

Food for Thought

January 2023

January is National Oatmeal Month

During the cold weather months oatmeal is a great way to add a warm and tasty food to your meals. Oatmeal is a whole grain. Whole grains are important for a healthy body because they contain vitamins, minerals, and fiber which helps us feel fuller longer, lowers cholesterol and also has anticancer properties.

There are a number of types of oats including:

- rolled oats
- quick cooking oats
- instant oats
- oat flour
- steel-cut oats



The nutritional value remains very similar between the different types of oats, but with one exception: fiber. Oats that take longer to cook generally contain more fiber – steel cut oats have 5 grams of fiber in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, which is twice the amount that can be found in the same volume of rolled oats.

Instant flavored oatmeal may have more added sugar, a higher amount of sodium, and lower fiber than other varieties of oats. When purchasing flavored instant oatmeal, pay attention to the nutrition facts label. That's the best way to know if there are 'extra' ingredients added to the product.

Consider making oats ahead of time and adding natural sources of sweetness such as fresh or frozen fruit or yogurt for a thicker consistency.

Ideas to boost nutrition and flavor with oatmeal include:



- ☕ Make oatmeal with calcium-rich milk instead of water.
- ☕ Toss in raisins or dried cranberries and chopped nuts like walnuts or pecans.
- ☕ Add fresh or frozen berries or other fruits like apples or bananas.
- ☕ Mix in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened applesauce.
- ☕ Sprinkle with cinnamon for sweetness, it adds flavor without calories. This will allow for no other sweeteners to be used or a smaller amount.

If you don't care for eating a bowl of oatmeal, you can add oats to baked products such as cookies, muffins, or breads. Oatmeal can also be used in place of breadcrumbs in meat loaf or patties.

Oats are not only a breakfast food. You can add them to many recipes to give them a nutrient boost. Oats can be added in place of breadcrumbs. Try adding them to meatloaf or as a crust for chicken or fish. Oats are also a great addition to baked goods such as oatmeal raisin cookies, maple pecan oatmeal bars, a crunchy fruit cobbler or homemade granola.

Overnight Oats

Basic Ingredients for all Varieties: 1/3 cup old fashioned or quick cooking oats
1/3 cup non-fat milk

Peanut Butter Variety:

2 Tbsp peanut butter
½ tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp honey

Pumpkin Variety:

1/3 cup pumpkin puree
½ teaspoon cinnamon
2 teaspoons packed brown sugar



Yogurt Variety:

1 container (6 ounces) non-fat yogurt (any flavor)
Optional Ingredients: ½ cup chopped fruit or nuts

1. Pour all ingredients into a small container (1-2 cup size) with a lid that fits tight.
2. Stir until all ingredients are combined.
3. Seal container with a lid. Store in the refrigerator overnight.
4. Serve for breakfast in the morning with chopped fruit or nuts, if desired.

Tips:

- Add 1 teaspoon of chia seeds for an extra nutrient boost
- Fresh or frozen fruit can be added as a natural way to sweeten
- You can use any type of milk

Eat Smart Idaho offers FREE classes & educational events that can help limited resource individuals & families learn how to eat well for less! Ask for Eat Smart Idaho in your County.

Panhandle: Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai &
Shoshone Counties 208-292-2525

North Central Idaho: Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, &
Nez Perce Counties 208-883-2267



To contact the Eat Smart Idaho Coordinator: Kali Gardiner, RDN, LD
Phone: 208-292-2525
E-mail – kalig@uidaho.edu
Web: www.eatsmartidaho.org

Sources: <https://food.unl.edu/free-resources/newsletters/family-fun-run/oatmeal-whole-grain-goodness>; <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/family-consumer-sciences/snap-ed/eat-smart/eat-smart-blog/spotlight-whole-grains>; <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/simply-nutritious-quick-and-delicious/2017-05-19-all-about-oats>; <https://extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/know-your-oats-oatmeal-month>; https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/oats_are_not_just_health_for_your_heart_but_for_your_whole_body; <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/overnight-oats/> retrieved 12/19/22

This work and material is supported and funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-SNAP and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. USDA and University of Idaho are equal opportunity providers.