.

- **Protein:** There is limited research available to document how the amount of protein you eat impacts the development of chronic diseases. However, evidence is mounting to suggest that high-protein foods may play a role in improving the health of an aging population by improving muscle health, preventing loss of muscle tissue, and aiding in heart function. Adding protein-rich ingredients like beans, seeds, and nuts to your smoothie will increase the potential health benefits of your smoothie. These ingredients will also keep you feeling full for a longer time. Dairy and non-dairy milk options, such as almond milk or soy milk, can also add extra protein to your smoothie. When choosing milk, it is also important to choose fortified milks without any added sugars. For example, look for unsweetened almond milk or soy milk.
- **Dairy:** Dairy foods like milk and yogurt are often used to give smoothies a thicker, smoother texture. Dairy foods are packed with calcium, vitamin D, and phosphorus to build strong bones. Selecting reduced fat and fat-free milks and yogurts offers another lower-fat protein ingredient and an excellent source of calcium.



- **Grains:** Grains make a delicious addition to a smoothie. Adding whole grains like oatmeal, flaxseeds, and quinoa to a smoothie will thicken the texture and add dietary fiber. Dietary fiber helps you feel fuller for a longer time, while helping your body digest the foods you eat. Dietary fiber can help lower cholesterol, reduce the risk of developing diabetes, and help prevent constipation and diverticulosis.

Which Smoothie is Best for Me?

Pick a smoothie recipe that serves the best purpose for your lifestyle. Are you trying to eat more greens or calcium-rich foods? Are you trying to eat more lean protein or include more fiber in your daily meal plan? Or do you need an alternative treat as a dessert replacement or a healthy, “on-the-go” breakfast? If chosen wisely, a smoothie can be a convenient and tasty option to promote a healthy lifestyle. Follow these steps to build a better smoothie.

Step #1 -- Choose A Base

Bases provide the foundation for a smoothie. When preparing, add the base first, so it sits at the bottom of the blender. This will help blend all ingredients more easily. There are a variety of bases to choose from.

- **Dairy Bases:** Reduced-fat dairy bases, such as fat-free milk and cottage cheese provide protein and texture to a smoothie. Fat-free or reduced-fat yogurt makes an excellent base, as well. It creates a creamy smoothie without the added fat of cream or ice cream. Try Greek yogurt for an even thicker, smoother texture. Greek yogurt provides more protein and fewer carbohydrates than traditional yogurt. Many yogurts are also packed with probiotics that help with digestion, too. .
- **Non-Dairy Bases:** Unsweetened, fortified almond, soy, rice, and coconut milks are great base options if you are avoiding lactose or cannot tolerate traditional cow’s milk. Check the nutrition facts labels to compare the calorie, protein, and vitamin/mineral profiles of non-dairy milks. Individual brands vary. For a sweeter smoothie, it is easy to choose a 100% fruit or vegetable juice. While they are good sources of antioxidants and phytonutrients, fruit juices are more calorie-dense and are a more concentrated source of simple sugars than whole fruits and vegetables. Use juice sparingly in your smoothie; the calories add up quickly.
- **Water:** Water is a low-cost, calorie-free base you can use to reduce the thickness of a smoothie. Or, add ice to thicken a smoothie.

Step # 2 -- Pick a Fruit

You can use canned, fresh, or frozen fruit in a smoothie. Choose fruits that are canned in their own juice or 100% fruit juice, rather than syrups. If you use frozen fruit, be sure to use less ice. Larger fresh fruits (peaches, apples, etc.) blend easier if they are peeled and cut, rather than added whole. Bananas are a common smoothie ingredient because they add thickness while adding a mild flavor. Fruits will sweeten a smoothie, while providing antioxidants and color.

Step # 3 -- Add a Vegetable

Whether you choose spinach for its mild flavor, trendy kale or collard greens, or something unique like parsley or Swiss chard, adding dark green, leafy vegetables will fill your smoothie with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber. Chop tougher leaves like kale and collards to help them blend more easily. Freezing leaves improves the blendability. Avocados and mashed red/orange vegetables such as pumpkin, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, and carrots add thickness to smoothies. They are also rich in vitamin A and antioxidants like beta-carotene, which help protect against certain types of cancer and other chronic diseases.

Step #4 -- Boost Up the Nutrition

Once you have added ingredients from each of the food groups, try adding a “booster” to enhance the flavor. Add walnuts or almonds for a boost of protein. For a treat, add unsweetened cocoa powder or cinnamon. Flax and chia seeds provide Omega-3 fatty acids for heart health. Adding these healthy boosters will provide a great flavor while keeping you fuller longer. Blend in mashed beans (black, red, white, kidney and navy) for a protein and fiber boost. Beans thicken smoothies without adding flavor, and they blend well.

