

10 ways to get out of your green smoothie rut



The Healthy Chef's strawberry smoothie

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 JODY SCOTT SHARE

Green smoothies can be a nutrient-dense way to start your day. But slurping the same ingredients down every single day is not. Here's a guide to taking your smoothie game to the next level.

No matter how mean and green your favourite smoothie may be, variety is the spice of life. Here are 10 ways to be creative and get more benefits from your daily blend.

1. It's all about the base...

Water, coconut water, home-made almond or macadamia milk or cooled herbal teas such as hibiscus or chamomile are great, says Teresa Cutter aka The Healthy Chef. "It depends how I feel and what I have in the fridge and what health benefit I'm looking for. As a breakfast I love blending frozen strawberries with a little banana, almond milk and Healthy Chef Vanilla WPL."

2. Freeze it...

Frozen berries are delicious but you can pretty much freeze any fresh produce and throw it into a smoothie so think outside the box. If you need to use up ripe avocados in a hurry, slice and scoop the flesh out and freeze them in zip lock plastic bags then use to make your smoothies creamy. "I always have frozen bananas in the fridge and I like to have frozen cubes of spinach, pineapple, mango and coconut water," says Cutter.

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3. Spice things up...

Adding spices to your smoothies can boost the medicinal benefits of your blend. For example, ginger is anti-inflammatory, boosts immunity and stimulates circulation. "It's also soothing for colds and flus and relieves head and muscle aches," says Cutter. Turmeric is also anti-inflammatory and good for your skin and liver. And cinnamon helps regulate blood sugar.

4. Remember to rotate your greens...

Yes, you can have too much of a good thing. Basically, all raw greens contain a small amount of toxins called alkaloids to stop grazing animals from eating too much of one plant. So experiment with beetroot leaves, dandelion greens, parsley, kale, rainbow chard, carrot tops, rocket, romaine lettuce, cabbage, spinach and silverbeet. "I'm a fan of using baby cos lettuce in my smoothies as they provide a nice light base that's not too overpowering," says Cutter. "I also love using baby spinach and herbs such as parsley and mint."

5. Stay seasonal...

Simply tuning into the season at your local farmer's market can stop you falling into a smoothie rut. "I always buy my fruit fresh and then freeze it myself. I go through the seasons and in autumn and winter it's banana, roasted pumpkin, kiwi fruit, spinach, orange or figs," says Cutter. "In spring and summer I stock up on berries, mangoes and peaches."

6. Hail the herbs...

Adding a few sprigs of fresh herbs is another way to enhance the flavour, add phytonutrients and boost the medicinal benefits of your smoothies. Parsley is alkalising plus it relieves bloating and gas, says Cutter. She says mint relaxes the digestive system and wheatgrass is a nourishing source of antioxidants that also helps boost your metabolism. Coriander can also give your smoothies a savoury kick.

7. Add healthy fats...

Adding a little fat to your smoothies will lubricate your skin and help you absorb fat-soluble vitamins such as vitamins A, D, E and K from the other ingredients. Cutter says avocados and macadamias are rich sources of antioxidants and monounsaturated Oleic fatty acids and vitamin E. "Adding chia, flaxseed or a handful of walnuts will also help boost your omega 3 levels," she says. "I also love using organic cold pressed coconut butter instead of the oil - it not only makes your smoothies creamy and delicious but has antibacterial and antiviral properties so it's great for your digestive system."

8. Don't be too fruity...

It's easy to go heavy on the fruit to sweeten your smoothie but you'll end up having way too much fructose. Use only fresh or frozen whole fruits - not fruit juice. And limit it to one piece of fruit or half cup of chopped fruit per serve. Finally, if you do add a piece of fruit then you shouldn't need to add dates or other sweeteners. It's not meant to be dessert.

9. Veg out...

There are so many vegetables you can throw into your smoothie to add fibre and additional nutrients. Zucchini is impossible to taste so you can use that to bulk out almost any smoothie. Or you could put raw, peeled beetroot in a berry smoothie; add daikon radish to a zingy pineapple and ginger smoothie or add a carrot or even steamed sweet potato to a spiced golden turmeric blend.

10. Protein please...

Adding protein will help keep your blood sugar and energy levels stable. Protein can work effectively to regulate your appetite, increase satiety, repair the body, support a healthy metabolism and encourage significant weight loss, says Cutter. A scoop of organic yoghurt, a tablespoon of pre-soaked nuts or seeds or almond butter or tahini will all do the trick. Or you could add a scoop of well-chosen, quality protein powder.

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