

10 delicious, healthy junk food alternatives essay

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Over time, various ‘recreational foods’ have permeated into every aspect of our culture. We eat them not only for the way they taste, but also for entertainment. And despite ample and increasingly strong evidence about their risks to our health, we consume more than ever.

While our individual reasons may be diverse, the primary motivation is the same in each. Scientific studies clearly demonstrate eating junk food has similar addictive patterns to drugs like cocaine and even heroin. The recreational or ‘junk’ foods mentioned here can be categorized into 4 basic groups: 1. Soft Drinks – This category contains any drink with large amounts of sweetener like sugar or especially high fructose corn syrup. This includes soda, flavored waters, and even most commercially sold ‘fruit juices’.

Each glass often contains enough calories in simple carbohydrates to make a medium size meal all by itself, with almost no nutrition. 2. Fatty Foods – While dietary fat is not nearly as dangerous as sugar (as the marketing for ‘low fat’ food implies), the risk level depends upon the balance of your diet. And there are many fatty foods, including hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza, breaded foods, and more. A Western cultural tradition of eating many animal based fats without a proper balance of plants contributes to a variety of health issues both mentally and physically.

3. Starchy Foods – This may now actually be the largest, most abused category out of the four. Starch – root vegetables, grains, and similar – is found in a huge variety of foods. Bread, chips, fries, pancakes, pasta, puffs, many more. These foods are either simple or complex carbohydrates which

in many cases digest just as fast as sugar, leading to the same consequences (weight gain, heart damage, skin problems, etc). .

Sweets – Another very abused category, though perhaps falling by the wayside as public institutions wake up to its dangers. Anything with unnatural amounts of sugar, fructose, HCFS, or other sweeteners qualifies. And there are too many to mention.

Bars, candies, cake, donuts, ice cream, pie, twinkies – chances are, you know it when you eat it. These foods rarely ‘disguise’ themselves. It is important to note that many of these foods overlap into several categories. Donuts, ice cream, and some restaurant specialties all have large amounts of both animal fats and sugar, for instance. Salt is also a special mention. While not a category by itself (as it can be applied to many foods), regular table salt holds little nutritional value and causes health problems in large quantities.

And this brings us to our list of healthy, great tasting junk food alternatives:

1. Sea Salt Sea salt is vastly superior to conventional table salt. Not only does it taste much better (and different sea salts have a variety of tastes), but it is much healthier. Unlike table salt which is as much as 99% calcium chloride, it contains multiple valuable minerals including calcium, magnesium, and potassium. . Nuts and Seeds When we think of nuts, the first thing which often comes to mind is the traditional can of ‘mixed nuts’ available at the grocery store. We may even think: I don’t like these! There are, however, hundreds of varieties of nuts and seeds available on (and off) the market. Amongst these is bound to be a variety you really enjoy.

And in the process, you can also enjoy the fact that nuts and seeds are among the absolute healthiest foods you can eat: very high in fiber, minerals, vitamins, protein, omega 3; and low in unhealthy calories. 3. Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies For many of us used to eating ‘recreational foods’, the last thing we tend to think of when considering fruits and vegetables is delicious. However, this is exactly what they are when combined into a smoothie using one of hundreds of freely available recipes online or in books & magazines.

Fruit smoothies and ‘green’ smoothies, as their called, can contain all the nutrients of traditional fruits, nuts, and vegetables while tasting radically better than sweets like ice cream and candy. 4. Juicing Another good use for fruits and vegetables is juicing.

This makes an excellent alternative to ultra-sweet sodas and store bought juices. Unlike the latter items, juicing your own is not only far healthier (all the vitamins and nutrients), it also tastes far better: it’s fresh, you can make your own combinations, and the natural fructose sugars taste far better than anything refined. 5. Water/Flavored Water When most of us get thirsty, we usually want something which ‘tastes good’. This usually puts water last on the list.

However, many people find they start liking water more as they replace other junk foods with delicious, healthy alternatives, and it’s more convenient than juicing. Even more preferable if you’re looking for exciting taste, however, is flavored water. And far from the carbonated, sugar based kind at the store (which is hardly different than soda) is a new alternative:

natural flavoring with fruit, herbs, and minerals. While not as sweet as sugar, it's a lot healthier – and more interesting. 6. Salad There are an infinite number of possible salad varieties. Along with the traditional lettuce salads are all-vegetable salads, fruit salads, and salads which include hundreds of possible side ingredients (nuts, dairy, more). Try searching for some recipes online using your favorite ingredients.

7. Vegetable Trays These make an excellent alternative to chips and similar snacks. Make your own or buy convenient pre-made trays at most grocery stores. Healthy dips include humus, guacamole, salsa, nut butter, and others. 8. Seafood There was a time when fish was among the healthiest foods in the world.

While pollution has changed this to some extent, the nutrient content of fresh, pure seafood can not be denied. Like any animal product today, try to find a natural source rather than industrial production. And there are so many types of seafood you're sure to like something: from crab to shrimp to lobster, sardines, tuna, and kipper, larger fish, clams, oysters, many others. Eat it plain or mix into your favorite recipe. 9. Cocoa Despite the bad things we've heard about chocolate, it's origins are actually incredibly healthy. That origin is Cocoa, a small evergreen tree from South America. And along with common nutrients, it contains some ultra rare anti-oxidants and mood-enhancing chemicals.

If you don't like the bitterness of pure cocoa, try mixing it in many of the various recipes online. As long as you don't consume it with excessive sugar the health benefits will be retained. 10. Eggs Eggs are another healthy food

with a bad reputation. We hear almost constantly about their high fat content and its danger to our cholesterol levels.

In fact, however, cholesterol is a repair mechanism of the body activated by arterial inflammation due to excess sugar consumption. This means all the vitamins, minerals, and protein in eggs can be enjoyed without concern.

Frozen Yogurt Frozen yogurt is an ideal alternative to take the place of ice cream. Frozen yogurt has a sweet taste and a sugar substitute that mimics the taste of real sugar. It also has the texture of ice cream so you feel like you are having a treat without the excess calories. You can even find frozen yogurt that has the same texture as mousse for an even better treat. Frozen yogurt also comes in a wide variety of flavors so you are sure to find something you like. **Popcorn and Rice Cakes** Choosing popcorn and rice cakes instead of potato chips can help you achieve your weight loss goals.

These healthy alternatives may not sound appetizing, but with a variety of flavors you will most likely find something that will satisfy your taste buds. If you need to, you can even add a small amount of salt and low-fat butter to your popcorn to give it extra flavor and make it a more appealing option.

Carrots Carrots also provide a great snack food crunch. A one pound bag of carrots can be purchased for around a buck and a carrot takes less than 30 seconds to peel. If you like your carrots pre-peeled, then considered peeled baby carrots. Although a little more expensive, they taste great and actually can become quite addictive. Want a little change, dip your carrots in some salad dressing. Be careful with carrots and small children though, as they can pose a real choking hazard.

Apple Slices Apples can be purchased relatively cheaply. Apple slices, like carrots and cucumbers, give you a great snack food crunch. Soak your apple slices in some orange juice or spread a small amount of peanut butter on your slices for some variety. With time, you'll find that healthy foods such as these taste far better than the junk foods we are all accustomed to. You'll also feel healthier and happier.