

Be Cool with a Smoothie

by the American Institute for Cancer Research

Smoothies have spilled out of health food stores and gone mainstream. Juice bars serve blender-whipped yogurt and fruit drinks in the mall and at the market. They can be a great way to increase your daily servings of fruit. But like many commercialized foods, the store-bought smoothie can contain more fat, sugar and calories than its healthy appearance suggests.

Some varieties claim to lower cholesterol, increase athletic performance and boost your intake of vitamins. But you should watch what goes in the mixture. Peanut butter and chocolate, for example, don't make a low-fat, nutritious meal.

An Easy Home Indulgence

The place to really have a smoothie is at home, where you can control the ingredients. Smoothies are easy and fun to make - you don't even need a recipe. For a simple smoothie, all you need is a blender, some fruit and a liquid (lowfat or skim milk, juices or soymilk). You can use fresh fruit in season or keep frozen fruit on hand to use year round. To boost the nutritional value of your drink, you can toss in a little wheat germ. A homemade smoothie makes a quick, tasty breakfast or a snack full of fiber, vitamins and protein. It's like a milkshake without the guilt.

Start by placing about a half-cup of liquid in the blender, then a sliced banana, or a cup of other fruit, and purée until smooth, gradually adding more liquid until you reach the desired consistency. If you use fresh fruit and want an instantly chilled smoothie, replace a little of the liquid with a few ice cubes.

Here are a few more tips:

1. For a frosty drink, use frozen fruit (bananas work well).
2. Avoid sweetened frozen fruits as this adds calories and may make the drink too syrupy sweet.
3. If it's too thick, add more milk, 100% fruit juice or soymilk.
4. If it's too thin, add more fruit, ice cubes, yogurt (fresh or frozen) or tofu.
5. If it's too tart, add honey or a little sugar.
6. If it's too sweet, add lemonade or a small spoonful of lemon juice.

Start your day or refresh yourself after a vigorous workout with this tropical smoothie.

Orange-Pineapple Smoothie

1 cup orange juice
1 cups pineapple chunks packed in their own juice, drained
1 banana
¼ cup skim milk
2 Tbsp. honey
4-5 ice cubes

Place all ingredients in a blender and purée until smooth.

Makes two servings. Per serving: 326 calories, 0 g total fat (0 g saturated fat), 80 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein, 4 g dietary fiber, 38 mg sodium.

To receive a free guide for nutrition information on over 50 common drinks, call the American Institute for Cancer Research at 1-800-843-8114, ext. 10, and request a Guide to Beverages.