

Special Report: Staying Cool This Summer

Guide to Great Beverages and Snacks During Summertime



Special Report: Staying Cool This Summer

INTRODUCTION

When the weather gets hot, everyone wants to stay cool. It's not because we don't like the sun but there is such a notion as too much of a good thing.

While you're thinking about ways to keep your body cool from the outside, don't forget that you can also find refreshment in foods. In the winter, we eat hot foods to stay warm and filling ones to keep us satisfied. We warm from the inside out. Why should summer be any different?

It's time to get in the swing of healthy summer nutrition. Choose fare that will be good to your body without weighing you down. When we spend most of our time on the go, food shouldn't slow us down.

In this report, you will learn how to get the most out of what you eat. We will concentrate on drinks and snacks - two things that everybody enjoys during the warmer months. But before we go into that subject you'll learn some tips on how to get the best nutrition with a variety of fresh summer food choices. And as a bonus, you'll discover some new recipes that your family can enjoy the entire season.

SUMMER NUTRITION TIPS

Summertime is a popular season. You can shed the heavy clothes in favor of lighter apparel. People take to the outdoors for exercise and fun. The fresh air reinvigorates our body.

And, let's not forget the sun. Everyone just loves to feel the warm rays. It seems to energize us as well.

What doesn't support the lighter feeling is heavy food. Pare down your daily diet so that you are getting what you need to stay active, refreshed and cool all at the same time.

Tip #1 - Stay hydrated

The summer sun can drain your energy after a full day outdoors. To combat water lost through sweating it is essential to take in enough water each day. Taking in a steady supply of fluid can prevent dehydration. It's a fact that if you are feeling thirsty you are already facing dehydration.

Tip #2- Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables

Fresh foods contain a higher percentage of nutrients. They also taste better. There are a number of fruits that have a high water content. Consuming them increases your fluid intake without really trying. Vegetables that are in season during the summer contain a lot of fiber. Fiber is filling so you can manage blood sugar levels better.

Tip #3 - Eat enough protein

Protein is a building block of healthy muscle tissue. Eating a little at each meal helps with that sweet craving. Find it in nuts and other plant sources if you want a break from animal protein. Another good choice is fish and seafood.

Tip #4 - Consume foods high in potassium

Most of us are deficient in this electrolyte. If you feel cramping in your legs while you are running, lack of potassium could be the culprit. Without it, you may experience confusion, fatigue, and cramping and heart problems. Begin your healthier intake of potassium today with foods like bananas, cantaloupe and green leafy vegetables.

Tip #5 - Incorporate cooler summer foods

That's the whole reason you are reading this report. Have you ever had a cool glass of water after a hard day of physical activity? The coolness trickles down your insides like water over rocks. The same can happen when you eat meals consisting of fresh and raw foods.

Tip #6 - Eat smaller portions

Eating a large meal can put us in a "tryptophan coma." Instead of feeling refueled you are sluggish and tired for hours. Nibbling on smaller portions throughout the day not only keeps the metabolism stoked but also keeps you feeling full. There is less chance of overeating when you are satisfied.

Summertime doesn't just involve changing your clothing but changing the way that you fuel your body. If you want to feel recharged even in the heat, feed your body well.

HEALTHY DRINKS

Now that we are aware how to eat when the weather heats up, it's time to help your family do just that. The first nutrition tip we gave you concerned hydration. The body is at least 70 percent water.

It keeps the blood flowing, cells metabolizing and organs functioning properly. Without enough water, urination slows down, organ systems start failing and cells can't keep the body going.

Some people don't like to drink water. That's okay. We are going to give you some ideas (and, yes, recipes, too) to increase fluid intake that can accompany water. Also, learn to drink your water in a new way that might have you craving it.

Smoothies

These are all the rage nowadays. They fall somewhere between fruit juice and a milkshake. That's a big stretch but smoothies provide you with a cool burst of freshness that fills you up and tastes good. Sure, you can buy them at juice shops and fast food restaurants, but you also don't know what hidden ingredients are also being added. At home, you can be assured that you are only drinking fresh and natural ingredients.

The two main types are fruit and vegetable. Fruit smoothies incorporate fresh fruit with yogurt, ice cream or milk, juice, ice cubes and a sweetener. Try to use complementary flavors so that they blend well in the mixture. Try different combinations until you find a few that you can rotate through for a fresh taste every day.

Here is a sample fruit smoothie recipe:

Strawberry-Banana Smoothie

- * One cup of strawberries
- * One medium banana
- * One cup of plain yogurt or fat free frozen strawberry yogurt
- * Half a cup of apple juice
- * Ice cubes
- * Honey or agave nectar (as needed)

Cut up strawberries and bananas for easier mixing. Add them to a blender along with the cup of yogurt and the fruit juice. Blend until mixed. Add ice cubes for thickness.

