

CHILL OUT WITH HOMEMADE POPSICLES AND SMOOTHIES

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On hot, humid days nothing tastes better than an icy cold treat. And with all the fresh berries and other fruits available in summer, there's no need to grab a box of Popsicles from the supermarket freezer or order a fruit smoothie at a juice bar at the mall or local health food store. You can make your own healthy ice pops and smoothies at home.

Let's start with Popsicles, a favorite snack for kids. Although delicious, most commercial varieties are not very nutritious. Many are just sweetened water. Others may contain some fruit juice or yogurt.

Making your own Popsicles allows you to control the ingredients for a healthier, more nutritious treat. You will need fresh or frozen fruit (for dietary fiber) and fruit juice. Low-fat vanilla or fruit-flavored yogurt will give a Popsicle more body.

To make Popsicles you'll need molds, available anywhere kitchen gadgets are sold. You also can use paper cups and wooden sticks or straws for the handle. Use small cups (three to five ounces) so your ice pop won't melt before it's all eaten.

Place about one-half cup of liquid in the blender and then add a sliced banana or cup of other fruit. Puree until smooth, gradually adding more liquid until you reach the desired consistency.

If the fruit is at room temperature and you want an instantly chilled smoothie, replace some of the liquid with a few ice cubes. Or use chopped-up frozen fruit.

To boost the nutritional value of your drink, toss in a little wheat germ. A homemade smoothie is an easy way to have a delicious breakfast or snack full of fiber, vitamins and protein. Think of it as a thick milkshake without the guilt.

This summer chill out by enjoying homemade Popsicles!

Although half the fun is experimenting to find flavor combinations that you like, here are some recipes to jump-start your imagination.

PEACH RASPBERRY POPSICLE

1 c. raspberries, fresh or frozen (unsweetened)
3/4 c. orange juice (100%)
1/2 c. low-fat peach yogurt

Blend all ingredients well in blender. Divide into molds. Freeze until firm.

Makes 6 Popsicles. Nutrition information per serving: 45 calories, 0 grams (g) fat, 9 g carbohydrate (8 g sugar), 1 g protein, 15 milligrams (mg) sodium; 4% of daily calcium and 25% of daily vitamin C requirements.

STRAWBERRY YOGURT POPSICLES

2 c. strawberries, hulled and chopped
2 c. low-fat vanilla yogurt

Blend well and pour into Popsicle molds.

Makes 12 Popsicles. Nutrition information per serving: 45 calories, 0.5 g fat, 8 g carbohydrate (8 g sugar), 2 g protein, 30 mg sodium; 8% of daily calcium and 25% of daily vitamin C requirements.