Smoothies can be a convenient and nutritious option for tasty breakfast, snack or dessert that provides vitamins, minerals, and protein. Give some of our favorite recipes a try; then, experiment by using our smoothie chart as a guide. There is no limit to what you can create.

For More Information

Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) works with families, schools, and communities to promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. Visit njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs for information on all our programs, and learn how to bring them to your school, worksite, or community organization.



Build Your Smoothie Recipe Collection with these Favorite Smoothie Recipes

Cool Tropical Smoothie

From www.gimmesomeoven.com

Ingredients:

- 3 cups baby spinach
- 1 cup frozen mango
- 1 cup strawberries
- ¾ cup unsweetened coconut almond milk
- 2 teaspoons chia seeds
- A squeeze of lime juice

Directions:

1. Add spinach, mango, strawberries, coconut almond milk, and lime juice to food processor.
2. Blend until smooth

Makes 2 servings.

Recipe adapted from HealthEssentials:

health.clevelandclinic.org/recipe-cool-tropical-smoothie

Pumpkin Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 cup pumpkin puree, fresh or low sodium canned
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 frozen bananas
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp maple syrup
- A handful of ice cubes

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and combine until smooth
2. Divide smoothie between 4 glasses. Serve over ice and with a sprinkle of cinnamon, if desired.

Makes 4 Servings

Recipe from SNAP4CT

snap4ct.org/pumpkin-smoothie.html



High-Protein Blueberry Smoothie

This smoothie will be a favorite! It's a great breakfast smoothie that will keep you full throughout the day. The added cottage cheese does the trick and increases protein while the blueberries and spinach/kale add key vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients to support health.

Ingredients:

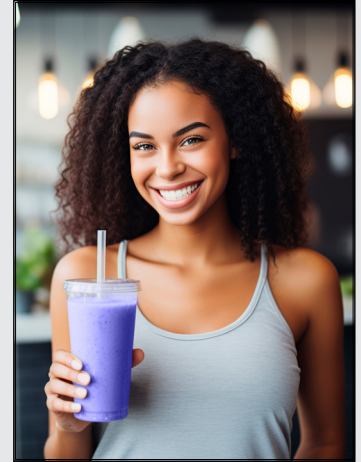
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 teaspoons peanut butter
- 1 cup fresh kale
- 1 cup almond milk, non-fat milk, or water

Directions:

1. Combine all the ingredients in a blender or a food processor.
2. Blend until smooth

Makes 1 serving.

Recipe by Yara Helmy, MS, RDN



Superfood Smoothie

From Yummly Recipes

Ingredients:

- 1 medium peeled banana, sliced and frozen
- 1 cup frozen spinach
- 1 medium apple with skin, chopped and frozen
- 1 (20 ounce) can pineapple chunks in 100% Juice
- 1 tablespoon hemp hearts

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth

Makes 4 servings.

Recipe adapted from University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension

planeatmove.com/recipes/recipe/superfood-smoothie

BUILD A BETTER

Smoothie

The Ultimate guide

To creating the most refreshing, taste, nutritious smoothies

Why Smoothies?

Smoothies can be a great option for a healthy, on-the-go breakfast, snack, or desert for kids and adults.

A Better Smoothie

A smoothie that includes ingredients like vegetable, fruits, protein foods, protein foods, and dairy or dairy alternatives is nutrient-rich and packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber antioxidants, and more.

PICK YOUR FRUITS

Bananas	Raspberries	Apples	Oranges
Plums	Papayas	Strawberries	Pineapple
Cherries	Cantaloupe	Mango	Blueberries
Kiwi	Pears	Apricots	

PUMP UP THE NUTRITION WITH VEGGIES

Spinach	Cucumber	Bok Choy	Cooked Squash
Celery	Cooked Beets	Kale	Cooked Pumpkin
Zucchini	Collard Greens	Swiss Chard	
Cooked Carrots	Avocados	Bell Peppers	

ADD A BASE

Water	Coconut Water	Coconut Milk	Rice Milk
Low-Fat Yogurt	Milk	Soy Milk	
Greek Yogurt	Almond Milk	Oat Milk	

TOSS IN SOME ADD-INS

Peanut Butter	Cinnamon	Walnuts	Vanilla Extract
Almond Butter	Chia Seeds	Flax Seed	Ginger
Nut Butter	Almonds	Oatmeal	Honey

Place all ingredients in the blender and Enjoy!

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Boards of County Commissioners.
The Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.



RUTGERS
NEW BRUNSWICK



Follow us on Facebook!