

Nutrient-dense: Which fruits and vegetables give you the most benefits

Choosing to eat healthy should be as simple as making good choices. Your daily intake should include lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains and as few processed foods as you can manage. But in practice, it is often complicated.



Interestingly, within each of these categories, there are good options and there are some that are even healthier. If you're trying to make the best choices, it makes sense to eat what gives you the most nutrients in each bite.

Your best option? Leafy greens. They are the most nutrient-dense vegetables.¹ Yes, those veggies that are considered "garnishes" are full-on powerhouses. They're low in calories and packed with fiber and vitamins A, C and K.

Powerhouse fruits and vegetables¹



Blackberry



Strawberry



Kiwi



Grapefruit



Orange



Cabbage



Swiss chard



Broccoli



Brussels sprouts



Kale

While these are near the top of the list nutritionally, almost every vegetable or fruit offers vitamins, minerals and fiber. So, there are no bad choices, just better choices.

Read on to see how you can start your day with nutrient-dense and delicious breakfast grain bowl options.

Breakfast grain bowls

Makes: 2 servings | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 30-35 mins

Your breakfast bowl starts with grains. You can use dinner leftovers like rice, quinoa or couscous. Or cook your own mixture of whole grains like farro, bulgur, buckwheat, millet or sorghum. Add your favorite topper from the following options—sweet, savory or a combination of the two.²



Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole grains (steel-cut oats, millet, bulgur, etc.)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice
- 1 cup water
- 1 inch fresh ginger, sliced into rounds or $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp ginger powder

Preparation

Rinse grains in cold water. Heat oil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add grains and ginger. Toast grains, tossing frequently for 3 minutes. Add water and orange juice, bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer. Cook until liquid is absorbed (about 20-25 minutes). Remove from heat. Remove and discard ginger rounds if used. Divide into two bowls.

Nutrition

Per serving



Calories: 309 | total fat: 6 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 3 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 53 g | fiber: 6 g | sugars: 6 g | protein: 9 g | potassium: 230 mg

Maple sausage, egg and spinach topper

Makes: 1 serving | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1-5 mins



Ingredients

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups raw spinach
- 1 serving, cooked chicken breakfast sausage, sliced
- 1 tsp tamari sauce
- 1 egg, soft-boiled, hard-boiled or poached
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup

Preparation

Put 1 cup of grain mixture in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute. Layer spinach, breakfast sausage and egg. Drizzle maple syrup and tamari. Season to taste.

Nutrition

Per serving for topping only



Calories: 236 | total fat: 9 g | saturated fat: 3 g | sodium: 448 mg | cholesterol: 237 mg
total carbs: 16 g | fiber: 1 g | sugars: 13 g | protein: 14 g | potassium: 316 mg

Rise and shine citrus topper

Makes: 1 serving | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1-5 mins



Ingredients

- ½ grapefruit, sectioned with rind removed
- ½ blood orange, sectioned with rind removed
- ½ cup mandarin sections
- ½ cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tsp toasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas)

Preparation

Put 1 cup of grain mixture in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute. Layer Greek yogurt, then citrus fruits. Drizzle honey on top and sprinkle with pepitas.

Nutrition

Per serving for topping only



Calories: 225 | total fat: 2 g | saturated fat: 2 g | sodium: 40 mg | cholesterol: 10 mg
total carbs: 40 g | fiber: 5 g | sugars: 26 g | protein: 12 g | potassium: 592 mg

Beautiful berry banana topper

Makes: 1 serving | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1-5 mins



Ingredients

- 1 cup mixed berries (fresh or frozen)
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese
- ½ banana, sliced
- 1 tsp lemon juice, plus zest
- 1 tsp toasted, shredded coconut

Preparation

Put 1 cup of grain mixture in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute. Layer cottage cheese, berries and banana. Drizzle with lemon juice and dress with a little lemon zest. Top with shredded coconut.

Nutrition

Per serving for topping only



Calories: 238 | total fat: 4 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 365 mg | cholesterol: 13 mg
total carbs: 39 g | fiber: 7 g | sugars: 23 g | protein: 13 g | potassium: 397 mg

BLT greens galore topper

Makes: 1 serving | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1-5 mins



Ingredients

- 1 cup mixed salad greens
- ¼ avocado, sliced
- 8 grape tomatoes, halved
- 2 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ cup shredded cheese (your choice)
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinaigrette or vinegar

Preparation

Put 1 cup of grain mixture in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute. Layer salad greens, tomato halves, bacon and cheese. Drizzle vinegar/vinaigrette and season to taste.

Nutrition

Per serving for topping only



Calories: 336 | total fat: 25 g | saturated fat: 12 g | sodium: 646 mg | cholesterol: 40 mg
total carbs: 9 g | fiber: 4 g | sugars: 1 g | protein: 16 g | potassium: 637 mg

Avocado toast topper

Makes: 1 serving | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 1-5 mins



Ingredients

- ½ avocado, sliced
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds
- 8 grape tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup watercress, arugula or a bitter green
- 1 egg, soft-boiled, hard-boiled or poached
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Preparation

Put 1 cup of grain mixture in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat for 1 minute. Layer avocado slices, tomato halves and greens. Sprinkle with chia seeds. Squeeze lemon wedge on top. Add egg and season with salt.

Nutrition

Per serving for topping only



Calories: 270 | total fat: 18 g | saturated fat: 4 g | sodium: 81 mg | cholesterol: 187 mg
total carbs: 17 g | fiber: 9 g | sugars: 2 g | protein: 10 g | potassium: 695 mg

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¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/nutrition/creating-balanced-healthy-meals-from-low-calorie-nutrient-dense-foods>

²Inspired by <https://www.runningtothekitchen.com/berry-breakfast-grain-salad/>