

Healthy Snacks to Help Your Family Make Positive Food Choices

Over 100 million Americans suffer from chronic, painful, expensive and often debilitating diseases. One of the dominant causes of chronic diseases in our country is the poor quality of the foods we consume. The average American ingests up to 10 pounds of chemical additives and a staggering 150 pounds of sugar each year. We eat food-like substances packaged in colorful and enticing boxes and bags. These so-called foods are frequently inexpensive as well as quick and easy to prepare. However, the true cost of a steady diet of super-processed, prepackaged foods will eventually show up in chronically poor health.

I have spent several years studying healthy eating lifestyles and what type of plan to follow to best avoid food-related illnesses. Recently, I taught a Bible study, *The Daniel Plan*, which focused on consuming whole, unprocessed foods. The plan encouraged you to begin with a two-week fast from wheat, sugar and dairy products. Being the teacher, I wanted to lead by example, and I encouraged my family to go along with the changes I was making in my personal eating plan.

I asked each of my three children to tell me their favorite snack food, which turned out to be crunchy, fat-laden potato chips; super-sweet sugar cookies; and salty, over-processed pretzels. At that moment, I realized my children were junk food junkies who preferred salty or sugar-laden snacks. They balked at the idea of giving up the familiar food they were used to eating.

One of my daughters asked, "If we went on this fast, what would we eat?" I came up empty-handed. It was difficult to

think of healthy snacks that could replace the unhealthy ones; yet give the same delicious satisfaction. I needed to provide nutritious, yet delicious, snacks which my skeptical family would find to be great substitutes to the usual processed foods. That afternoon, I went to work in my kitchen and made the following nutritious snack foods: healthy, homemade granola; sweet and tangy dehydrated strawberries and mangoes; refreshing fruit smoothies from frozen strawberries, raspberries and blackberries; crunchy dark chocolate-covered nuts, seeds and currants; and delicious chocolate chip cookies made with almond flour.

The next day, my experiments were put to the test when my youngest daughter needed to grab a quick breakfast. She skeptically ate a slice of dried mango but ended up coming back for more. My treats were tested again when my middle child packed her lunch. She took two almond cookies and some dehydrated strawberries. My treats were a success!

These delicious snacks were the answer I needed. I was enthralled by how much our variety of food choices expanded when I got creative and brainstormed in the kitchen. The benefit our family has received is tremendous. I have lost weight, and my craving for carbohydrates has stopped. Making healthy eating choices has a positive effect on the whole family. Seeing my family choosing healthy foods gave me the encouragement I needed to continue on this path.

I hope the following nutritious snack recipes get you excited about making healthy treats for your family too. Enjoy a large variety of delicious foods, and the payoff will be many more years of better health without food-related illness.

Recipes

Granny Sue's Granola

8 cups oats

1 cup almonds

1 cup pecans

1 cup walnuts

1/2 cup sunflower seeds

1/3 cup sesame seeds

1/3 cup pumpkin seeds

3/4 cup coconut or olive oil

1/2 – 2/3 cup of honey

Combine all ingredients. Pour into two large greased baking pans. Bake at 325 degrees for 18-20 minutes, take out, and stir. Cook for another 18-20 minutes, stir, and add the following ingredients: 1-2 cups of dried fruit: berries, dates, apricots, raisins or craisens.

Cook for 10 more minutes. Store granola in two quart Mason jars. Put one on the kitchen counter and the other in the refrigerator.

Dehydrated Fruit

A food dehydrator is a terrific investment when beginning to change to a healthier style of eating. Simply cut your fruit into similar-size slices. Place on dehydrator trays and turn on for the length of time indicated by your dehydrator's instructions. If the fruit is in different sizes, the small pieces will get overdone and the large pieces will not be completely dried. Store dried fruit in Mason jars.

Frozen Berries

Either pick or purchase your berries. Rinse with water and drain in a colander. Place berries on an ungreased cookie sheet. Make sure the berries do not touch. Place in freezer

several hours until frozen. Place frozen berries in Mason jars and put back in the freezer. Since the berries are frozen individually, you can take as much or as little out of the jar as you need when making your fruit smoothie.

Berry Smoothie

1 cup coconut or almond milk

1 cup frozen berries

1 tsp coconut oil

Stevia to sweeten

1 cup ice

Protein smoothie: add 1/2 cup of nuts (almond, pecan, walnut) or 2 Tbsp. of almond butter.

Green smoothie: add 1/2 cup of spinach or kale.

Dark Chocolate-Covered Nuts, Seeds and Currants

Melt 1-2 bars of dark chocolate (more than 70% cocoa, which is healthy and low in sugar). Add a mixture of nuts, seeds and currants until coated. Drop by tablespoons onto a sheet of wax paper. As the mixture cools, the nut clusters will harden.

Dark Chocolate Chip Pecan Cookies

3 cups of almond flour (Could substitute 1 cup with coconut flour)

1/4 tsp salt

1 tsp baking soda

1/4 cup of coconut or olive oil

1 tsp of stevia for baking

1/4 cup of maple syrup

1 egg

1 tsp vanilla

1/2 cup dark chocolate >70% cocoa

1/2 cup pecans, almonds or walnuts (optional)

Combine dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, mix oil, stevia, syrup, eggs and vanilla with a hand mixer. Slowly add dry ingredients. Mix by hand when adding chocolate chips and nuts. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. {eoa}

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She has published three books, Scripture Yoga, a No. 1 Amazon best-selling yoga book; Yoga for Beginners which ranked No. 3; and 7 Steps to Get Off Sugar and Carbohydrates. She published two sets of Christian Yoga Card Decks, "How to Receive God's Peace" and "Fruit of the Spirit" and two Christian Yoga DVDs, God's Mighty Angels and What the Bible Says About Prayer. Her two digital products, Eat to Live with a Low-Carbohydrate, Low-Glycemic, Anti-Inflammatory Diet, and How to Prevent, Improve and Reverse Alzheimer's and Dementia are great resources for attaining optimal health. Susan blogs and provides healthy menus, recipes and corresponding grocery lists at . You can find out more about Susan at .