

6 Tips for Getting MORE fruits and veggies in Your Life



Q: What excuses do you hear most frequently for why people don't eat very many fresh fruits and vegetables?

A: I hear people say all the time that it's just too hard to eat fresh fruits and veggies and that it's too expensive. Neither of those are very logical considering that eating veggies and fruits in their fresh form is the fastest and easiest way to consume them and also that produce items are some of the cheapest in the grocery store.

Q: It seems like one reason people choose convenience foods over fresh produce is because they are just that -- convenient. What

are some habits you've developed that help you eat fresh foods on the go?

A: I pick healthy foods that ARE convenient. Bringing an apple and a handful of almonds from home for a snack when running errands, for example, is much more convenient than, driving through the drive thru at a fast food restaurant and ordering a packaged apple turnover. Baby carrots, raw nuts, bars made with fresh dates and nuts, a fresh fruit smoothie made to sip on while driving are also good ideas of convenience foods. One of my favorite things to do is to buy prewashed dark leafy greens, like arugula, spinach or romaine, and wrap the leaves around fruit slices like apples and oranges. It's especially quick and easy when I'm on the go or in a hurry and if you're looking for a whole meal, can be supplemented with an avocado and a piece of whole grain bread with fresh nut butter and sliced bananas or strawberries.

Q: What is the No.1 easiest thing people should do to up their intake of fresh fruits and vegetables?

A: Hands down, the easiest way to increase intake of fresh fruits and veggies is to drink one smoothie a day (it doesn't always have to be green!). If you already have the ingredients on hand, all you do is throw them into a blender and blend. They taste great and they are generally packed with several servings of fruits and vegetables. Here's my

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favorite recipe for a smoothie that is great for people who have never had one or are afraid of how they might taste. I've tried this on hundreds of people and the consensus is that it's extraordinary.

Purple Green Smoothie

1 C packed fresh spinach
2-3 C frozen blueberries
2 C fresh orange juice
1 fresh mango or 2 C frozen mango

Blend and enjoy.

Q: Most people naturally eat more fresh fruit and vegetables in warm months. Do you have any tips for translating those cravings into a year-round habit?

A: Our bodies naturally crave more fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer because they are cooling to our body, and cooked foods in the winter because they are warming. It's normal to reduce intake of fresh foods in winter, but the point is to continue eating fruits and vegetables whether they are fresh or not. I encourage people to eat a lot of cooked squash, cooked sweet potatoes, yams and carrots. Steamed cruciferous veggies like cauliflower and broccoli and warm dishes like vegetable curries, stir fries and vegetable soups. Our intake of fresh things in winter can be continued by topping these dishes with freshly

chopped greens and herbs and by eating fruit or green salads as sides. One of my favorite way to continue eating "fresh, but warm" in the winter is to roast cubed root vegetables and then toss them with greens and dressing to eat immediately. These "warm" salads give me a good variety of cooked and fresh vegetables.

Q: A lot of people are unaware of the variety of produce and ways to prepare it. What are some of your go-to resources for raw or whole food eating?

A: Well, my website and cookbooks, of course! But I also love Alice Waters and any of her cookbooks since she prepares everything with very minimal ingredients. Her philosophy, which I have adopted also, is that if you have fresh, well grown and produced vegetables and fruits, preferably as local as possible, not those from a big box store that have shipped from half-way across the world and have been sitting on the shelf forever, you need to do very little to prepare them. For example, a head of broccoli is often at it's tastiest when lightly steamed and dressed with a little olive oil, some salt and maybe a drizzle of lemon juice.

Q: Any top strategies for getting kids (or adults) to eat more or try new fruits and vegetables?

A: My absolute best strategy for getting people to eat more vegetables is to NOT limit consumption.

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Too often I hear people say that they craved two bananas, but only ate one because they thought it would bad to eat two. Or many people fear that if they eat a bowl of cherries, for example, they'll get sick or if they eat an entire avocado, they'll suddenly have a heart attack. None of these things are true. If we are eating whole foods, it's nearly impossible to over eat them.

A strategy I use with kids to get them to try new things is to take them to the produce section of the grocery store and tell them that they can pick anything they want as long as they've never tried it before. Whatever they choose is theirs and theirs only. This gives them ownership and pride over a new and healthy food and you can bet they'll be eating it as a result.

author: melissa chappell

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