If the flavor is not sweet enough for you, try a natural sweetener before you reach for sugar. Some ideas are maple syrup, honey or agave nectar. Drizzle it into your glass. Add some fresh strawberry pieces and a sprig of mint for a garnish. Mint adds a fresh taste to clean your palate after drinking your smoothie.

Vegetable smoothies are created using a combination of fresh vegetables along with an optional piece of fruit. Many veggies have a natural sweetness that people don't recognize because they eat them after they have been heavily processed. This is a chance to get back to nature's coolness.

You might be thinking, "How can I blend hard veggies?" The trick is dice your vegetables well before adding them to the blender. If you have an inexpensive blender from the store, you may need to upgrade to one with more speed and more powerful blades.

Some vegetables work better than others. Some popular choices for smoothies include spinach, greens, carrots, broccoli and avocados. In addition, nuts can be added for a dose of good fat and lots of protein and fiber. Your final combination will be full of fiber, vitamins and minerals that the body needs - all wrapped in a glass of refreshing liquid.

Here is a sample vegetable smoothie recipe:

Blueberry-Carrot Smoothie

- * One cup of fresh blueberries
- * Fresh carrot juice (it tastes better if you juice them yourself) or pureed carrots
- * Half a cup of milk (soymilk, low fat milk) or one cup of yogurt
- * Pureed spinach leaves
- * Flaxseeds
- * Sweetener, if needed (agave nectar, honey)

Clean and cut up vegetables. Add your liquid base - carrot juice and milk or yoghurt. Remove spines on greens and rough outer skin from carrots. Puree carrots and spinach until smooth. Mix in blueberries. Lastly, add some ground flaxseed for a bit of omega-3 fatty acids in your drink.

If the smoothie is too loose, add some ice cubes. Nuts will also help to thicken the smoothie. Adjust the sweetness with honey, agave nectar or maple syrup.

Ingredients for smoothies can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated. When you are ready for a cool delight, simply put the fruits and/or vegetables of your choice into a blender and mix.

Lemonade

When the weather is hot, a stimulating glass of lemonade can quench your thirst. Make it fresh at home. Add other fruits to it to create another flavor to enjoy.

Here's a sample recipe:

Raspberry Lemonade

- * Half a cup of raspberries
- * One cup of strawberries
- * Water
- * Sugar to taste

Blend your fruits together until thoroughly mixed. Set aside. Boil two quarts of water. When the water is done, add it to a large pitcher. Mix in the pureed fruit mixture as well as the sugar. Allow to come to room temperature. Chill in the fridge.

For other lemonade flavors, add fresh fruits like peach slices, blueberries and strawberries. Make sure that all are pureed well before adding to the boiling water. A cool glass of lemonade in the evening may be just what the doctor ordered.

Flavored Water

The body needs to replenish fluids lost during workouts and normal daily activity, especially during the summer. Drinking water provides hydration without any of the calories. But, it can be bland to drink plain water each day.

There are ways that you can flavor water so that it has a cool kick to it that everyone will enjoy. Consider using flavored ice cubes. Their purpose is to add a bit of sweetness or tang to your water as they melt.

It is really easy to create flavored ice cubes. Add your favorite lemonade or fruit juice to an ice tray. Add one or two cubes to a glass of water for a trickle of taste as you drink.

Another way to freshen a glass of plain water is to add slices of fruit or vegetables to a pitcher. Here's a simple recipe:

Cucumber Water

- * One medium cucumber, sliced
- * One pitcher of water

Wash and slice the cucumber. Add the slices to a pitcher of water and chill.

Pour yourself a fresh glass. It is simple but refreshing. If you don't like cucumbers, try a slice of orange or a slice of lemon.

Iced Teas

Many people drink sweetened iced tea in the summertime. It is good, but the downside is that it is full of sugar. This provides a lot of extra empty calories that the body doesn't need. You can provide better nutrition for yourself with herbal iced teas and natural sweeteners.

Here's a sample recipe:

Apple Spiced-Peach Tea

- * Apple Spice flavored tea bag
- * One sliced peach
- * Hot water
- * Natural sweeteners (honey or agave nectar)

Boil five quarts of water. Add two apple spice tea bags and peach slices and allow tea to steep. For taste, add a natural sweetener while tea is still warm so it will mix well. Bring to room temperature; remove tea bag and chill in the refrigerator.

Try to choose decaffeinated teas in your favorite flavor. Combine them with water and sweetener alone or add your favorite fruit to permeate the tea in the pitcher.

Iced Coffee

If you enjoy good coffee in the morning, you can also have it throughout the day but in a cooler form. Turn left-over coffee into a chilled coffee drink any time of the day.

