

Green Smoothies *for Beginners*

A close-up photograph of a glass filled with a vibrant green smoothie. The smoothie has a frothy, bubbly texture. Several fresh raspberries are scattered on top of the smoothie. A sprig of fresh green mint leaves is placed on the right side of the glass, partially overlapping the smoothie and the glass rim. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

ESSENTIALS TO GET STARTED

63 SMOOTHIE
INGREDIENTS

35 DELICIOUS
RECIPES

3 SMOOTHIE
CLEANSES

Green Smoothies *for Beginners*

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ISBN: Print 978-1-62315-098-3 | eBook 978-1-62315-099-0

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the consumption of raw fruits, vegetables, herbs, and spices has been used as preventive medicine and to promote good health and healing, but for some reason, it never really caught on in the Western diet. And as people moved further away from unprocessed fruits and vegetables in their diets, health issues such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and strokes have radically increased.

The so-called “diseases of excess” are now at epidemic proportions. Fortunately, there’s a simple answer for those interested in embracing a healthful lifestyle: put down the cheeseburger and pick up the smoothie! Don’t cringe—the pages to come will show you how to make this delicious.

Curing your health problems and avoiding disease is really as uncomplicated as changing your diet. As people learn more about how their bodies function and what causes disease, it’s becoming obvious that the key to living a long, healthy life is to eat right and exercise. Sounds simple, but that’s truly all there is to it. In the course of this book, you will learn how to incorporate green fruits and vegetables into your diet in eye-opening ways that may surprise you—and you’re going to love them!

What’s the Big Deal about Green Smoothies?

The big deal is that they can literally save your life! Green fruits and vegetables contain chlorophyll, a special nutrient that you won’t find in their brightly colored brothers and sisters. This will be covered in greater detail later, but for now, just know that your body needs chlorophyll to fight disease, keep your digestive tract and cardiovascular system clean and healthy, and fuel your brain and body. In essence, you can’t live well without green veggies, as consumers of the fast-food Western diet are proving.

There are two reasons many people don’t eat as much produce as they should: time and taste. It’s much easier to grab a cheeseburger and fries or a sub than it is to sit down and eat a huge salad. No one would argue that chips are more convenient to carry around than a veggie plate, and a chocolate bar is certainly less messy to consume than an orange. However, in making these choices, you’re trading health for convenience. Smoothies, on the other hand, provide a perfect solution to both of these excuses, being at once portable and delicious!

If you’re eating a typical Western diet based on fast food, empty calories, and few nutrients, you’re probably suffering from physical maladies such as energy crashes, acne, indigestion, constipation, and brain fog. You may write these symptoms off as the price of life on the go, but they’re actually the first signs that your body isn’t getting what it needs to function properly. Fortunately, there is a way

that you can quickly and easily get all of the benefits of eating a huge salad without actually having to do so.

In the following pages, you will learn all about the health benefits of green smoothies and how to create tasty, green drinks to suit your taste buds. Not in the mood to be creative? No problem; you'll find simple detox plans here, along with tasty recipes for restoring health, energy, and beauty from the inside out. Getting healthy has never been so easy and delicious.

1

GREEN SMOOTHIES: WHAT'S ALL THE HYPE?

You've probably seen beautiful, skinny people carrying cups full of what looks like pond ooze and just can't imagine yourself actually drinking something that color, even though you realize it's probably excellent for your body's well-being. Well, you should know you're seriously missing out! As scientists have come to understand just how much diet contributes to health, the importance of eating a healthful diet has never been more obvious, and one of the easiest ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your daily regimen is by tossing them into the blender.

There are about a million fad diets out there promising health and beauty, but most of them are garbage. Limiting your diet to only certain foods, eliminating an entire food group, or ingesting large amounts of one particular vitamin or supplement is almost certainly a recipe for failure, if for no other reason than the fact that your brain isn't wired to accept deprivation for long. The good news is that green smoothies aren't a passing fad, and they don't require you to eliminate anything from your diet unless you're on a cleanse—but that'll be covered later.

Green smoothies are simply an expedient, tasty, tried-and-true way to eat more fruits and vegetables—nothing more and nothing less. One of the many benefits you'll likely reap is that you'll find yourself eating less and craving fewer “bad” foods. This will occur because your body will finally be getting what it needs, and the fiber in the smoothies will make you feel full for several hours after you drink it. The result, of course, will be a slimmer, healthier you.

