

# Smoothie Blend

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I've always had an issue with eating raw fruit. Between the sticky hands post peeling an orange and the trouble of having to separate the seeds from the edible parts of a grape I could always find a reason to steer clear of fruit. Unfortunately however despite my insistent objection to fruit everyone I knew to know something about the subject told me there's no better substitute. Between the nutrients that get lost in the processing of fruit juices, the fibre you miss when you opt for the vitamin tablets and unnatural additives on fruit products I couldn't deny they were right so I looked for a way to force myself to eat fruit.

A smoothie proved to be the solution. Between the use of natural fruit and the convenience of drinking your daily fruit requirements in a glass I could see why. Things only got better when I saw the amount of flavours one can play with and blend their favourite ingredients to make a beverage suitable for any season and mood. Unfortunately however I also discovered the limitations that come with being reliant on store bought smoothies, whether it is the excess sugar from the ice cream they sometimes use instead of yogurt or having to go out of the house to buy the smoothie. So after reading and consulting with those that knew their way better than me in the kitchen I have the following points I'd like for you to follow to a perfect smoothie;



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## The hardware

The hardware you need is dependent on your needs really; if it's just the mixing of your protein shake pre/ post training then a suitable shaker will do the trick but for those luxurious, decadent smoothies blended from fruit and other 'raw' ingredients then a blender is more suited for the job.

- **Blender**  
In 2008 I bought myself a Kenwood Multi Pro Blender and while at the time paying more than a grand for a kitchen appliance seemed ridiculous (I'm a man after all) I've never looked back. The beauty about opting for a full blender with all the accessories as compared to a mere smoothie maker is that the former gives you flexibility and expanded functionality like juicing oranges.



You will also want something powerful because the best smoothie is made from smooth blended ingredients including ice, adding the latter at the end often results in an inconsistent drink with flavours varying from good to bland because of the dilution factor of the melting ice. If you not a fan of the full blender then a smoothie maker is also ideal as is a stick blender (try the Kenwood Triblade).

- **Shaker**  
For some the need is more mobility based rather than gourmet so a protein shaker is more suited. The best shaker is one that does not leak, has good mixing qualities and has a drinking opening big enough for thick drinks. USN also makes the Tornado shaker also has an extra screw-on receptacle that conveniently fits on the shaker and can be used to carry your next supplement serving whether it be powder or caps.

## The base

The type of liquid base used on a smoothie is informed by personal preference rather than prescribed. I have however noted the following differences between the bases;

- **Milk**



Milk yields a more decadent and rich smoothie relatively speaking. This often works well with non-acidic fruits as we all know the sour milk effect acid can have on milk.



Milk mixed with whey protein blended with another rich ingredient like chocolate/ peanut butter can often result in a desert like smoothie which is great if you need to indulge without too much guilt. Unfortunately however there's also a downside, milk has fat and calories so if weight loss is the goal milk might not be the option for you. Also it's worthy to note that as milk has a 'best' before date chances are you smoothie won't keep as long in the fridge before going bad.

- **Fruit Juice**



This base is excellent especially to fill up the void when your favourite seasonal fruit is out of season. I'm a fan of Strawberries so at times when these are not in season a strawberry fruit juice always works. Fruit juices also have natural fructose which eliminates/ reduces the need to introduce external sweetness. Unfortunately however this can also be a bad thing as the additive sweetening effect from the fruit juice, whey protein and fruit can result in a very sweet product.

- **Water**  
Try as you might there's no way you can ignore the advantages that come with the simplicity of water. Yes the smoothie might not be as decadent but it also has significantly less calories as water has none. These smoothies also keep longer in the fridge as their shelf life is not prejudiced by milk/ fruit juice. The fact that a water based smoothie will not trigger undesired symptoms for lactose intolerant people as is the case with milk is also an added bonus with water (as it is the case with most fruit juices). The quickest way to make a cold smoothie without the need to freeze it is to blend the ice cubes with the rest of the ingredients until they completely melt.



## Ingredients

Smoothie flavours are dependent on the individual taste and they can be as diverse as there are people worldwide! Chances are whatever combination you feel like can be made into a smoothie, granted some might require bravery as a prerequisite to their consumption. There are however a few guidelines on what to add and which combinations to use;

- **Emulsifying Agent**  
An emulsifying agent ensures that all the ingredients combine and the final product does not separate. In fruit smoothies a Banana is excellent at this while also being able to go along with a lot of other ingredients. Instant cereals also play this role well so you can try them instead of bananas or with bananas for a more luxurious taste. If however you are using Whey Protein or any other meal replacement chances are this will suffice as an emulsifier. Adding yogurt is also great but not only as an emulsifying agent but due to the natural goodness that comes for the live cultures, just watch out for the calorific content.
- **Flavouring Agent**  
If you are using fruit or a meal replacement chances are that will be your flavouring agent already. The trick though is irrespective of the combinations you decide to opt for as your ingredients there must always be one that stands out as your main flavour. Because I like coffee there are times when I will add it to my smoothies as the main flavour. Be careful of raw eggs though, since I heard of salmonella in my second year at tertiary I've since opted to eat my eggs cooked!
- **Fruit**  
One of the best advantages of smoothies is that you can have your full day's fruit recommended daily allowance in one of 2 servings rather than 5. Using fresh fruit in a smoothie ensures that you get to fulfill your fruit consumption obligations conveniently. While you might be tempted to peel edible skin on fruit like apples/ pears don't, apparently this is a fibre source. I must however warn you that while it might seem great to cram as much fruit varieties on one smoothie the resulting product might not agree. Something else to consider with fruits as well especially those high in fructose is their ability to ferment quicker which reduces the shelf life of your smoothie. You can also chop your fruit into pieces and freeze it; this is excellent in making sure your smoothie gets cold quicker. Also remember fruit has fructose which means it has calories!
- **Perfect combination**  
Much as the color combination in a rainbow is beautiful combining too many fruits/ ingredients in a smoothie can result in an undrinkable concoction. So it goes without saying that it is a good idea to know what flavour you are going for and use only ingredients that complement each other. Milk, coffee, cocoa, banana and whey protein go well together but the minute you put strawberries or oranges in the mixture it all goes south. A fruit juice, whey (fruit flavoured) and berry smoothie tastes great combination until you add peanut butter.

I've also found that there are other ingredients which are great with smoothies including honey as a sweetening agent, vanilla essence to enhance the flavour and lemon juice for that refreshing tangy taste.

So whether you are **on the road or at home now** you have no excuse not to eat your fruit. Smoothies are a great way to have natural fruit and derive most of its goodness without the mess. The recipes can be easily varied and ingredients altered for that refreshing feeling on a hot day or the nourishing sensations that comes from a wholesome meal! For more recipes you can always check out [AllRecipes.com](http://AllRecipes.com) and [Hartford House](http://Hartford House); the website of your Whey Protein/ Meal Replacement Company might also not be a bad idea.

