



**Ontario Home Economics Association**

*Ask a Professional Home Economist*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Fuel up on Nutritious Snacks**

**by Amy Snider, P.H.Ec.**

Lifestyle demands have changed the way we eat. Snacking is on the rise as 84 per cent of Canadians admit to eating between meals. Families who rush from work and school to evening activities often find there just isn't time to sit down to a traditional meal. Instead, hurried snacks fill the hunger gap until there is time to think about the next meal. However, thoughtless eating can have an impact on our health. Snacks contribute to calories consumed and should receive as much attention as regular meals. Appropriate snacks can provide valuable fuel for activities and contribute to meeting our nutritional needs. Here are some smart snacking guidelines:

- Ensure that each snack contains **at least** two of the food groups listed in the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.
- Combine foods that contain complex carbohydrates such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains with foods that contain protein sources such as meats and alternatives or light dairy products to provide lasting energy.
- Think portability when planning snacks! A supply of grab-and-go snacks will keep you from making unwholesome fast-food pit-stops.
- Pre-pack snacks into portion-controlled containers to prevent over-indulging.

Be a savvy snacker. Include healthful snack options on your weekly shopping list. While pre-packaged convenience foods such as single servings of yogurt, applesauce, cottage cheese and hummus can simplify preparation, they are often more expensive and less environmentally friendly. To save and think green, buy these foods in bulk and divide portions into re-usable containers as you put away the groceries. That way, your snack options are ready when you are. Try these balanced combos that take just minutes to pack and can be eaten almost anywhere:

- a handful (10) unsalted almonds and a small bunch grapes;
- hummus with toasted pita chips and carrot sticks;
- unsweetened applesauce with a wedge of Cheddar cheese and melba toast;
- yogurt topped with multigrain breakfast cereal and fresh berries;
- cottage cheese with cubed melon or cantaloupe;
- dried fruit tossed with whole-grain pretzels and unsalted pecans or walnuts.

Try the following make-ahead snacks that are sure to please the whole family.

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### Cheesy Celery Crunchers

*Here's a fast and easy twist on classic stuffed celery that doubles easily to feed a hungry crowd.*

1/2 cup (125 mL)	light cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup (125 mL)	shredded Cheddar cheese
1/4 cup (50 mL)	grated carrot
1/4 cup (50 mL)	finely chopped red pepper
2 tbsp (30 mL)	light ranch-style salad dressing
2 tbsp (30 mL)	chopped green onion (optional)
4	celery stalks

Blend the cream cheese with the Cheddar cheese, carrot, red pepper, ranch dressing and green onion (if using) until well combined. (Mixture can be packed into an airtight container and held for up to 3 days in the refrigerator.) Divide the mixture between the celery pieces; spread to fill the hollows evenly. Cut into bite-sized lengths. Transfer to an airtight container and reserve for up to 1 day. Makes about 20 bites.

Nutrients per serving (5 bites): 156 calories, 6 g carbohydrates, 2 g fibre, 8 g protein, 12 g fat, 394 mg sodium. Excellent source of vitamin C (33 % DV). Good source of calcium (21 % DV) and vitamin A (18 % DV).

### Roasted Red Pepper Bean Dip with Pita Chips

*Great alternative to chips and dip on family movie night or to keep on hand all week long*

3	roasted red peppers from a jar, blotted dry
1 can (19 oz/540 mL)	chickpeas, rinsed well and drained
2 tbsp (30 mL)	lemon juice
2 tbsp (30 mL)	finely chopped red onion
1	clove garlic, minced
1 tbsp (15 mL)	each olive oil and red wine vinegar
1/2 tsp (2 mL)	each salt and pepper (to taste)
5	small whole wheat pitas, toasted

Combine the peppers, chickpeas, lemon juice, onion, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper in a food processor. Puree until smooth. Transfer the mixture to an airtight container and reserve for up to 5 days in the refrigerator. Makes about 2-1/2 cups (625 mL). Serve with toasted pita wedges.

To Toast Pita Wedges: Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Cut pitas into wedges. Spread in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake, turning once, for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden and crisp. Cool completely; transfer to an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Nutrients per serving (1/4 cup/50 mL dip and 1/2 pita): 112 calories, 19 g carbohydrates, 5 g fibre, 4 g protein, 3 g fat, 444 mg sodium.

**Amy Snider, P.H.Ec.** is a Toronto-based Professional Home Economist and author of *Fiber Boost - Everyday Cooking for a Long, Healthy Life*. As a food consultant, Amy develops recipes, analyses nutritional content and creates new product ideas. Running and fitness are important to Amy, who knows the importance of snacking smart for endurance.

**The Ontario Home Economics Association**, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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