



# GET SWEET ON FRUIT!



Instead of reaching for the sugar bowl, satisfy sweet cravings with fruit. Fruits contain nutrients that make them a healthier choice compared to refined and concentrated sweeteners typically found in candy, cookies, cakes, ice cream, sodas and many other sweet treats.

## MAKE DESSERT FRUITFUL!

When it comes to that nightly question, “Can we have dessert?” fresh fruit is a more nutritious answer than foods sweetened with refined sugar. Just say “yes” to these easy, no-sugar-added ideas:



Pineapple chunks sprinkled with coconut flakes and chopped pistachio nuts



Grilled or baked peach slices with cinnamon and graham crackers crumbled on top



Strawberries with a squeeze of fresh orange juice and a sprinkle of fresh mint



Cherries with a spoonful of ricotta cheese and slivered almonds on top



Apple slices sprinkled with cinnamon—enjoy raw or microwave for 45–60 seconds for a hot dessert



Dessert parfaits—layer your favorite fresh-cut fruit with plain yogurt and a sprinkling of nuts or granola

Get creative with your own combinations using favorite fruits, herbs and spices!

**-FRUIT-**

**VS.**

**-TABLE SUGAR-**

- Fruits contain fiber, water and essential nutrients, in addition to naturally occurring sugar. That means you get the sweet flavor and more nutrition bang in each bite.
- Refined white table sugar is nutritionally void (and so are many of the treats it's used to create).
- The body processes sugar differently when it comes from fruit, in part because the fiber in fruit slows digestion of the sugars.

## HANDS-ON ACTIVITY **Make Your Own Fruit Leather**

**Step 1** Choose your favorite ripe fruit (at least 4 cups). Apples, pears, strawberries, grapes and mangoes work especially well. Feel free to mix fruits! Remove peels, cores, pits, seeds and stems. Chop all fruit into similar-size chunks (cut grapes in half).

**Step 2** Cook it up. Place the fruit in a large saucepan. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water for every 4 cups of cut fruit. With adult help, bring the water and fruit to a simmer. Continue simmering, covered, on low 15–20 minutes or until the fruit is cooked

through and juice begins to thicken. About halfway through cooking, add one teaspoon of lemon juice, or more to brighten the flavor to your liking, and add a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg if desired.

**Step 3** Purée the fruit. Remove from heat and allow the fruit to cool enough to transfer it into food processor or blender. Purée until smooth.

### What You'll Need

fresh fruit, water, lemon juice (optional), spices (optional), cookie sheet, parchment paper, food processor/blender, large saucepan, spatula

**Step 4** Make it leather! Preheat oven to 170°F. Line the baking sheet with parchment. Use a spatula to spread the fruit purée onto the parchment in a thin, even layer. Place it in the oven and let it bake/dehydrate for 3–4 hours until it reaches desired texture (outer edges may dry out faster so check the center).

**Step 5** Cut fruit leather into strips with a pizza cutter and serve.



## GO A STEP FURTHER

### Sweeter Than Sugar

Substitute fruit-based sweeteners for refined white sugar in recipes, especially baked goods. A quick online search will yield loads of ideas, including:



#### Date Paste

Purée about 1 cup pitted dates with ½ cup water



#### Figs

Purée about 8 ounces fresh figs with ¼ cup water



#### Bananas

Mash with a fork

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Adding vanilla extract or “sweet” spices, such as cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves, to fresh fruit gives a flavor boost that can help kids transition away from more sugary desserts.
- Top pancakes, waffles and oatmeal with fresh fruit or a fruit purée instead of syrup.
- Use 100% fruit juice to make your own popsicles. Making them is fun for the whole family!
- For kids who aren't fresh fruit fans, try dried fruit for a treat. The sugar in some dried fruits is more concentrated, so keep serving sizes in check.

## RECIPES

Let kids help with the simple steps in **bold**!

### BREAKFAST Banana Oat Bars

2 cups old-fashioned oats      ¼ cup chopped walnuts  
½ cup shredded coconut      2 large ripe bananas, mashed  
½ cup raisins or chopped dates      ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce

Preheat oven to 350°F. **Step 1: Mix all ingredients in a large bowl.**  
**Step 2: Press into a 9" square baking pan** and bake 30 minutes. **Step 3:** Cool completely on wire rack, then cut into squares and serve.

### SNACK Apple Sandwiches

2 apples, cored and cut into ½-inch thick rounds      2 tablespoons semi-sweet chocolate chips  
3 tablespoons peanut or almond butter      3 tablespoons granola

**Step 1: Spread one side of half the apple slices with peanut or almond butter, then sprinkle on chocolate chips and granola.**  
**Step 2: Top with remaining apple slices, pressing down gently.**

### DESSERT Tropical Fruit & Mint Parfaits

Makes 4 parfaits

2 cups mixed mango, papaya or pineapple      ¾–1 cup Greek yogurt  
juice and zest of one navel orange      granola or crushed graham crackers for topping (optional)  
fresh mint leaves, chopped

*Tropical Fruit & Mint Parfait recipe continued.*

**Step 1: Peel and chop the fruit and combine in a bowl.** Add chopped mint leaves and squeeze orange juice into the bowl, then toss all ingredients gently. **Step 2: Let it sit for at least 15 minutes to marinate.** **Step 3: Layer alternating spoonfuls of fruit mixture with Greek yogurt in a dish.** **Step 4: Sprinkle with orange zest and granola or graham crackers before serving.**

### DESSERT Banana-Berry Ice Cream

2 ripe bananas, cut into chunks      1–3 tablespoons almond, and frozen      soy or cow milk  
1 ½ cups mixed strawberries, blueberries or blackberries

**Step 1: Hull the strawberries, then place frozen bananas and all the berries in a food processor.** **Step 2: Blend until smooth.** If it's too thick, add milk one tablespoon at a time until desired consistency is reached. **Serve immediately.**

### DESSERT Raw Apple Crisp

4 apples, cored and chopped      ¾ cup raisins  
¼ cup orange juice      ¾ teaspoons ground ginger  
¾ cup pecan halves      ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¾ cup nuts of your choice

**Step 1: Put apples in an 8" square baking dish or 2-quart casserole dish.** **Step 2: Drizzle with orange juice and toss until fruit is coated.** **Step 3: In a food processor, combine remaining ingredients and pulse just until chopped.** **Step 4: Spoon the nut mixture over the apple mixture and serve.**