



Plants and a Protein

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One of the most common requests I get from clients are for snack ideas. People often seem to get into ruts with snack options and crave something new. Snacks are fantastic for keeping you energized throughout the day...look at them as an opportunity to promote focus and concentration, top off your fuel stores before a workout, and as part of your plan for getting your nutrient needs met.

With all the recipes and ideas out there, let's try simplifying snacking into 2 words: plants and protein. If you can pair a plant with a protein, you can create energizing and satisfying combinations to keep you well fueled. Plants include grains, starches, fruits and vegetables. They provide energy-yielding carbohydrates and fiber for staying satisfied longer. Good sources of protein include dairy products, nuts, seeds, beans and meats. The protein contributes significantly to staying satisfied also. Here's a list of several of my favorites....plant and protein combinations:

Plant	<i>Plus</i> Protein
Bananas or apples	Peanut or almond butter
Whole grain crackers	Cheese or deli meat
Bell peppers, carrots, cucumber	Hummus
Granola or Belvita breakfast biscuit (crumbled)	Yogurt
Whole grain pita bread or chips	Hummus
Whole beans	Melted shredded cheese
Dried fruit	Nuts
High fiber cereal (dry or cooked, such as oatmeal)	Nuts and/or milk
Fresh fruit	Cup of milk
Whole grain toast (I love Dave's Killer Bread)	Peanut or almond butter
Pita bread	Cheese melted on top
Popcorn	Milk, chocolate milk, or sprinkle parmesan cheese
Berries	Kefir (fermented dairy beverage)
Graham crackers	Peanut butter
Fruit	Hard-boiled eggs

These options are literally a tip of the iceberg! There are tons of combinations you can come up with. And, of course, you can play with the options above to make them more interesting. I love sprinkling my toast and peanut butter with cinnamon. Add avocado to your pita and melted cheese (or substitute the pita with a handful of tortilla chips!). Create your own trail mix. Blend the yogurt with fruit to make it a smoothie on the go. Add a touch of chocolate chips to the kefir and fruit for a fun dessert. Use a whole grain tortilla and wrap the peanut butter and banana slices. Make your own granola and include oats, nuts, and dried fruit.

One final note on snacks....don't be afraid to eat them. Too often I have clients attempting to avoid their hunger cues between meals in efforts to manage their weight, only to find themselves ravenously hungry and stuffing food in at the next meal. Coffee should not be used as a way to avoid eating. Respond to your hunger cues. Be prepared for them to hit. What combinations will you come up with?

HAPPY SNACKING!

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