



FOOD BITES

February 2014

The Nut-ritious Almond

As far back as we can remember, almonds have been enjoyed by all. These little crunchy characters are in everything from top selling cereals to trend setting salad recipes. They even make an appearance as the calming, soothing airline snack we all rely on to curb our hunger in the air. As you've enjoyed these tasty morsels, did you ever stop and think that you were also doing something good for your body? Well, the tasty almond delivers not only flavor and texture to everything it's added to, but also more complete nutrition than you can imagine in just one handful.



Tasty Ideas

Whether you're serving salad or soup, pasta or poultry, almonds are a natural and healthful addition to any menu. With their excellent nutritional profile, almonds can be a part of an overall balanced diet. Here are some heart-healthy tips for incorporating wholesome, crunchy almonds into your diet:

- ◆ Make "nut crumbs" by adding whole toasted almonds to the bowl of a food processor and pulsing on and off until the almonds are coarsely ground. Use them as a wholesome grain topping for casseroles, or sprinkle on pasta and grain dishes.
- ◆ Bursting with flavor, savory seasoned almonds are the perfect topping for your favorite side or main dish. In a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat, toss whole natural or slivered almonds in a small amount of vegetable oil until golden. Add your choice of dried herbs, then sprinkle over salads, vegetables and pasta.
- ◆ Mix toasted slivered or sliced almonds into grain-based dishes, such as Middle Eastern classic tabbouleh or other bulgur wheat salads to add flavor, nutrition and crunch. Or pair them with quinoa, hailed as the "super grain of the future" for its healthful nutrition profile.

Cont. on next page...

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Family and Consumer Science
P.O. Box 279, Panhandle, TX 79068
Phone: 806-537-3882
carson@ag.tamu.edu

Jeanene Montgomery

Jeanene Montgomery
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Family & Consumer Science

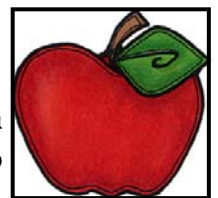
- ◆ The mild flavor of almonds is the perfect complement to vibrant Asian flavors. Try tossing finely diced toasted almonds into a ginger-shrimp sauté or adding toasted whole natural almonds to Chinese vegetable stir-fry dishes.
- ◆ Almond butter is a nutritious and hearty topping for bagels or muffins. And, it's easy to make at home by chopping whole natural almonds in a food processor with a little vegetable oil, salt and sugar until almost smooth.
- ◆ Visual appeal is important in low-fat cooking. Make a prudent parfait look sinful by layering frozen yogurt, pureed frozen berries and toasted sliced almonds in an elegant stemmed glass. Or, make individual trifles by adding layers of cubed angel food cake. Garnish with sprigs of mint, sliced almonds or whole berries, and serve with almond biscotti.
- ◆ The buttery flavor and crunchy texture of almonds make them a perfect topper for freshly baked low-fat scones and breads. Before baking scones, brush them with milk or egg white and top with slivered or chopped almonds. And for extra special quick breads sprinkle chopped almonds on them before baking, or knead toasted chopped or slivered almonds into yeast bread dough.
- ◆ To give hot cereal just a little more panache, mix in dried cranberries or cherries and a generous amount of chopped toasted almonds just before serving. Serve with skim milk and a drizzle of maple syrup.
- ◆ Satisfy your palate while watching your waistline by steaming your favorite fresh fish and vegetables and sprinkling them with toasted, sliced almonds. Serve with wedges of lemon or lime. You get all the flavor and all the benefits of a healthy, low-fat meal.
- ◆ Plain roasted chicken is enhanced by stuffing it with diced apples, onions, garlic, herbs and coarsely chopped, toasted whole almonds.



Creating A+ Menus

If you want to plan an A+ menu, keep balance, variety, and moderation in mind!

Balance - Make sure you include foods from all of the food groups using MyPyramid as a guide. Each group contributes different nutrients, so it's important to include each group every day.



Milk: Calcium, vitamin D, riboflavin (B2), vitamin B12

Meat: Protein, iron, B vitamins, zinc

Fruit: Vitamin C, fiber

Vegetables: Vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, fiber

Grains: Carbohydrate, iron, folate, fiber (whole grains)

Variety - Choose a variety of foods within each group. You'll be more likely to get all the nutrients you need for good health everyday!

Moderation - Keep portion sizes of high fat and high sugar items small, and use them sparingly.

Family Meals Do More than Put Food on the Table

Make mealtime a family time. If you can get together for meals even a few times a week, family meals mean healthier eating – and more. For National Nutrition Month[®], the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages all families to make a commitment to eating more meals together and "Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right."