What Are Green Smoothies?

Green smoothies are exactly what the name implies: fibrous concoctions that are green in color! The more detailed answer is that they are made from whole, raw fruits and vegetables and contain at least enough green produce to keep the color of the smoothie green. Some smoothies are a nice lime color, while others may be brighter or darker green. You can drink them in a glass like a shake, or eat them in a bowl like a cold soup. The only rules are as follows:

- Use enough green fruits and vegetables to make the smoothie green.
- Blend it so that there are no large, chewable chunks (unless you like chunks, then feel free to leave them in!).

- Don't remove the fiber.
- Don't cook the produce.
- Don't add anything but fruits, vegetables, herbs, and spices to it. No sweeteners, milk, protein powder, or anything else.

That's it. That's all that there is to making a green smoothie. You can drink them for a healthful meal replacement, add them to a meal to boost the nutritional value, incorporate them as a filling snack, or use them to cleanse and detox, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. You've probably heard about juicing and may wonder what the difference is between a juice and a smoothie—to find out, read on.

Smoothies Versus Juices

There are two different ways to incorporate drinkable fruits and vegetables into your diet: smoothies and juices. The primary difference is that smoothies are made in a blender and contain all of the pulp and sometimes even the skins. Juices, on the other hand, are made by running your produce through a specialized juicing machine that separates the juice from the skin and pulp: all that's left is pure juice.

Why Smoothies Are Fabulous for You

Plants contain phytonutrients, live enzymes, vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals that people's bodies need to survive and thrive. There have been many civilizations throughout history that existed wholly on fruits and vegetables, and they were some of the healthiest people on the planet. There are no complex proteins in produce that your body has to break down for energy, though if you're drinking smoothies, your digestive tract will have to extract the nutrients from the fiber. The flip side of that argument, though, is that the fiber in smoothies keeps your digestive tract clean.

Why Smoothies Trump Juices

Though juicing requires a special juice extractor that can be quite expensive, all you need to make a smoothie is a good blender. Aside from cost, smoothies have several benefits that make them an excellent choice. For instance, if you're trying to lose weight, smoothies provide a ton of nutrients as well as fiber that will prevent you from feeling hungry. You therefore won't be tempted by those late-afternoon cravings that can throw your attempts to eat healthfully right out the window.

Another terrific thing about smoothies is that they're fast. All that you need to do is clean and core your produce and toss it into the blender. You don't even have to peel most of it; as a matter of fact, skins contain many nutrients that you won't get from the flesh.

Did You Know? *Many professionals contend that chewing is a necessary part of both digestion and achieving the feeling of fullness. If this is the case, then smoothies may be the better option than juices for healthful, gradual weight loss.*

Finally, some fruits and vegetables don't juice well, but you can easily toss them into your blender to take advantage of their incredible health benefits and luscious flavors. These include:

- Avocados
- Bananas
- Coconut
- Eggplant
- Leeks (You don't get much juice, and what you do get is extremely strong. Blending them, however, can lend a nice, mild, oniony flavor to your vegetable smoothies, as well as a huge nutritional boost.)
- Melons (Though you can juice them, you may get some pulp leaking through.)

The Benefits of Green Smoothies

So now you know why smoothies are so good for you, but what sets green produce apart from all of the other delicious, nutritious fruits and vegetables? The answer is simple: a little green pigment called chlorophyll. Often referred to as the blood or life of the plant, chlorophyll stimulates photosynthesis, the process that uses light to convert the plant's water and carbon dioxide into the glucose the plant uses for energy.

One of the reasons those in the know think chlorophyll is so good for you is that it's nearly identical in structure to hemoglobin, the part of your blood responsible for transporting oxygen. Some believe that chlorophyll can perform the same function in the body as hemoglobin. Though it's not yet scientifically proven, it's a viable theory, and there is some preliminary research to support it.

