

Litterless lunches 101: Smoothies

According to the David Suzuki Foundation, Canadians waste a staggering amount of food each year. They estimate that the average single-family home discards 275 kg of food annually and while about 75% of that ends up in green bins in Toronto, the balance is trucked to landfill sites. Toronto taxpayers spend roughly \$10 Million to process uncomposted food.

Here is our chance to help make a dent in this waste, to divert perfectly delicious food from our green bins and into our kids' lunchboxes and the solution could not be more simple: whenever you have a bit of uneaten and ripe fruit—be it from a fruit platter, a couple of berries that are left in the box or from an untouched snack that has come back from school, put it in a container in the freezer. After a few weeks, you will find that you have enough fruit on hand to make a number of smoothies.

My kids love smoothies as a part of their lunches or for a recess snack. I am delighted to make them because it means they have some fruit, maybe even a vegetable, and some protein to keep them going in the classroom or schoolyard. The key to making smoothie convenient is to have chopped up fruit on hand, so save your bits and pieces of fruit and if you use all of that up, hit the frozen section of the supermarket or Costco and stock up your freezer.

Safety first: smoothies that contain dairy must be kept cold to keep them safe for consumption. Please only send them to school in a reusable insulated bottle or cup (e.g., reusable coffee mug—these are great for cold beverages too). There are tons of great options out there and you probably already have something suitable at home.



Chocolate ginger apple or pear smoothie

1 apple or pear
2/3 cup yogurt or kefir
1 Tbsp cacao powder
1 tsp maple syrup
1/4 tsp fresh ginger
Squeeze of lemon



Mango, carrot and cinnamon smoothie

2/3 cup frozen mango chunks
1/3 cup roughly chopped carrot
2/3 cup yogurt or kefir
1/2 tsp cinnamon



Banana and mixed berry smoothie

1/2 banana
1/2 cup frozen berries
2/3 cup yogurt or kefir



Berries and beet smoothie

1 small beet, peeled and roughly chopped
2/3 cup frozen berries
2/3 cup yogurt or kefir
1 tsp maple syrup
1/2 tsp cinnamon

Smoothie making basics:

Equipment—blender

Smoothie making couldn't be easier and is a perfect hands on activity for kids. Dump all of the ingredients into the blender, put the top on firmly, turn it on and process until the mixture is smooth. If the blender appears to be struggling, turn off the blender, add a splash of water and then give the contents a stir with a spatula. Replace the top and turn the machine on again.

General guidelines for a single serving:

1 cup total of fruit or a mix of fruit and vegetables

2/3 cup of unsweetened yogurt, kefir or a dairy-free substitute like soy, oat or hemp milk

Anything else you like to add: ground cinnamon or ginger, vanilla, cacao, turmeric, maple syrup or honey for a bit of sweetness, etc.

One cautionary note: avoid using large quantities of blueberries, flax seeds and chia seeds. Blueberries have lots of pectin the seeds naturally develop a gel in contact with liquid which in turn will transform a bottle of drinkable smoothie into a bottle of undrinkable jelly!