"Research shows that family meals promote healthier eating – more fruits, vegetables and fiber; less fried food; and often fewer calories," says registered dietitian nutritionist and Academy spokesperson Angela Ginn. "This year's National Nutrition Month theme, 'Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right,' reminds families to return to the basics of healthful eating by returning to the family dining table."

"And family meals do much more than put healthy food on the table. Beyond preparing the meal itself, we sometimes forget that mealtimes offer time to talk, listen and build family relationships. And it's a chance for parents to be good role models for healthful eating," Ginn says.

Ginn offers ideas for adding more family meals to any family's routine:

- **Start slowly.** "However many meals you eat as a family now, add one more to your weekly schedule. If school nights are too hectic for a family dinner, make it a leisurely weekend breakfast or lunch. After a few weeks, add another family meal to your schedule," Ginn says.
- **Plan tasty menus together.** "Putting together a family meal does not have to be complicated or time-consuming. Let every member of the family choose a favorite item and build simple, delicious meals around them. Even small children can pick a main dish like tacos or pasta, a vegetable like a green salad or cooked carrots and sliced apples or fruit salad for dessert," Ginn says.
- **Set the right mood.** "Food is just one important part of mealtime. Your table setting can improve the mealtime mood with very little expense: a candle, colored napkins and wipe-clean plastic tablemats for children," Ginn says.
- **Talk!** "The conversations families have while eating together have a huge impact, as you share experiences and ideas, and pass along family values. Pick topics that are positive and allow everyone to talk. Even toddlers like to discuss topics like 'What is your favorite color?' or 'What made you laugh today?'" Ginn says.
- **Turn off the TV, phones and anything else that makes noise.** "They create distractions that can throw off any family's mealtime routine," Ginn says. "Declare mealtime a TV- and phone-free zone, except for emergencies, of course. Instead, put on some background music, played at low volume, to add a relaxing atmosphere."

No matter your children's ages, parents and caretakers can find countless resources and a wide range of information about eating right – all backed by the unequalled expertise of nutrition professionals like registered dietitian nutritionists – at Kids Eat Right (www.KidsEatRight.org), a joint initiative of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Academy's Foundation. "Kids Eat Right helps families shop smart, cook healthy and eat right," Ginn says.

It's About the Whole Day!

Consider your food choices based on the whole day rather than for one meal or snack. This allows you to be flexible and balance out some of your favorite foods at one meal that may be higher in fat, added sugars, calories and sodium with foods that are lower in these at other meals.

Example:

You want to plan your menu to include chips and dip or ice cream for lunch. Balance your menu by making sure breakfast and dinner meals and snacks are low in fat and sodium. Adding colorful fruits and vegetables throughout the day will help you keep your menu low in fat and sodium.





Fast and Lean Meal Ideas

Here are some meal ideas that will help you choose better foods if you don't have much time to cook. It is important to read food labels and try to find brands that are low in fat and sodium. When eating out, always order the sauce on the side. Good luck!

Breakfast Ideas

Whole-Grain Product:

- ◆ Cooked oatmeal
- ◆ Cooked cream of wheat
- ◆ Smoothie of yogurt, skim milk, fruit and rolled oats
- ◆ Shredded wheat or unsweetened whole grain cereal
- ◆ Muesli - nonfat light yogurt mixed with fruit and dry rolled oats
- ◆ 2 slices 100% whole-grain toast or English muffin with light jelly

Dairy:

- ◆ Skim milk
- ◆ Light, nonfat yogurt

Fruit:

- ◆ Banana
- ◆ Orange
- ◆ Apple
- ◆ Pear
- ◆ Grapes
- ◆ Melon

Lunch Ideas

Light Entrée:

- ◆ Pasta with red sauce
- ◆ Fish: poached, baked, grilled
- ◆ Low-fat stir-fry with veggies, brown rice and lean protein
- ◆ Chicken breast: roasted, baked or grilled; without skin
- ◆ Tuna salad made with light mayonnaise served on lettuce
- ◆ Chicken breast salad made with nonfat mayonnaise served on salad
- ◆ Clear broth-based soup
- ◆ Low-fat chili
- ◆ Beans and rice
- ◆ Low-fat rice dish

Side Dishes:

- ◆ Fresh fruit
- ◆ Tossed low-fat salad (try to include with every meal)
- ◆ Steamed vegetables
- ◆ Raw vegetables
- ◆ Low-fat slaw
- ◆ Baked potato with fat-free sour cream