Other great benefits of chlorophyll include:

- Anti-aging benefits, including enhanced cell regeneration
- Antioxidant benefits
- Chelation of heavy metals from your blood
- Decreased inflammation related to certain illnesses
- Extracted toxins from your liver
- Improved cognitive function
- Improved healing
- Improved immune system

- Improved skin tone
- Increased blood alkalinity, creating a disease-resistant environment
- Protection from the harmful effects of environmental toxins and carcinogens
- Reduced chance of calcium oxalate kidney stones
- Stabilized blood sugar
- Stimulated bowel movements to help keep your colon clean
- Sustained levels of energy
- Weight loss promotion

These are just a few of the benefits of chlorophyll. As you can see, the reasons for going green are too numerous to ignore, but it's also best to get your chlorophyll from raw fruits and vegetables because heat—even a small amount—destroys chlorophyll. If you must cook your vegetables, steam them lightly; if you cook them to the point that they lose their bright green color, you've lost many of the health benefits.

2

THE BASICS OF GREEN SMOOTHIES

To make your first attempts at smoothie-making a success, there are a few things you need to know. Though making smoothies is a fairly simple process, making them taste good is another matter entirely. There's no doubt you're going to end up with a few nasty-tasting concoctions, so this chapter will also provide tips on how to turn a glass of "eww" into a glass of "yum."

Green Smoothie Guidelines

Before you get started, there are a few things you need to know to make your experience as "smooth" as possible! Remember—don't think of green smoothies as a passing fad or something you'll keep up only until you've lost a few pounds. You want to incorporate smoothies as part of a healthful diet for the rest of your life, so developing good methods and habits now will serve you well for a long and healthy existence on this planet.

Use Fresh, Ripe, Organic Produce

By using only the freshest, ripest ingredients, you'll ensure that you get the most flavor and nutritional value from your smoothies. Ripe fruits and vegetables have the most water content so will result in juicy, flavorful smoothies. You also want to use organic produce, because that's the only way to guarantee that you're not drinking a glass of pesticides instead of nutrients. Finally, it's essential that you use fresh produce, as chlorophyll begins to deteriorate as soon as a fruit or vegetable is picked.

Don't Add Anything

If you want to add water, spices, or herbs to your smoothie, that's fine, but avoid adding other components, such as milk, sweeteners, nuts, seeds, or oils. Remember that the goal is to obtain all the health benefits from the fruits and vegetables without complex proteins or other difficult-to-digest ingredients getting in the way. Introducing dairy, grains, simple sugars, or fat into your smoothie will interfere with your body's absorption of the nutrients.

Clean Your Blender

Cleaning your blender thoroughly after each use is vital both for health purposes and to ensure that the nutrients in your smoothies aren't compromised. It takes only a few minutes for oxidation to begin, and bacteria can start growing at room temperature in just a few hours. Take the time to clean your blender well each time you use it. Then you won't have to worry about any undesirables lurking in the cracks and crevices.

Clear Smoothies with Your Doctor before You Begin

There are certain people who shouldn't eat or drink too many greens or participate in restrictive diets. If any of the following apply to you, be sure to clear green smoothies and green smoothie cleansing with your doctor.

- Calcium kidney stones
- Diabetes
- Eating disorders
- History of allergic reactions to green vegetables or fruits
- History of problems with oxalates
- Hypothyroidism
- Pregnancy
- Taking regular medications

As a general rule, before you make any kind of radical changes to your diet, speak with your doctor.

Keep It Simple

It may be tempting, at least in the beginning, to add a dozen different ingredients to your smoothie, but it's best to keep it simple. Use just a few ingredients in order to keep your flavors clean, allowing your palate to adjust more easily to your new, healthful habit. Also, if you use only a few ingredients, it won't be such a struggle for your digestive system to digest it.

Mix Green Veggies Up

Alkaloids are chemical compounds that occur naturally in nearly all green vegetables but can be toxic if you eat the same green for a period of many weeks at a time. In order to avoid alkaloid build-up, eat a wide variety of green vegetables. You don't have to worry about your fruits, as significant amounts of alkaloids don't exist in any commonly eaten fruit.

Drink Your Smoothie Immediately

As soon as you make your smoothie, don't hesitate—drink it! The instant the skin of a vegetable or fruit is broken and air touches the flesh, the oxidation process begins, and the nutritional value begins to decline, so if you make enough smoothie to last all day, be sure to store it in an air-tight container in the refrigerator. A squeeze of lemon juice will help combat oxidation, and using a dark container that's the right size for the amount of smoothie you have is helpful, too.

Tips for Getting Started

Now that you understand the basic guidelines for smoothie-making, the next step is to examine some things you can do to make the actual experience pleasant as well as healthful. The most important part is to remember that this is your life and your experience. Find combinations that work for you, and don't be afraid to experiment. After all, life is an adventure, and your smoothies should be fun, too.

