

Nuts to you

A healthy alternative to fatty meats and fried foods

Are all nuts healthy, or are some more nutritious than others?
The special nutrient contributions of each type of nut vary, but all are healthy if you keep portion sizes small so your calorie consumption stays on target for a healthy weight. Studies with a variety of nuts show that when people substitute nuts for foods such as fatty meat and deep-fried foods high in saturated or trans fats, blood cholesterol usually declines.

Almonds, walnuts, peanuts, pistachios, pine nuts and pecans all have 3 grams or less of cholesterol-raising saturated fat in a one-and-a-half ounce serving (about one-third cup). Nuts contain mostly monounsaturated fat; walnuts are high in polyunsaturated fat, some of which is an omega-3 fat that's in the same family with the heart-healthy fat found in salmon and other fatty fish.

Cashews and almonds are especially high in magnesium, pecans are loaded with manganese and pistachios are rich in vitamin B-6. Brazil nuts are an outstanding source of the antioxidant mineral selenium. Almonds are exceptional sources of vitamin E, another antioxidant; hazelnuts, peanuts and Brazil nuts are also good sources.

All nuts provide varying combinations of natural antioxidants, cholesterol-lowering phytosterols, and dietary fiber and serve as a protein source, too. Since they all contain 240 to 285 calories per one-third cup, make sure that you don't just add nuts to your diet, but substitute them for less-healthy foods.

South American Peanut Soup



Peanut soup (below) makes a flavorful starter to any meal. This recipe is a take on South American sopa de mani – a creamy concoction of peanuts, potatoes, tomatoes and spices. Peanuts contain vitamin E, dietary fiber and healthy unsaturated fat. Nuts of all kinds are part of dietary patterns shown to lower cancer risk. For a complete meal, use this as a simmering sauce and toss in a little chicken breast or firm tofu.

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 cup chopped onion

1 Tbsp. finely chopped garlic

2 tsp. ground cumin

2 tsp. dried oregano

1/2 lb. red-skinned potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 can (14 oz.) no salt added diced tomatoes

3 cups fat-free, reduced-sodium beef broth

1/8 tsp. ground cayenne pepper or to taste

1/4 cup smooth peanut butter

1/4 cup lightly packed cilantro, chopped, for garnish
- In large saucepan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, 4 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until onion is soft, 2 minutes. Mix in cumin and oregano.
- Add potatoes, tomatoes, broth and cayenne. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer soup until potatoes are soft, about 20-30 minutes. Uncover and cool soup in pot for 10 minutes.
- Add peanut butter. Using immersion blender, whirl soup, leaving it with some texture. Or transfer soup to blender and whirl until almost smooth.
- Divide soup among 4 wide, shallow bowls, garnish with cilantro and serve. Makes 4 servings.
- Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 203 calories, 12 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 19 g carbohydrate, 8 g protein, 3 g dietary fiber, 191 mg sodium.

Spaghetti (Squash) Noodles

Spaghetti squash is a unique vegetable, to be sure, but it's the sauce in this recipe that's likely to raise your eyebrows. Featuring ginger, hot sauce and – gasp – chocolate peanut butter, this dish is a taste experience you won't forget.

- 1 large spaghetti squash, cut in half lengthwise and seeds taken out
- 1 cup spinach, cut in a chiffonade
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 1 red onion, sliced lengthwise
- 5 tablespoons toasted spaghetti squash seeds
- 5-6 tablespoons mint cut in a chiffonade



Spicy Chocolate Peanut Sauce

- 1 teaspoon minced ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-2 teaspoons sriracha
- 1 teaspoons pepper
- Salt to taste
- 2 teaspoons chocolate peanut butter (or plain peanut butter)
- juice of 1 lemon
- Zest from 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- tiny splash of toasted sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment and place the squash halves, cut side up, on the baking sheet with a little drizzle of olive oil.

Bake for about 45 minutes or until the flesh pulls away in easy strands. In the last 15 minutes of baking, add the spaghetti squash seeds on to the same baking sheet on the side and allow them to toast.

In the meanwhile, place all of the sauce ingredients either in a small jar and with the lid on shake it well. Alternatively you could blend them in a blender. Taste for seasoning and set aside.

When squash is cool enough to handle, scrape the spaghetti strands out with a fork into a large bowl and add the onions, carrots, spinach and mint and mix it very gently.

Pour a big splash of the dressing into the bowl and toss it gently. Top it off with the toasted squash seeds and enjoy the crunchy salad. Makes 2 servings.

Sweet Potato Almond Fritters

- 3 cups peeled and grated sweet potato (about 3 medium sweet potatoes)
- 1 cup finely chopped white onion
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pressed garlic
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 cup almond meal or almond flour
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (for greasing cookie sheet)
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- Optional for dipping: hummus or tahini sauce

Position a middle rack in the oven and preheat to 375°. In a mixing bowl, combine sweet potato, onion, garlic, salt, almond meal/flour, cilantro and pepper. Stir in eggs.

Using clean hands, mix the contents of the bowl together well, then scoop heaping tablespoons of packed-puck shaped fritters and place equidistant from one another onto a cookie sheet that is greased with one tablespoon of olive oil. Sprinkle the tops of the fritters with sliced almonds.

Bake for 30 minutes, then turn over each with a spatula. Place back in the oven for an additional five minutes. Let cool for five minutes and serve. Enjoy the fritters on their own or with hummus or soy-based sauce for dipping.

Serves: 4-5. Serving Size: 4-5 fritters. Calories: 49; Fiber: 1 g; Fat: 3 g; Cholesterol: 12 mg; Sat Fat: 0 g; Sodium: 130 mg; Mono Fat: 1 g; Calcium: 20 mg; Poly Fat: 0 g; Magnesium: 19 mg; Protein: 2 g; Potassium: 71 mg; Carb: 4 g; Vitamin E: 2 mg*