Dinner Ideas

Light Entrée:

- ◆ Pasta with red sauce
- ◆ Fish: poached, baked, grilled
- ◆ Chicken breast: roasted, baked or grilled; without skin
- ◆ Low-fat stir-fry with veggies, brown rice and lean protein
- ◆ Low-fat lasagna
- ◆ Shrimp cocktail
- ◆ Low-fat sushi
- ◆ Low-fat appetizer
- ◆ Clear broth-based soup
- ◆ Low-fat chili
- ◆ Beans and rice
- ◆ Low-fat rice dish

Side Dishes:

- ◆ Fresh fruit
- ◆ Tossed low-fat salad (try to include with every meal)
- ◆ Steamed vegetables
- ◆ Raw vegetables
- ◆ Low-fat slaw
- ◆ Baked potato with fat-free sour cream

Busy Families and Mealtime

Mealtime can be a special time for the family to talk and listen to each other. It provides a sense of belonging and a feeling of support. Make mealtime quality time for the family.

- ♥ Share daily experiences and enjoy each others company.
- ♥ Avoid complaining and criticizing.

Preparing meals at home is usually cheaper than eating out or having take-out foods. Home meals are generally more nutritious than those bought ready-made.

Some helpful hints for enjoyable family meals:

- ♥ Establish a family meal hour, at least once or twice a week.
- ♥ Keep the T.V. off and do not answer the telephone.
- ♥ Alternate who plans the meals and who makes them. This is another possible way for parents to spend time talking with their children.
- ♥ Assign roles and rotate responsibilities for each family member. For example, one child can set the table while the other places the food on the table, and everyone helps with the clean-up.
- ♥ As the weather warms up, go outside for a picnic and spend special family time while eating and play-



Good food and good times make strong and happy families!

12 Steps to Better Portion Control

Portion Perils: Trying to manage portion size can feel like a constant, impossible task. People face down huge portions at restaurants and are surrounded by oversized packages of processed foods at every turn. It can all get so overwhelming! Luckily, with a few simple tips, successful portion control can get easier! With the right management of your food supply and kitchen, you can enjoy your favorite foods without the portion distortion headaches.

1. **Choose Bread Carefully.** When you choose breads, go for ones that have less than 100 calories per serving. Some bread slices have 90 to 100 calories each, which could bring the “per serving” total to almost 200 calories. Some big bagels, rolls, and loaves can top that, with over 400 calories per serving. However, you can buy bread that has 45 calories per slice, or you can choose a small pita or English muffin. These usually have only 100 calories per serving.
2. **Squeeze It!** Pick up a squeeze bottle of mayonnaise – the squeeze tube makes it way easier to lay out a teaspoon-sized serving. Now it will be simple to use mayonnaise in moderation and still get to put it on sandwiches and in other recipes.
3. **Spray Your Dressing.** Spritz bottles of dressing are perfect for portion control! Spray a little of your favorite dressing over your salad, and the calories will stay scant while your whole salad shines.
4. **Drizzle The Oil.** Put your olive oil or other cooking oil into a drizzle bottle and you will use 75% less over the course of a year. That’s helpful for your waistline and your budget!
5. **Make or Get Little Bags of Snacks.** If you buy potato chips in single servings, you will usually eat less at each sitting than you would if you grabbed a big bag and sat down on the couch. Single-serving bags also preserve freshness, which means that your portion control efforts won’t be shabbily rewarded by stale chips overflowing and spilling out of the bags in your pantry. If snack packs aren’t budget-friendly, pick up some zip-lock baggies of your own and pre-portion servings from one big bag into those little bags.
6. **Make A Fruit Bowl.** If you keep washed, ripe fruit out on your counter at room temperature, it *will* get eaten. Apples, pears, and oranges adapt to this technique quite well. You can also fill the deli drawer of your refrigerator with ready-to-eat fruits.
7. **Pick Winning Snacks.** “Grab and go” yogurt that has 100 calories per cup is a winner for breakfast, lunch, and after dinner.
8. **Go Crackers!** Purchase whole grain WASA crackers instead of “putting on the ritz” and you will reduce the empty calorie content of your snacks. Top them with peanut butter and fruit for a great open-faced sandwich base that is high in fiber.
9. **Share Your Dessert.** If you pick up a whole cake, a box of cinnamon rolls, or a few packages of cookies or brownies, you’ll likely add 2,000+ calories to your pantry. If you do this every week, it really adds up. Instead of stocking your pantry with calorie bombs, dine out when you need a sweet treat. Go out, be social, and share!
10. **Make tea.** Purchase tea bags and make refrigerator tea every day. Switch out the flavor choices and consider adding slices of citrus fruit or sprigs of fresh herbs. That way, a delicious, calorie-free drink is always at your fingertips.
11. **Play “Protein Cards.”** Slice any meat or poultry that you’re serving into small, thin pieces, just like a deck of cards. This will help you keep an eye on the portion size.
12. **Make a Big Salad.** Have a big spinner bowl of salad waiting for every meal. Salad that is ready gets eaten!



