

We know that smoothies are a relatively quick and easy way of obtaining some really good nutrition, and they can be immensely enjoyable, so we've listed here some of the fruits, vegetables and other plant foods that we've used and enjoyed in smoothies, *not all of them in one smoothie*! We've also listed a benefit or two of using each of them and some possible quick and easy things to do with any leftovers.

Ingredient: **Kale**

Why? **Kale** really is the nutrient dense green vegetable that it's rumoured to be with good levels of calcium and other minerals, and powerful isothiocyanates, ie anti-cancer phytochemicals, when chopped up and eaten raw, such as in a smoothie!

Other Uses It's not always easy to eat **kale** raw, so we often steam it for a couple of minutes, just to soften it. If you're feeling adventurous, a fun thing to do with **kale** is to chop it up small, massage some of your favourite seasonings into it and pop it briefly into the oven at a low temperature, unless you have a dehydrator in which case, air dry your pieces of **kale** until they're nice and crispy.

Ingredient: **Romaine Lettuce**

Why? It was a surprise to discover how well **romaine lettuce** works in a smoothie, and by using plenty of it over the course of the day, you will get some very good nutrition; **romaine** is actually reasonable source of zinc as well as other minerals and vitamins such as vitamin K

Other Uses: There will almost certainly be plenty of this pleasingly crunchy leafy vegetable left and, not surprisingly, it's ideal in salads. But equally, because it's not the floppy variety of lettuce, a large leaf makes a good wrap for any of your favourite fillings.

Ingredient: **Spinach**

Why? **Spinach** also works very well as an ingredient in a green smoothie. It's nutritionally different from the two above in that some of its mineral content, iron, calcium, magnesium is less available than in kale or romaine due to the oxalic acid in it which binds to these minerals, making them less accessible to us when we eat it. On the plus side though, **spinach** is good for eye health by virtue of its lutein and zeaxanthin, and it's a reasonable source of Omega 3!

Other Uses: It's a win win with **spinach**; easy to use raw in a salad or as an additional ingredient in the wrap suggestion above, and it can be ready to eat after just a few minutes of steaming. By eating it raw, the lutein and zeaxanthin remain intact, as does the Omega 3 fat. By cooking it, some of the oxalic acid breaks down, making more of the iron and calcium available.

Ingredient: **Celery**

Why? **Celery** provides a touch of saltiness for the smoothie. It contains a variety of mineral salts in a perfect balance, making it a good 'salt' choice for anyone watching their sodium intake.

Other Uses: One stalk of **celery** is probably enough in a smoothie, so there will be some leftover. If you have a juicer, then you could investigate the current trend for juicing it ..the whole bunch. Alternatively, it's always good with dips such as hummus; it can be chopped up quickly and easily into little batons.

Ingredient: **Cucumber**

Why? **Cucumber** contributes what we consider to be superior water, natural, mineral dense water without the chlorination that is an unfortunate but necessary feature of our tap water. Any fruit or vegetable can make this boast, but cucumber is particularly water rich and at the same time, low in calories

Other Uses: **Cucumber** is clearly an obvious salad vegetable, but like celery it can also be cut into batons and eaten with a dip, or it can be cut into pieces long enough to be filled with a dip once the seeds in the middle have been scooped out.

Ingredient: **Date(s)**

Why? Most people can only contemplate a smoothie, especially a green smoothie, if there's some sweetness. A **date** or two will do the job with the additional bonuses of some minerals, most B vitamins and fibre. Regular sugar can make no such claims!

Other Uses: **Dates** are an ideal snack food, they're satisfying and, as already mentioned, they are nutritious. Their sweet properties are not only useful for smoothies, but can replace many liquid sweeteners by turning them into date paste, for which there's a [recipe](#) on our website.

Ingredient: **Banana**

Why? **Bananas** are a great way of adding some thickness to a smoothie. Like dates, they also add sweetness along with minerals, B vitamins and fibre, in fact they're well known for providing prebiotic fibre especially when they're not too ripe. This is food for the 'good gut bugs' and as such, they contribute to a healthy microbiome, the importance of which is becoming increasingly apparent.

Other Uses: **Bananas** must be the most convenient (and affordable) fresh fruit snack, but they're also great for making quick desserts - split one and fill it with a nut or soya yoghurt, date paste, chia jam ...there are so many possibilities. Or make a thicker smoothie by adding some Omega 3 rich seeds and cacao or carob powder. We have a [recipe](#) for one of these, too. Bananas also make a quick and easy non-dairy ice cream. All that's required is to chop a few up into pieces and freeze them so that they're ready to be blitzed up into a cream and eaten straight away.

