

LIQUID PRODUCE DRINKS: SMOOTHIES AND EXTRACTED JUICES

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 reports that 90% of the U.S. population does not meet the recommended intake for vegetables, while 80% isn't meeting the recommendation for fruit. In the "2020 State of the Plate" report by the Produce for Better Health Foundation, it was found that most Americans only eat one serving of fruits and vegetables once or less a day. Vegetables were found to be consumed about once per day, while fruit was found to only be consumed six times a week, less than once a day. Fruits and vegetables contain fiber, antioxidants, phytonutrients, potassium, and are nutrient-dense foods. They play a key role in disease prevention and weight control, so it's crucial that we improve our intake.

If you find you struggle to meet your fruit and/or vegetable needs, juice extraction and smoothies can be a healthy and delicious way to improve your intake. We break down juicing and smoothies, plus the pros and cons of each below.

JUICE EXTRACTION (A.K.A. JUICING)

A juice extractor is an electric tabletop appliance that has a chute or tube for feeding the produce, a sharp blade, a reservoir for the fiber/pulp and a pitcher to hold the extracted juice. Produce does not need to be de-seeded or peeled, as the juicer is able to manage both. Because the rind and peels can be fed into the juicer, it is always prudent to wash and/or scrub produce with water and a bristle brush. If your budget permits, seek out organic sources to help minimize chemical pesticide exposure. Conventional produce is safe for consumption as well – just make sure to wash thoroughly before juicing. Shopping local farm markets may also provide an affordable option to obtain high quality fresh produce.

There are three types of juicers - centrifugal, single gear (a.k.a. cold press) and twin gear. They vary in quality and cost as well as functionality. Twin gear juicers are better for juicing greens and wheat grass and can also be used to make nut butters and baby food. Put some time into researching models that best meet your needs for the price.

Juicing removes the insoluble fiber, but the soluble fiber remains in the juice. Juicing can provide improved nutrient access because our bodies absorb and assimilate nutrients such as digestive enzymes and phytonutrients from extracted juice more easily.

Commonly juiced vegetables include: beets, carrots, cucumbers, ginger, greens

Commonly juiced fruits include: apples, berries, grapefruit, lemons, limes, oranges, pears

SMOOTHIES

Smoothies are made by added ingredients to a blender or food processor. The food is chopped and blended with nothing discarded or extracted. Smoothies tend to be thicker beverages that use fruit as a base with the option to add ingredients such as yogurt, milk, dairy-free alternatives, coconut water or unsweetened juice. You can also add ingredients like almonds, nut or seed butters, cacao nibs or chia seeds. Blending produce into a smoothie preserves fiber, which is important for regulating blood sugar, lowering cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, keeping bowels regular and aiding in satiety.

Smoothie-lovers beware, though - smoothies can easily turn into high-calorie, sugar-delivery systems if they include too much fruit, sweetened yogurt, sweetened juice, sorbet, frozen yogurt or ice cream. Sadly, many made-to-order and bottled smoothies include these ingredients. Try to make your own smoothies so you have more control over the ingredients and amounts.

	PROS	CONS
Juicing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be lower in calories than smoothies if prepared with lots of vegetables, whereas smoothies tend to use fruits & other more calorie-dense add-ins • May encourage greater vegetable consumption • Easier nutrient absorption for conditions in which fiber may aggravate symptoms, such as digestive problems • A quick way to add nutrients to the diet • Portable • Some juicers can also be used to make nut milks; save the pulp to make nut butters • Can freeze and reuse later; may want to do this with herbs such as ginger, dill or fennel in ice cube trays for fresh additions to cooking to use as desired • Pulp can be reused – as food or compost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiber is discarded • May not satisfy hunger for very long • Uses a lot of vegetables and fruits at once, which can add up in cost • Juicers are expensive • Cleaning juicer can be messy and frustrating • Contains small amounts of protein
Smoothies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains fiber, hence all the benefits of fiber • Can add protein such as non-or low-fat yogurt, milk, tofu or nut/seed butters • Can be made using a blender, food processor, hand-immersion blender or other blending gadgets, which are often multi-functional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be caloric, especially if using a lot of fruit and adding protein and fat sources • Not often made with vegetables, but they can be added

SUMMARY

Juicing and smoothies offer two additional delivery systems to help reach your fruit and vegetable goals. As the chart above states, there are pros and cons for both of these beverages and it is worthwhile to explore both. While many may debate juicing versus smoothies, they both offer opportunities for increased nutrition in a glass. Most experts will agree that there are no substitutes for having whole fruits and vegetables in your diet. Additionally, it's easier to consume more calories with beverages than with whole foods. To that end, find ways to enjoy eating and drinking your vegetables and fruits so you can reap their bountiful benefits.