Thai Chicken Noodle Soup



Ingredients:

2 Tblsp Land O Lakes Butter
1 large (1 cup) onion, thinly sliced
2 Tblsp chili garlic sauce
1 (14-oz) can light coconut milk
1 quart (4 cups) reduced sodium chicken broth
2 cups shredded chicken
1 cup sugar snap peas
1 medium (1 cup) red bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 Tblsp fish sauce
2 oz thin rice noodles, broken apart
2 Tblsp lime juice
Chopped fresh cilantro leaves, if desired

Directions:

Melt butter in saucepan over medium-high heat until sizzling. Add onions; cook 3 minutes or until softened. Stir in garlic sauce; cook 1 minute. Add coconut milk and chicken broth. Cover; cook until mixture just comes to a boil.

Uncover; add chicken, peas, bell pepper, fish sauce and rice noodles; cook until mixture comes to a boil. Continue cooking 4 minutes or until noodles are softened. Stir in lime juice.

Chicken Tortilla Soup



Ingredients:

6 oz grilled chicken breast cut in strips
1 can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
1 can stewed tomatoes, undrained
1 can corn, drained
1 cup chunky salsa
2 cups water
1 cup tortilla chips, crushed
1/2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded

Directions:

Combine both cans of tomatoes including liquid, corn, salsa and water together in large saucepan. Cut chicken strips into bite-size pieces and add to pan.

Bring soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Ladle soup into individual bowls. Top with tortilla chips and cheese.

Serve with a tossed salad.

Creamy Potato Soup

Ingredients:

5 medium (4 cups) Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, cubed
1/4 cup Butter
1/4 cup chopped onion
2 tsp chicken-flavored bouillon
1/2 tsp salt
1/8 tsp pepper
2 cups milk

Directions:

Place cubed potatoes in a 4-quart saucepan. Add enough water to cover. Cook over medium-high heat 8-10 minutes or until mixture comes to a boil. Continue cooking 10-12 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Remove from heat; drain. Keep warm.

Melt butter in 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat until sizzling; add onions. Continue cooking 3-5 minutes or until onions are softened. Stir in chicken bouillon until dissolved.

Add onion mixture, milk, salt and pepper to cooked potatoes in same 4-quart saucepan. Pour *half* of soup mixture into 5-cup blender container. Cover; blend 25-30 seconds or until smooth. Return blended potato mixture to saucepan. Cook over medium heat 3-5 minutes or until heated through.



Apricot-Honey Chicken Dijon

Ingredients:

- 4 Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts
- 1/3 cup honey mustard or Dijon mustard
- 3 Tbsp apricot preserves
- 1 tsp ginger, ground

Directions:

1. Preheat grill to medium-high. Mix mustard, apricot preserves and ginger in a small bowl. Brush some of the mustard mixture on chicken.
2. Place chicken on grill about 6 inches from heat. Grill chicken, brushing frequently with remaining mustard mixture, 6 to 8 minutes on each side or until done.



Dilly Mashed Potatoes

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons light butter, softened
- 1/3 cup skim milk or 2% milk
- 1/4 cup fat-free sour cream
- 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon dill weed
- 1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Cook potatoes in boiling water until tender; drain.
Mash with remaining ingredients.



How to have a more tender, juicy chicken breast...

Most of the time when you cook or eat chicken breast the results are not so juicy - they are often dry.

But there is a way to have a more delicious bird and in less time, too!

Here is how - start the chicken breast in the microwave for three minutes and then finish baking in the oven at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. It is good if you add a little lemon juice or broth and some seasonings. You can also do this with turkey and fish, too.

Fish and chicken do not require long cooking to make them tender, so the microwave works well for these. Be sure to cook until done but not overdone.

