



Snacks Made Easy

When it comes to food, sometimes having too many options can be paralyzing. Making a choice for a specific direction then leads you to choosing from tons of different recipes, all claiming to be more health-conscious than the next. Let's dispel some of these myths and start with a foundation you can build off to trust your snack choices.

MEAL, MINI-MEAL, OR SNACK

When confronted with your next food option, consider how this food fits into your day instead of how to have the most power-packed and perfect plate. The truth is, spending huge amounts of energy on the decision of what to eat uses up your mental energy more rapidly than simply having routines in place that you can fall back on with confidence. So start with these quick questions:

- 1 | When was the last time I ate?
- 2 | What have I eaten today? What might be missing?
- 3 | When will I eat next?
- 4 | How do I feel?

These brief questions help you fit the food into your day rather than your day fitting into your food choices. You may be thinking it's time for a meal (this is when I always eat!) but answering the four questions helps you decide that you would prefer having a snack. Or the alternative: I just need a snack (but I haven't had any meals today, I have a headache, and it's 2pm). Your body is asking for more than a 100-calorie snack. These questions remove the *should* and show you what your body *needs* in the moment.

CALORIE SURPLUS AND CALORIE DEFICIT

Ever find yourself thinking, "I just won't eat now so I don't have so many calories." Almost everyone has at some point. That's because many diets over the past few decades have highlighted that the fewer the calories, the better the outcome.

Nutrition science does show that to gain body mass, our bodies must

consume more calories than we burn. Conversely, to lose mass (this can be both fat and muscle), we must consume fewer calories than we burn. However, on paper is a lot different than in practice. Undereating often leads to overeating or binge eating late at night because our mental faculties have been used up throughout the day. All those decisions you have made earlier in the day have emptied your mental energy tank. A calorie deficit during the day can be completely canceled out by calorie surplus at night. And you are left with no results and lots of effort.

SNACK HABITS

Snacking may or may not be a part of your daily calorie intake. If your body prefers larger meals spread throughout the day, then keep it! Your snacks may either be nonexistent, or they are grab-and-go items like an apple or a small pack of nuts. This suggests that your body prefers this eating pattern and that your meals are providing your body with enough calories and nutrients.

However, if you do like snacks in your day, then you have added a few more decisions onto your daily allocated food choice mental load. Use these guidelines for a habitual snacking framework to lessen the decision-burden:

- 1 | In this snack, what can I add that grows from the Earth?
Think: fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds
- 2 | Are there least two macronutrients available?
- 3 | How much of this do I want, and how much do I need?

SNACK FOUNDATIONS

Below are 10 snack foundations. Assign days for them to repeat each week. Try these simple foundations for snacks and alter the flavors, toppings, or variation each week to keep your taste buds interested while minimizing the decision-making process.

1 | Yogurt (dairy or nondairy)

- + granola or trail mix
- +nuts/seeds
- + berries
- +Almond/peanut/seed butter
- +Cinnamon

2 | Fruit (apple, banana, orange, etc)

- +Almond/peanut/seed butter
- +Cinnamon
- +Nuts/seeds
- +Cheese

3 | Oatmeal ([overnight](#) recipe for easy prep)

- +Coconut
- +Chia/Flax/Hemp
- +Berries

4 | [Energy Balls](#)

5 | Nuts/Trail Mix/Mixed Nuts

- +Dried fruit

6| Protein Roll Up (turkey, chicken, tuna, tofu, etc)

+Spinach

+Tortilla

7| Vegetable Crudite (Persian cucumbers, tomatoes, Trader Joe's Les Petite Carrots, Tomatoes, etc)

+Hummus

+Avocado

+Seed crackers, rice crackers, nut crackers

8| Whole Wheat Bread/Toast

+Turkey, chicken, tuna, etc and spinach

+Nut/see butter and honey

+ Avocado and tomato

+Chickpeas or black beans

9| Hard Boiled Egg(s)

+Whole wheat bread and avocado

+Piece of fruit

+Edamame

10| Smoothie

+Nut/see butters

+Protein powder

+Chia/flax/hemp

+Fruit

+Spinach