

# ***Florida Food Fare***

by Mary King  
Family & Consumer Sciences  
University of Florida / IFAS  
Sarasota County Extension

## **Healthy Snacks**

Few of us, children and adults alike, can get through the day without a snack. Whether it's in the middle of the morning or late afternoon, our stomach begins to growl, we begin to feel sluggish or just need a refreshing pick me up. Just like a car needs gasoline to drive its engine, your body needs food to keep you healthy and energized. When you feel hungry between meals, your body is signaling that it needs a jump-start so you won't run out of fuel before mealtime. Growing children in particular often need more food energy than they can easily consume at a single meal. Eating breakfast, lunch and dinner may not be enough. Nutritious snacks are smart ways to get the nutrients and energy needed to work, play and grow.

Snacks can be part of a healthy diet. They do not have to be full of calories, fat and sugar to taste good and satisfy that between-meal craving. Think of snack time as a "mini meal." Small snacks during the day sometimes help prevent overeating at mealtimes too. Try for at least two different food groups in each snack. Make a snack plan with your child. Together make a list of nutritious snacks that you and your child like and be sure to include some that he or she can make alone. Agree on a plan to make sure there are always enough of the necessary ingredients and post the list on the refrigerator.

Most everyone knows that reaching for a vegetable platter is healthier than reaching for a bowl of potato chips. But once you start using the carrot sticks to scoop up the sour cream dip, the tables are turned. Dipped vegetables give you about 60 percent more fat and calories than potato chips straight from the bag. Alternatives for vegetable dips might be low fat or fat free sour cream, or plain nonfat yogurt mixed with dry Ranch salad dressing. Honey and toasted chopped almonds or wheat germ added to plain yogurt make a delicious dip for dunking bite-size pieces of fruit. Fresh fruits and vegetables in season are always good snack choices.

Dried fruit and nut mixes (trail mix) are easy to make and keep well. Spread peanut butter on a bread stick, graham cracker, rice cake or whole grain bagel

and sprinkle with raisins, sunflower seeds or coconut. The all American favorite, popcorn, can be a low fat snack depending on what you top it with. One low fat trick is to spray the warm popcorn with no stick cooking spray and then season with your favorite herbs, spices or parmesan cheese. Baked nonfat frozen pretzels sprinkled with parmesan cheese and dipped into dijon style mustard makes an unbeatable combo for satisfying those hunger cravings.

Yogurt makes a healthy and refreshing snack anytime. It can be eaten plain right from the carton or mixed with fruit. Frozen yogurt pops are delicious and fun to make. One of the quickest and most satisfying summer snacks and a great source of calcium and vitamins is a yogurt smoothie. Made with fresh or canned fruit, yogurt, and juice or fat free soymilk, it can be whipped together in your blender. Another great source of calcium is low fat cheese, cut into strips or cubes served with whole wheat crackers.

The next time you or someone in your family has a hunger craving, there is no need to feel guilty, or worry about adding extra fat, as long as you have ingredients on hand for a healthy snack. It might be just what you need to give you the energy to get through the rest of the day. Try one of these easy to prepare snack suggestions.

### **Recipes:**

#### **Chile Cheese Popcorn**

10 cups hot air popped popcorn	1/2-1 teaspoon chili powder
1 1/2-2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese	1/4 teaspoon dried oregano

While popcorn is popping, stir together the cheese, chili powder and oregano in a small cup. Transfer hot popcorn to large bowl and toss quickly with cheese mixture. Serve immediately.

#### **Frozen Yogurt Pops**

2 cups plain low fat yogurt	1/2 cup canned crushed pineapple
1 can frozen pineapple or orange-pineapple juice concentrate, thawed	small paper cups
	wooden popsicle sticks

Drain pineapple. Put all ingredients in a medium sized bowl and mix together. Spoon the mixture into paper cups filling them almost to the top. Stretch a piece of plastic wrap across the top of each cup. Using the popsicle stick, poke a hole

in the plastic wrap and stand the stick straight up in the center of the cup. Put the cups in the freezer until the mixture is frozen solid. Remove plastic wrap and cup. Makes 6-8 pops.

### **Baked Sweet Potato Chips**

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Peel sweet potato or yam and slice thin, as if for a thick potato chip. Cover a cookie sheet or baking pan with foil, sprayed lightly with cooking spray. Lay sweet potato chips on foil, rubbing each one slightly in the vegetable spray. Then lightly spray the tops with vegetable spray and sprinkle with garlic salt. Bake for 20 minutes, turn, sprinkle that side and bake another 10 minutes.

### **Snackin Granola Bars**

3 1/2 cups toasted oats (see notes)	1/2 cup brown sugar
1 cup dried fruit	1 egg beaten
1 cup chopped nuts	1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2/3 cup margarine melted	1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients, mix well. Press firmly into well greased 9x13 " pan. Bake in preheated moderate oven, 350 degrees F for about 25 minutes. Cool and cut into bars. Store in tightly covered container in cool dry place or in refrigerator.

**Notes:** to toast, spread on a cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees F until light brown, about 15 minutes.

**Variations:** 1/2 cup coconut; 6 oz package chocolate chips; 1/2 cup sunflower seeds.

### **Herbed Ricotta and Whole Grain Crackers**

1 cup light ricotta cheese	Grape tomatoes, halved
2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped	Whole grain crackers

Mix ricotta cheese with basil. Spread the mixture on whole grain crackers and top with the grape tomato.