Make Your Smoothies a Rewarding Experience

Remember that this isn't a passing trend; it's a change in lifestyle. Keeping this in mind, make your smoothies delicious so that you look forward to them. If you like them, you're more likely to stick with it. Read on to learn some tips to help you make sure your smoothies taste great and keep you coming back for more.

Start with Transition Smoothies

Unless you absolutely adore the flavor of mashed spinach and broccoli, it's probably not a good idea to start with smoothies made from only green veggies. Remember, the only requirement for your smoothie is that it actually looks green. That means you can incorporate other fruits and vegetables such as pears, apples, kiwis, berries, or basically any other option to make the flavors more pleasant.

Use the 4, 3, 2, 1 Rule

You may find it helpful to use the 4, 3, 2, 1 rule of thumb when you're building your smoothie. Use four parts sweet juice, such as apple, pear, cucumber, or grape. Use three parts green veggies, such as spinach, kale, broccoli, and sprouts. Use two parts tangy or tart juice, such as lemon or lime juice. Finally, use one part zesty or spicy fruits, veggies, or herbs, such as cilantro, mint, ginger, or chili pepper.

Don't Panic if It's Awful!

Just about any combination can be pulled back from the edge if you know how to do it. Adding mild, sweet, refreshing, or zesty produce such as cucumber, apple, lemon, lime, lettuce, or celery can mellow out a bitter or grassy smoothie to make it

palatable. You'll learn as you go, so if you make a few train wrecks in the beginning, don't be concerned. Chalk it up as a learning experience and keep blending!

Experiment

The best way to gain experience making smoothies is to break out the blender and get started. You probably have a basic understanding of many of the flavors that you're going to be using. In fact, if you think about it, you probably already know what many fruits and vegetables taste like together.

Use flavors that you're familiar with as a base, and build from there. Also, try the recipes in the following pages. Just because one may be designated as an effective acne drink doesn't mean you can't drink it if you have clear skin. There are multiple health benefits to be gained from all juices, so if one looks good to you, give it a shot. For that matter, step outside of your comfort zone and try something that seems a little bizarre to you—you may just find a new favorite!

3

CREATE YOUR OWN GREEN DRINKS

Your smoothie can be made from just about any fruit, vegetable, or herb you can imagine as long as the resulting smoothie is green. In that spirit, this chapter reviews several of the most common varieties of produce you'll probably use to get started. Since you'll already be familiar with their flavors and textures, your palate will have an easier time adapting to these in their new form. You'll also learn how much juice or pulp you can expect to get from an average serving.

Natural Sweeteners

These fruits and vegetables contain natural sweetness and will probably be the easiest for your body to get habituated to as you begin making smoothies. If you're having problems adapting to drinking your nutrients, try adding a few more of these to your blender until you adjust to the grassier or earthier flavors of some of your greener or less traditional ingredients.

Apples

- **Color:** Green
- **Yield:** 1 medium, cored apple = 2/3 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet with just a hint of tartness
- **Health Benefits:** Apples are rich in phytonutrients, called polyphenols, as well as antioxidants. They help regulate blood sugar, decrease your risk of asthma, and reduce your odds of developing several types of cancer, including lung, colon, and breast cancers. Be sure to core your apples, because the seeds contain traces of cyanide.

Apricots

- **Color:** Peach
- **Yield:** 1 apricot = 1/4 cup

- **Flavor Profile:** Moderately sweet, and sometimes a little tart, musky, and mildly “peachy”
- **Health Benefits:** Rich in beta-carotene and vitamins A and C, apricots help fight free radicals that cause eye conditions, such as cataracts and macular degeneration. They have soluble fiber that helps you maintain healthful levels of HDL, the “good” cholesterol, and insoluble fiber, which helps you to feel full.

Berries, Raspberry or Blackberry

- **Color:** Red or black
- **Yield:** 1 pound = 1 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Rich, sweet, and sometimes a bit tart
- **Health Benefits:** Two more examples of health superstars, blackberries and raspberries are rich in phytonutrients called tannins, as well as copper, folate, magnesium, manganese, potassium, and vitamins C, E, and K. They’re also a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, which help keep your brain and heart healthy.

