How to Build a Better Smoothie

Smoothies may seem like a no-brainer. Just fill a blender with fruit, ice and milk or juice, then let ‘er rip. But add too much fruit, and your smoothie is suddenly 1,000 calories instead of 500. Add too little protein, and you get a surge in energy, followed by an urge to nap (and snack).

Try these tips for making a nutritious and filling smoothie:

1. **MEASURE YOUR FRUIT**
   - More is a source of vitamins, minerals and heart-healthy antioxidants.
   - Avoid adding too much fruit, which can lead to excessive calories.
   - Freeze single-serving baggies of fruit to replace ice.
   - Slice fresh fruit, or use frozen fruit. They’re equally nutritious.

2. **MAXIMIZE YOUR PROTEIN**
   - Pack multiple servings of protein, a great energy source, into each smoothie. This will stabilize your blood sugar and keep you full.
   - Greek yogurt has almost double the protein of other yogurts. For fewer calories, choose nonfat or 1% plain or vanilla.
   - Seeds or nuts will add some crunch to your smoothie. (Hemp seeds are super-nutritious.)

3. **CHOOSE LIQUIDS WISELY**
   - Milk and fruit have more nutrition and fewer calories than juice.
   - Rethink juice. Milk and fruit have more nutrition and fewer calories than juice. If you must, use 100%, calcium-fortified juice.
   - Avoid canned coconut milk. It’s sky-high in saturated fat.

4. **SNEAK IN SOME Veggies**
   - Fresh veggies are a great source of vitamins and minerals with very few calories. (Try leftover veggies, too.)
   - They may make your smoothie less sweet.

5. **ADD SOME PIZZAZZ**
   - Spices add flavor to your smoothie without the calories of honey and other sweeteners. They have health benefits, too. (Cinnamon helps fight inflammation and ginger aids digestion, for example.)

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My favorite smoothie has whey protein powder, frozen berries, some banana, either peanut butter or Greek yogurt, a little cinnamon, and kale or spinach (because I like it less sweet).

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