 The Real Skinny on Smoothies

Smoothies are refreshing, fun, fruity, and conveniently ready to go anywhere in a cup with a straw. They are so popular that you can find them everywhere—from the fast food drive thru to specialty coffee shops to grocery stores—even whole shops dedicated to the smoothie. Are smoothies the healthy elixir you think they are or are they just another drink one should avoid? Yes. Really, both are true because there are so many different kinds of smoothies, and truly it is all a matter of what is in it! Some smoothies are great meal replacement options and others are merely a milkshake of a different name. So in order to be sure you are getting your health on—look to the ingredients to determine whether it is truly beneficial.

First look at the base of the smoothie, is it a fresh juice (low sugar/no added sugar) or nonfat milk? Don’t start with bases loaded with sugar or fat. Green tea, which is filled with antioxidants, can also be used. Next, what is flavoring it? Real fruits and vegetables (fresh or frozen) are optimal. A little sweetener, like honey, may boost your enjoyment but go easy on it. Flavored syrups have no health value. Add-ins like protein or green powders can help boost health benefits, but it is even better to use protein-rich ingredients like Greek yogurt or greens like kale and spinach. Adding chia or flax seeds can add some omega fatty acids that are great for your brain and heart.

To keep your smoothie a healthy choice avoid adding things like chocolate pudding mix, syrup or powders (like the ones to make chocolate milk); sugars (table sugar and syrups); and high-fat dairy like whipping cream or whole milk. Keep the ingredients simple and whole! According to Elaine Magee with WebMD, “if you’re having a smoothie in place of a meal, look for a smoothie with at least 5 grams of protein and a similar amount of fiber, so it will be more likely to hold off hunger for more than a couple of hours.  If your smoothie is a between-meal snack, you’re better off choosing the smallest size possible and keeping the calories below 300.”

Here are two recipes from Prevention. Many others can be found from Cooking Light and Eating Well.

**Mango Madness**

Take advantage ripe mangoes with this delicious drink.

SERVINGS: 2

1 can (8 oz) juice-packed pineapple chunks  
1 c fat-free frozen vanilla yogurt  
1 lg ripe mango, peeled and chopped  
1 ripe banana, sliced  
Crushed or cracked ice

**1. COMBINE** the pineapple (with juice), frozen yogurt, mango, and banana. Blend until smooth.  
**2. WITH**the blender running. gradually drop in enough ice to bring the level up to 4 cups. Blend until the ice is pureed.

**NUTRITION** (*per serving*) *251 cals, 0.5 g fat, 0.2 g sat fat, 68 mg sodium, 60 g carbs, 50 g sugars, 4 g fiber, 6.5 g protein*

#### Chocolate Almond Greenie

This powerhouse smoothie is filling and crave-worthy. Filled with calcium and vitamin D to build bones, disease-fighting antioxidants, and heart-healthy omega 3-fats.  
–[*Dawn Jackson Blatner*](http://www.dawnjacksonblatner.com/), RD, CSSD, LDN

1 c unsweetened vanilla almond milk   
1 Tbsp almond butter   
1 banana   
1 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 c kale or spinach leaves    
1 Tbsp chia seed   
Ice (to taste; about 1/2 cup)

Combine all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth.

**NUTRITION**(per serving): 340 cal, 11 g pro, 45 g carb, 12 g fiber, 16 g sugars, 17 g fat, 2 g sat fat, 240 mg sodium

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