The antioxidants in these berries protect you from a host of diseases, including cancer and heart disease. They also fight free radicals and help prevent signs of aging, including wrinkles, dull skin, and muscle loss. The antimicrobial properties help keep you free of digestive issues, too, as well as fungal infections, such as yeast infections.

Cantaloupe

- **Color:** Yellow/orange
- **Yield:** 1/4 medium cantaloupe = 1–1 1/2 cups
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet, musky, and refreshing
- **Health Benefits:** Chock-full of such nutrients and antioxidants as beta-carotene, folate, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins A, B₁, B₆, C, and K, cantaloupe not only adds a delicious sweetness to your juice, it also protects you from a host of illnesses, including macular degeneration, emphysema, fatigue, irregular blood sugar, low metabolism, stroke, heart disease, immune weakness, and several types of cancer.

Carrots

- **Color:** Bright orange
- **Yield:** 1 pound or 2 medium carrots = 1 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet and mild

- **Health Benefits:** Like cantaloupe, the health benefits of carrots are off the charts and would take an entire chapter to cover in full. They're a great source of vitamin A, beta-carotene, the entire B complex of vitamins, calcium, manganese, molybdenum, phosphorus, and potassium. The nutrients, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory properties help keep your eyes healthy and promote good cardiovascular health. They also protect you from cancer, as well as prevent signs of aging, and do wonders for your hair, nails, and skin.

Grapes

- **Color:** Green
- **Yield:** 1 cup = 1/2 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet and tart
- **Health Benefits:** Chock-full of antioxidants (about thirty in total!), manganese, potassium, and vitamins C, B1, B6, and K, grapes help protect you from breast, colon, and prostate cancers, cardiovascular disease, irregular blood sugar levels, and cognitive decline.

Honeydew Melons

- **Color:** Green
- **Yield:** 1/4 medium = 1–1 1/4 cups
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet and light
- **Health Benefits:** Honeydew melons are a good source of vitamin A, potassium, vitamin C, copper, and B vitamins, including niacin and thiamin. They're a great way to help your body detoxify, and also protect you from cardiovascular disease, infection, skin damage caused by oxidation and collagen loss, several different types of cancer, and eye disorders, including macular degeneration.

Kiwifruits

- **Color:** Green
- **Yield:** 4 kiwis = 1/2 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet and tart
- **Health Benefits:** Kiwis actually have more vitamin C than oranges, as well as calcium and a host of vitamins and minerals. They have some amazing benefits, such as helping to lower your blood pressure, promoting circulatory health, protecting your DNA from oxidation, and reducing the risk of respiratory problems, especially in children.

Oranges

- **Color:** Orange
- **Yield:** 1 medium orange = 1 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet, zesty, and sometimes a bit tart
- **Health Benefits:** You probably already know that oranges are a great source of vitamin C, but did you know that they also have calcium, folate, potassium, vitamins A and B₁, and several different phytonutrients, including anthocyanins, flavanones, polyphenols, and hydroxycinnamic acids? Oranges help lower blood pressure, fight off colds and the flu, and protect you from diseases such as lung and stomach cancers, arthritis, and atherosclerosis. In addition, they reduce your risk of stroke and heart disease.

Papayas

- **Color:** Orange
- **Yield:** 1 pound = 3/4–1 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Mildly sweet, musky, and earthy
- **Health Benefits:** Though this brightly colored fruit is a bit of an acquired taste, the health benefits are well worth the adjustment. Papayas have a ton of vitamin C and are rich in vitamin A (including beta-carotene), folic acid, pantothenic acids, folate, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins E and B. They promote heart health, good vision, and a healthy immune system. Papayas also help prevent colon cancer, arthritis, and asthma.

Pears

- **Color:** Translucent green
- **Yield:** 1 medium pear, cored = 1/2 cup
- **Flavor Profile:** Mildly sweet, light, and a bit rustic
- **Health Benefits:** Pears have phytonutrients and are a great source of vitamin C and vitamin K. Pears are easily tolerated by people with food allergies, and they promote good eye health. Vitamin K is used by your body for effective blood clotting and to maintain bone health. Like apple seeds, pear seeds have trace amounts of cyanide that are released when you crack them, so don't put them in the blender.

Pineapples

- **Color:** Yellow
- **Yield:** 1/4 small fresh = 1–1 1/4 cups
- **Flavor Profile:** Sweet, fruity, and tropical