

Eat More Fruit In Refreshing Smoothie

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School's out and the weather has instantly turned hot! Kids are clamoring for something cold to drink. When choosing beverages for mealtime or snacks, aim for water or one percent or fat-free milk, especially for children. University of Florida/IFAS Extension nutrition specialists recommend limiting fruit juice to six ounces per day for one- to six-year-olds and 12 ounces for 7- to 18-year olds. This cuts down on their filling up on juice so they are not hungry for other foods. Fruit juices are good sources of certain vitamins and minerals and can be part of a healthy eating plan. Check the label and make a healthy choice.

Fruit juice typically is made from 100 percent fruit juice with no added sugars. Juice drinks, including "juice cocktail" beverages, usually contain added sugars, including high fructose corn syrup. High fructose corn syrup is similar in composition to table sugar and is used to sweeten many processed foods because it is less expensive than table sugar. However, it has little nutritional value. Even though a juice drink may contain fruit juice and even the recommended daily value of vitamin C per serving, the added sugars and sweeteners contribute "empty" calories. Check the label to see what the product contains. Choose "100 percent fruit juice" products for greater nutritional value for your food dollar. This information is usually found near the Nutrition Facts panel on the back of the label.

In addition, consuming the whole fruit has added benefits, including fiber and other nutrients that are removed during juice processing. An apple, for example, has more fiber and nutrients and is more filling than 100 percent apple juice. Of course, apple juice is a healthier choice over sugar-sweetened beverages. When possible, opt for whole fruit over fruit juice.

For a quick, refreshing treat, try this fruit smoothie:

Pineapple and Banana Smoothie

2 large ripe bananas
1 cup pineapple juice
4 tablespoons low fat plain yogurt

Cut the bananas into small pieces and put in a blender or food processor. Add the pineapple juice, then the yogurt. Blend until smooth. Serves 2.

Sources: *Food and Fitness*, February 2009, S.B. Klein and B. Anderson, Iowa State University Extension, <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/45A9C983-823A-4CE5-8CBF-764E553B9EBB/95389/Feb2009.pdf>

Healthy Snacks for Children, Center for Science in the Public Interest, http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/document_fy893
<http://www.quickfreerecipes.com/pineapple-and-banana-smoothie-recipe/>

Have a question? Contact the University of Florida IFAS - Washington/Holmes Counties Extension office at (850)638-6265, weekdays 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m.

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