



Start a Fad: Eat Fruit as Dessert

According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines at www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines and MyPlate at www.choosemyplate.gov, we need to make smart choices from every food group and find our balance between food and physical activity to get the most nutrition from our calories.

A healthy eating plan is one that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. For fruits, this means eating at least 2 cups a day. We need to eat a variety of fruits every day: choose from fresh, frozen, canned, or dried, and go easy on fruit juices.

FRUIT AS DESSERT! Fruits have traditionally made good snacks and interesting salads. Many of us drink our fruits as juices and can increase our fruit consumption even more by eating fruit as dessert.

Cravings for sweets after meals can be met with fruits. Whole fruits are easy to carry and can be eaten as dessert for lunches on the run. And how about chilled cut fruit for dessert for any lunch or dinner?

Fruits can be creatively transformed into fancy, beautiful desserts. Try multi-colored fruit medleys, lightly glazed fruit compotes, creative mixtures of fruits and nuts, lots of fruit on small pieces of cakes and cookies, mashed ripe fruit frozen into shapes, and variations of traditional ethnic desserts.

Easy fruit sauces can add to the allure of fruits as dessert as well. Consider light, refreshing combinations: lemon or lime juice, a bit of honey, grated lemon or lime zest and minced mint leaves OR vanilla yogurt, frozen juice concentrate and coconut extract.

Try crumbled oatmeal cookies on a fresh fruit cocktail; crushed frosted corn cereal on tart berries; chocolate cake crumbs on a banana, orange and apple fruit cocktail; or cinnamon-sugar sprinkled on apple wedges.

Ethnic traditions are also a good starting point for fruit as dessert. There are many variations of Scandinavian “fruit soups.” Chinese “almond floats” can be made with a larger proportion of fruits. Pacific Islander “taro puddings” can be made with coconut extract flavoring instead of coconut milk with added chunks of fruit. Asian “sticky rice” desserts can be adapted by using the rice as a base, adding a layer of sweet bean mash, and topping it with lots of fruits. Or start with a base of sticky rice, add a layer of a mixed fruit and sweet potatoes, and top with syrup made of fruit juice, coconut extract to taste, and lemon or lime zest.

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