

Extension Education  
Laurie Bates News Column  
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## Creative Smoothies

By Laurie Bates

Create tasty and nutritious smoothies from simple foods. Not only are they delicious, but they can be extremely healthy, and quick to make for a snack, at work, or on the go.

Blending up smoothies from fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables and spices from your pantry is budget friendly, with no lines to wait in, and you get to choose the flavors that you like. These homemade treats make a world of difference when it comes to taste. Listed below are a few non-traditional ingredients that can be added to smoothies at home. Some of them may be new to you, but they are worth trying at least once.

**Pomegranate Juice.** Pomegranates in every variety have become popular over the last year or so. Their tangy and tart taste is refreshing and crisp (similar to unsweetened blueberry or cranberry juice). This might be one of the safest additions to your smoothie if you are at the beginning stages of adding antioxidant packed ingredients.

**Blueberries.** Delightfully blue in color and packed with anti-aging and disease fighting power, try freezing them ahead of time for a cold fun smoothie.

**Peaches.** Unlike most fruit, peaches are full of calcium. What a tasty way to get this needed mineral. Peaches go well with orange juice and bananas. Make sure to freeze peaches when in season, to make sure you have them all winter long.

**Kefir or Greek Yogurt.** Kefir is a fermented milk drink that is made with kefir grains. Both Greek Yogurt and kefir give smoothies the consistency of a very smooth, light, milky yogurt and contain probiotics (which aids in digestion). It can be found near the yogurt in specialty or health food stores. Adding Kefir and/or yogurt to a smoothie will enhance the flavor and the nutritional value, including protein, by leaps and bounds.

**Ginger.** Ginger may not be the first ingredient that comes to mind when making a smoothie in the morning, but it may be time to think again. Ginger has a handful of benefits without negative side effects. One benefit is ginger soothes the gastrointestinal tract, and can help prevent nausea and vomiting. Ginger is a worthwhile spice to add to smoothies or other food after a workout for a little kick in flavor.

**Papaya.** Like other orange fruits and vegetables, papaya is extremely high in vitamin C and certain to bring the taste of the tropics to smoothies when added to oranges and bananas.

**Cocoa Powder.** We all know that chocolate is extremely good for you when eating the right kind (high in cacao and bitter in taste). When it is mixed with peanut butter and a banana it is super delicious. Cacao powder is naturally sugar free, and a nutrient rich food that is considered extremely beneficial for health and wellbeing.

**Bananas.** Bananas are extremely healthy and relatively low in calories. They have high levels of potassium and promote cardiovascular health, which helps maintain normal blood pressure and heart function. Frozen bananas in smoothies help to keep the texture thick, cold, and fluffy.

Cinnamon. Cinnamon intensifies the flavor of fruits like apricots, apples, cherries, blueberries, and oranges when added to smoothies. I personally love the aroma, fragrance, and warm taste it gives to smoothies.

Spinach. Spinach is an excellent source of many vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, such as: Vitamin A, C, E, K, magnesium, folate, iron, vitamin B6, calcium, potassium, protein, omega 3 fatty acids, and more. It does not give a flavor to the smoothie, but the color is a beautiful green unless you put dark berries in with it.

### Popeye Smoothie

6-8 ounces yogurt, any flavor

1/2 cup skim milk

1/2 fresh or frozen banana

1/2 cup fresh or frozen fruit

1 cup packed fresh spinach

Combine all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth. Yield: 1 big delicious smoothie.

### Healthy Blueberry Muffin Smoothie

2 cups milk

1 cup vanilla yogurt or Greek yogurt, frozen

2-1/2 cups blueberries, fresh or frozen

1-1/2 cup old-fashioned oats

2 Tbsp. honey

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Large handful ice

Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Serve immediately. Yield: four 16 oz. smoothies.

As you can see, smoothies can be much more than just a mix of fruits and vegetables. Their versatility makes them a great choice for a healthy breakfast or a much-needed afternoon boost, and their flavors can be mixed in almost endless combinations.