It's simple. Mix a cup of cold coffee (preferably decaf) with half a cup of low-fat milk or soy milk. For a little kick, add a touch of espresso powder. Mix well and pour over ice.

Sparkling Drinks

Many of the above drink suggestions can perform double duty. They can be transformed into sparkling drinks in an instant. Something about the feel of bubbles tingling in your mouth makes you feel refreshed.

Here are a few ideas to sparkle your regular drinks:

- Add half a cup of sparkling water to half a cup of your favorite iced tea or lemonade
- Add half a cup of seltzer water to half a cup of 100 percent fruit juice
- Combine sparkling water with a handful of fresh berries and flavored ice cubes

Each of these cool drinks has some nutritional value. You may feel like you are just getting a burst of refreshment but your daily intake of fruits, vegetables, fiber and vitamins will greatly increase as well.

HEALTHY SNACKS

We all love to snack. Some believe that snacking is what makes you gain weight, but the reality is that the cause is simpler than that. It is a mathematical equation. When there are more calories entering the body than are being burned through activity, the excess is stored as fat.

Snacking actually helps to fight cravings and boost metabolism. Instead of eliminating snacks from your daily diet, choose better, healthier ones. The following snack ideas have the distinction of not only being healthy but also fresh enough for summer eating.

Eggs

Eggs have enjoyed a life of reverence and revulsion. Now, it is back to being okay to eat them. They contain cholesterol but also a lot of protein which is great anytime for satisfying hunger.

Eggs can be enjoyed anytime in their hard-boiled form. We eat plenty of them at Easter but as a quick snack, you can't beat them.

Here's a sample egg snack recipe:

Deviled Eggs

* One dozen eggs

- * Half a cup of low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise
- * One quarter cup of mustard
- * White vinegar
- * Paprika for garnish

Boil one dozen eggs. Allow to cool in the fridge. Divide each egg in half. Scoop out the yolks. Combine with mayonnaise and mustard in a bowl. Add a splash of white vinegar for taste and tanginess. Place a spoonful of the mixture back in each egg half. Sprinkle with paprika.

Legumes and Beans

What makes a snack work anyway? Could it be the portability factor? We like to eat pieces of things that we can chew easily. Edamame is raw soybeans in their pods. They are crisp, sweet and full of flavor. They are great on a salad or simple eating them as is as a quick snack that is full of protein.

Beans also make great snacks. Here are a couple of recipes that do have the portability factor. Carry in a small container and place in a cooler. You can enjoy a refreshing snack wherever you go.

Hummus dip

- * 1 can of chickpeas (drained)
- * Half a cup of tahini (sesame seed paste)
- * One clove of garlic, minced
- * Lemon juice

Grind up the chickpeas until they are mashed and blended. Combine with tahini, a squeeze of lemon juice and minced garlic. Chill in the fridge. When you are ready to eat it, use toasted pita chips, fresh cut veggies or whole grain crackers.

Black bean salsa

- * 1 can of black beans
- * 1 can of pinto beans
- * Half a cup of chopped onion
- * 1 can of corn

- * 1`can of diced tomatoes
- * Lime juice
- * Vinegar
- * Dash of sugar
- * Cilantro

Combine the first five ingredients together in a bowl. Add a splash of vinegar, lime juice and a dash of sugar. Mix well. Top with chopped cilantro.

Eat with whole grain chips, chopped veggies or alone with a spoon.

Sweet Snacks

Not everything has to be tangy to feel refreshing to the palate. Here are a couple more recipes that give you a hint of sweetness and lots of fiber.

Chilled Grapes

Use seedless red or white grapes.

Choose the sweetest variety you can find. Wash them and place in snack bags. Place in the freezer to thoroughly chill. Grab a bag to enjoy on a hot day.

Fruit and Yogurt Parfait

- * One cup of rolled oats
- * One cup of plain yogurt
- * One cup of blueberries
- * One cup of strawberries, cut up
- * Honey

Start with a clear plastic cup. Place a small amount of rolled oats in the bottom. Top with blueberries. Add a tablespoon of yogurt. Add another layer of oats. Top with strawberry pieces. Add another tablespoon of yogurt. Continue to layer, alternating fruit, until all ingredients are gone. Drizzle a teaspoon of honey over the top.

For smaller portions, use six-ounce cups and divide the ingredients. Refrigerate parfaits until ready to eat. If you don't favor strawberries and blueberries, use another combination of fruit more to your liking.

CONCLUSION

During the winter we can't wait for warmer weather to come. In the summer, we worship the sun but do like to keep cool on the hotter days. Armed with tips to guide your nutritional choices and recipes for great beverages and snacks, everyone who wants to stay refreshed can.