

Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

Smoothies can boost fruit, calcium intake

My teenage daughter has a sudden affinity for smoothies. She is making them all the time. Is this something I should encourage?

Smoothies can be a great way for anyone to consume more produce, and even additional calcium if milk, yogurt or calcium-fortified juice is part of the mix.

And most teens need more fruits, vegetables and calcium in their diets. A 2006 study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that less than 1 percent of boys and less than 4 percent of girls aged 14 to 18 years ate the recommended amount of produce. (For girls 14-18, the recommended amount is 1.5 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables per day. Boys that age need an extra half-cup of each.)

Both boys and girls from 14 to 18 years need 1,300 milligrams of calcium a day — about the amount in 4.5 cups of milk. A national nutrition survey in 2005-2006 found that 42 percent of teen boys and only 10 percent of teen girls consumed enough calcium every day.

So, in a word, yes! If your daughter's smoothies help her consume enough produce and calcium day to day, by all means encourage her on her smoothie craze. But it's important to make sure they're healthy beverages, not sugar-laden frozen slushies or milkshakes in disguise.

When prepared healthfully, smoothies can provide a big boost in nutrition. According to a study published in *Health Education and Behavior* in 2015, when smoothies were introduced as an option at school breakfasts at a middle school and high school in Utah, students eating a full cup of fruit during breakfast increased from 4.3 percent to a whopping 45.1 percent.



photo: Hemera

Another study, published in the *Journal of Child Nutrition and Management* in 2015, showed that 68 percent of high school students who chose yogurt as a breakfast option didn't choose milk, suggesting that yogurt products — including many smoothies — may offer an appealing calcium-rich alternative for non-milk drinkers.

The smoothies made for the Utah school study included milk or juice, vanilla yogurt, and fruit — usually bananas, strawberries, pineapple and mandarin oranges, but sometimes cherries and pears — and even spinach for green smoothies. No extra sugar, frozen yogurt or ice cream was added — a good guideline for keeping the nutritional profile of a smoothie high. Adding ice will provide a nice chill and help lower the calorie count. Using frozen fruit — even frozen bananas — helps keep a smoothie thick with or without ice cubes.

For healthy recipe ideas, try the “Fruits and Veggies: More Matters” website at fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org. Click on “Recipes” and choose “Beverages and Smoothies.” You will find 16 pages of recipes for everything from an Orange Banana Frosty to a Watermelon Strawberry Shake (no ice cream included).

In addition, consider introducing your daughter to choosemyplate.gov/teens. This website encourages teens to adopt healthy food and activity habits to last a lifetime.

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By Martha Filipic
614-292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor: This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, Youth Nutrition and Wellness specialist with Ohio State University Extension. OSU Extension is the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University.

Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.

College Marketing and Communications
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1043
614-292-2011

208 Research Services Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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