Ingredient: **Berries**

Why? These little red, purple and blue gems are well known for their array of phytochemicals. **Blueberries**, for example, and especially wild **blueberries** have been found to have favourable effects on cholesterol and blood pressure. Their anthocyanins appear to have antiinflammatory properties and these anthocyanins have been shown to demonstrate statistically significant benefit for fibromyalgia sufferers.

Other Uses: These fruits are easily stored in a freezer compartment, especially out of season when the fresh **berries** are less available. **Blackberries**, cherries, raspberries and strawberries make a good chia jam, for which there is a recipe under Desserts and Sweet Things on our website. They're a good topping for porridge and they can be added to bananas to make a **berry** flavoured non- dairy ice cream (see above).

Ingredient: **Orange**

Why? Citrus fruits add zest and fluid to a smoothie. We've found limes make a good addition, especially to a green smoothie. **Orange** is a big favourite with most people, making it a good way to start. Many of the ingredients listed here contain vitamin C and **oranges** are particularly well known for their offering of this vitamin which, aside from its positive effect on

immunity, also assists in the absorption of iron from iron rich green vegetables, such as kale and romaine lettuce. And did you know **oranges** are also a good source of calcium?

Other Uses: **Orange** is a lovely fruit to combine with a variety of green leaves and a tasty dressing for a quick and nourishing salad. Add in some fresh mango and you have quite a special treat! We tend to make a dressing using some of the mango and **orange**, lemon or lime juice, a TSP of miso for saltiness and as much ginger as is enjoyable for you.

Ingredient: **Apple or Pear**

Why? Both of these fruits are a good addition to a smoothie, but there's no denying that it's **pear** that adds quite a special quality (in our opinion). The fibre content of these fruits is impressive.

Other Uses: These two are definitely some of nature's easiest snack foods; apart from washing them, there's really nothing more to do other than eat them. They also work well in recipes for those days when there's a bit more time and inclination to do more. The Apple Cobbler recipe under the heading of Desserts and Sweet Things is pretty straightforward and may be worth a try.

Ingredient: **Chia Seeds**

Why? These super little seeds are a gentle fat and protein addition to a smoothie, especially if it's the first food of the day. Other fat sources may prove a little heavy, but a modest amount of **chia seeds** is likely to be lighter. They're a good source of Omega 3 fat; unusually, they provide more Omega 3 than 6 whereas most nuts and seeds have the balance the other way around. **Chia seeds** are a good source of calcium and other minerals, and they provide a little extra thickness to the smoothie.

Other Uses: If you have any fresh or frozen berries, a handful of dates and some **chia seeds**, then you have all the ingredients you need for making chia jam. As they have a thickening effect, they're also good to use in dressings, sauces and desserts such as chia porridge / pudding.

Ingredient: **Flax Seeds**

Why? There is a bit more fat in **flax seeds** than in chia seeds, but like chia seeds, they have a higher proportion of Omega 3 to 6, and actually provide a little more than chia seeds. By freshly grinding them, the fats are more available to the body. By using them whole, they help with digestion. Both of these seeds soak up fluid and so must be consumed with or alongside liquid.

Other Uses: Like chia seeds, **flax seeds** can be used as a thickening agent. We use them in dressings, sauces and hummus, giving each of these extra substance, nutrients and fibre compared to using flax oil alone.

Ingredient: **Hemp Seeds**

Why? We're referring here to hulled **hemp seeds**, without the crunchy shells. They add creaminess to a smoothie along with minerals such as zinc and good quantities of Omega 6 and 3 fats.

Other Uses: **Hemp seeds** make one of the easiest plant milks if you're happy to keep, rather than strain the seeds after blending. They're also an easy topping for desserts, porridge, salads and can be used directly from the packet.

Final Notes: Smoothies are typically nutrient dense, which is great! It does however mean that glugging them down quickly in a bid to get on with whatever else seems pressing may prove to be a bit of an assault on the digestion at one go. We therefore recommend taking it much more slowly which is easy to achieve by pouring the smoothie into a bowl and eating it with a spoon. This also means, of course, that toppings can be added ... maybe something to chew on?