Chicken and Mushroom Fettuccine Alfredo

Ingredients:

- 4 Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts
- 1 pkg fettuccine pasta, 12 oz cooked and drained
- 1 pkg Alfredo sauce mix, 1.6 oz
- 1 jar mushroom, 4.5 oz, drained and sliced
- 1 cup frozen sweet peas

Directions:

1. Prepare pasta according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a small bowl prepare sauce mix according to package directions.
2. Cut chicken into 1-inch pieces. Spray large skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Heat over medium-high. Add chicken; cook and stir until lightly browned. Add sauce to chicken; bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Stir in mushrooms and peas; cook 5 minutes or until chicken is done.
3. Serve chicken-vegetable mixture over pasta



Melt Your Heart Tuna Melt

Ingredients

Tuna Salad:

One 12-ounce can tuna, drained
1/4 cup mayonnaise, plus more if you like a creamy tuna salad
Juice of 1/2 lemon, plus more if desired
1/4 cup chopped red onion
1/4 cup chopped green onion, white parts and some of the green parts
1/2 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
1/2 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1/2 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh mint
1/2 tablespoon red wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Sandwich:

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
8 slices sourdough bread
8 slices Cheddar
4 pickle spears, for serving



Directions

For the tuna: In a large bowl, break up the tuna with a fork and add the mayonnaise, lemon juice, red onions, green onions, basil, cilantro, parsley, mint and vinegar. Mix well to combine. Taste and season with salt, pepper and extra lemon juice and mayonnaise as desired.

For the sandwich: Brush the softened butter on 1 side of each slice of bread, setting aside some butter for cooking the sandwiches. Place the bread buttered-side down on a baking sheet. Divide the tuna among 4 slices of bread and top each with 2 slices of cheese. Complete the sandwich with the remaining 4 slices of bread, buttered-side up.

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and add half of the remaining butter. When the butter melts, place 2 sandwiches in the pan and cook until toasted and golden brown on each side. Repeat with the remaining sandwiches. (If your pan is large enough, you can cook all the sandwiches at the same time.) Serve warm, with pickles.

Tuna Quesadilla

Ingredients

2 small (3-ounce) cans tuna, drained and flaked
1/2 cup salsa, drained
1/2 cup chopped fresh scallions
1 cup shredded Cheddar
3 (12-inch) flour tortillas



Directions

Mix tuna with salsa and scallions. Fold in Cheddar. Divide mixture into 1/3's and spread each portion over 1/2 of a tortilla and fold into a half circle. Brown each of the 3 quesadillas on both sides in a hot pan to melt cheese. Cool a bit, cut into wedges and serve.

Tuna Noodle Casserole

Ingredients

Casserole:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for baking dish

One 12-ounce bag egg noodles (or 4 cups)

Kosher salt

1 pound yellowfin or albacore tuna in oil, drained and flaked, such as Ortiz or Callipo

10 ounces frozen peas, thawed

1 1/2 cups shredded Irish Cheddar

1 1/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/2 cup chopped onion

1/2 teaspoon whole dried thyme

Freshly ground black pepper

8 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced

4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1 tablespoon prepared horseradish

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups chicken stock or broth

2 cups heavy cream

Topping:

3 cups panko breadcrumbs (Japanese)

3 tablespoons olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper



Directions

For the casserole: Preheat the oven to 375degrees F. Butter a 13- by 9-inch ovenproof dish or lasagna dish and set aside.

Cook the egg noodles in salted boiling water according to package directions for al dente, about 8 minutes. Drain and immediately place the noodles in a large bowl filled with ice water to stop the cooking. Once cooled, drain and then pour the pasta into a large bowl with the tuna, peas and both cheeses. Toss to combine.

In a large pan with straight sides, add the 2 tablespoons butter, the olive oil, onions and thyme. Season with a sprinkle of salt and pepper and cook on medium heat until the onions are tender and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms, season with salt and cook gently until tender and darkened, about 5 minutes more. Add the Worcestershire sauce and horseradish, and then sprinkle the flour over the entire pan. Stir to help the flour soak into the vegetables and cook a minute more to lose the flour taste. Raise the heat to medium-high and add the chicken stock. Cook until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes, and then slowly stir in the heavy cream. Simmer until the cream is thickened slightly, about 4 minutes more. Taste and season with salt if needed. Pour the mushroom sauce over the prepared noodles in the large bowl and quickly stir to combine. Immediately pour into the prepared dish.

For the topping: In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and olive oil. Season with a sprinkle of salt and a grind or two of pepper. Stir until the crumbs soak up the oil evenly. Sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture evenly over the top of the dish and place, uncovered, in the oven until the sides are bubbly and the top is golden brown, about 35 minutes. Let it rest 5 minutes before serving.

