

LIFESTYLES WITH SYLVIA



Dear Friends,

Well, it's official: the summer has arrived! And nothing goes better with a hot summer's day than an ice-cold drink, right? That's why I'm devoting this month's column to smoothies, the delicious and nutritious way to stay nice and cool this summer.

Everyone loves a smoothie, right? Of course! After all, they're chock-full of nutrients and low in calories and fat, yet they're out of this world when it comes to taste. Plus, they're super easy to make—all you need is a knife, a blender and a handful of high-quality ingredients—and there are endless recipes available to match your diet and nutrition needs, whether they be fueling your workout, boosting your immune system or simply helping you to lose weight.

Are you new to the smoothie craze? Read on and you'll be making five star smoothies in no time!

The Super Summer Smoothie Shopping List

The first step towards making (and enjoying) a super smoothie is a trip to your local farmers' market to pick up fresh ingredients. To help you get started, here's a shopping list that's perfect for the summer months:

Fruits: apricots, blackberries, cantaloupe, cherries, grapes, honeydew, litchi nuts, mangos, nectarines, papayas, peaches, plums, raspberries, watermelon

Vegetables: avocados, beets, carrots, chard, cucumbers, kale, red bell peppers, spinach, squash, tomatoes

Binders: almond milk, almonds, bran, buttermilk, coconut milk, flaxseed and flax oil, ginger, honey, maple syrup, low-fat or non-fat milk, mint, peanut butter, pumpkin seeds, rice milk, soft silken tofu, soy milk, sunflower seeds, tahini (sesame seed paste), tea, vanilla extract, yogurt

Additives: algae, bee pollen, brewer's yeast, echinacea, ginkgo biloba, ginseng, goldenseal, gutu kola, hemp seed, kava, protein powder, wheatgrass juice

Seven Super Smoothie Suggestions

If you've never made a smoothie before, or if the smoothies you've made in the past haven't been hitting the spot, keep these seven super smoothie suggestions in mind:

A smoothie is only as good as the sum of its parts, so stick to the highest-quality fruits and vegetables and avoid artificial ingredients and sweetener.

For the best smoothie consistency, use very small ice cubes or crushed ice. If you prefer your smoothies thick and dense, add an extra handful of frozen fruit, crushed ice or frozen yogurt or sorbet. To achieve a thinner, lighter consistency, just add more liquid. To naturally sweeten your smoothies, add a bit of honey, maple syrup, barley malt, brown rice syrup, stevia (a sweet plant extract), agave nectar or one half of a very ripe banana. Mix things up by experimenting with flavored ice cubes. To make your own, pour the juice, tea, or nectar of your preference into an ice cube tray and freeze—it's that easy! Always use low-fat dairy products in your smoothies and remember that frozen fresh fruit is best if used within two weeks of freezing.

For the best possible flavor and texture, drink your smoothie right away. If the ingredients begin to separate, which usually happens after 20 minutes, give it a good stir or put it back in the blender for a minute to bring your smoothie back to its original consistency. Get your kids involved. Making smoothies is a great way to get your kids to start thinking about nutrition... and they'll have fun doing it, too, I promise!

Ready, Set... Smoothie!

Now that you've got your ingredients and you're all caught up on the basics, here are some of my favorite smoothie recipes to jumpstart your habit (keep in mind that all of these recipes make about 2 ½ cups and serve two).

***The Mind and Body:** The perfect post-gym snack, the Mind and Body will help replenish all of the nutrients you spent during your workout. At the same time, the protein and omega-3 fatty acid-rich tofu will give your brain a well-deserved boost.*

- ½ cup soft silken tofu
- 1 ¼ cups pear nectar
- ½ cup frozen diced pineapple
- ½ frozen banana, sliced
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice

Combine the tofu and pear nectar in a blender. Add the remaining ingredients. Blend until smooth. 170 calories per serving.

***The Get Up and Go:** For those of you that like to down a cup of Joe for extra energy before your morning workout, substitute tea for coffee in the following smoothie and enjoy the caffeine jolt without the jitters.*

- 1 cup orange segments, chilled
- ½ cup grapefruit segments, chilled
- ½ cup strong-brewed Earl Gray tea, chilled
- ¾ cup orange sherbet
- 2 ice cubes, crushed

Combine the orange segments, grapefruit segments and tea in a blender. Add the sherbet and ice. Blend until smooth. 160 calories per serving.

The Ohm, That's Good: *A vigorous yoga practice can cost you many vital nutrients. This refreshing tropical-fruit smoothie will replenish your reserves and aid in the battle against fatigue.*

- 1 ½ cups quartered fresh strawberries
- ¾ cup diced mango
- ¾ cup chilled guava nectar
- ½ frozen banana, sliced
- 3 to 5 drops coconut extract (optional)

Combine the strawberries, mango, and guava nectar in a blender. Add the banana and optional coconut extract. Blend until smooth. 160 calories per serving.

The Carbo-rater: *Carbohydrates are the best source of energy for working muscles, so it's important to fuel up on them before a workout. This blend of yogurt and fruit has a whopping 53 grams of carbohydrates per serving. For the maximum benefit, drink it an hour or so before you exercise.*

- 1 cup low-fat blueberry yogurt
- ¾ cup chilled apple juice
- ¾ cup fresh blueberries
- 1 cup frozen unsweetened chopped or sliced peaches

Combine the yogurt and apple juice in a blender. Add the blueberries and peaches and blend until smooth. 238 calories per serving.

The Protein Punch: *Protein helps balance your blood sugar and is essential for repairing body tissue. Also rich in iron, this smoothie has the potential to make you feel like running a marathon.*

- ¾ cup almond milk
- ½ cup plain low-fat yogurt
- ½ cup soft silken tofu
- 8 chopped dates
- 2 tablespoons tahini or peanut butter
- 1 frozen banana, sliced

Combine the almond milk, yogurt and tofu in a blender. Add the remaining ingredients and blend until smooth. 311 calories per serving.

The Very Veggie: *An absolutely delicious alternative from the sweeter fruit-based options, this smoothie is perfect for a quick post-workout lunch. If you don't have fresh ripe tomatoes, use canned, organic, low-sodium tomatoes for the best taste.*

- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes with juice
- ½ cup carrot juice, made into ice cubes and crushed
- ½ cup soft silken tofu
- ½ cup chopped red bell peppers
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon Lawry's seasoned salt

Combine all the ingredients in a blender. Blend until smooth. 105 calories per serving.

So what are you waiting for? Break out the blender and prepare to experience the tasty delights and powerful effects of putting superior foods into your body. And you can take my word for it—as I write this, my Vita Blender is ready and waiting for the local and freshly picked fruits and vegetables I just picked up at my CSA! Just tuning in? If you're unfamiliar with some of my new lingo, feel free to contact me at Sylviae9@aol.com and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Until next time, happy healthful eating,

Sylvia

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