Cool Cucumber Dip

Serves 8; 2 tablespoons per serving

Crushed toasted almonds provide crunch, and the just-right seasoning blend adds zing to this unusual dip. It's convenient and stress-free for parties — you can make it up to four days in advance and serve it with colorful precut vegetables.

¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon sliced almonds

¾ cup fat-free sour cream

¼ medium cucumber, peeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped (about ½ cup)

2 medium green onions, cut into ½-inch pieces

2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon salt-free extra-spicy seasoning blend

In a medium skillet, dry-roast the almonds over medium-heat for 3 to 4 minutes, or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Put 1 tablespoon almonds in a small bowl. Set aside to use as a garnish.

In a food processor or blender, process the remaining almonds for 3 to 5 seconds, or until coarsely crushed (¼-inch irregular pieces). Transfer to a medium serving bowl.

Process the remaining ingredients until the desired consistency, 5 to 10 seconds if you prefer a chunky texture, 15 to 20 seconds for smooth. Stir into the crushed almonds.

To serve, sprinkle with the reserved almonds.

Cook's Tip: For a decorative presentation, peel a medium cucumber in lengthwise strips about ½ inch wide and ½ inch apart, leaving ½-inch strips of peel intact. Cut the cucumber crosswise into ¾-inch slices. Using a melon baller or the tip of a small spoon, partially hollow out the slices, making little cups with enough of one end intact to hold the filling in place. Spoon the filling into the cups.

Nutritional Analysis (per serving)

Calories	47	Cholesterol	4 mg
Total Fat	2.0 g	Sodium	20 mg
Saturated Fat	0.0 g	Carbohydrates	5 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	1 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	0.5 g	Sugars	2 g
Monounsaturated Fat	1.0 g	Protein	2 g

Dietary Exchanges: ½ carbohydrate

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Devil's Food Cupcakes with Almond-Mocha Topping on Raspberry Sauce

Serves 24; 1 cupcake, 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons sauce, and 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons topping per serving

Whether it's a special occasion or you just want to make someone feel special, this decadent-looking dessert will bring smiles…and compliments!

Cooking spray

Cupcakes

1 18.25-ounce box devil's food cake mix

1 2.5-ounce jar baby food pureed prunes

1 cup strong coffee, or 1 cup water plus 2 teaspoons instant coffee granules

3 large egg whites

2 tablespoons canola or corn oil

Sauce

2 12-ounce packages frozen unsweetened raspberries, thawed

½ cup sugar

1½ tablespoons cornstarch

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping

2 teaspoons instant coffee granules

2 teaspoons water

8 ounces frozen fat-free whipped topping, thawed in refrigerator

⅔ cup sliced almonds, dry-roasted

Preheat the oven to 325°F, or as directed on the package. Lightly spray two 12-cup muffin pans with cooking spray.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the cupcake ingredients. Follow the package directions for beating the batter and baking and cooling the cupcakes.

Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, stir together the raspberries, sugar, and cornstarch until the cornstarch is dissolved. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil for 1 to 1½ minutes, or until thickened, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat. Let cool completely, about 20 minutes. Stir in the vanilla.

In a medium bowl, stir together the coffee granules and water until the coffee is dissolved. Fold in the whipped topping until well blended. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

For each serving, spread 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons raspberry sauce on a dessert plate, top with a cupcake, spoon 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons whipped topping mixture over the cupcake, and sprinkle with about 1½ teaspoons almonds.

Cook's Tip: When shopping for cake mix, read the Nutrition Facts labels and choose a product with 0 grams of trans fat. You can refrigerate any leftovers from this recipe for up to 48 hours or freeze them for later use. Keep the cupcakes, the sauce, and the whipped topping in separate airtight containers.

Nutritional Analysis (per serving)

Calories	173
Total Fat	4.0 g
Saturated Fat	1.0 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	1.0 g
Monounsaturated Fat	2.0 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Sodium	198 mg
Carbohydrates	31 g
Fiber	2 g
Sugars	18 g
Protein	2 g

Dietary Exchanges: 2 carbohydrate, 1 fat

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Learn and Live

Grab-and-Go Snack Mix

Serves 10; ½ cup per serving

Pumpkin seeds and pie spices make this snack mix different from the norm. It's full of crunchy goodness from nuts and grains.

Cooking spray

1 teaspoon canola or corn oil

¼ cup honey

¼ cup chopped walnuts

¼ cup chopped pecans

¼ cup shelled unsalted pumpkin seeds

¾ to 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice or apple pie spice

2 cups multigrain or whole-wheat cereal squares with maple syrup and brown sugar

½ cup sweetened dried cranberries or sweetened dried cherries

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly spray with cooking spray.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the honey for 2 minutes, or until it just comes to a boil. Stir in the walnuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, and pie spice. Cook for 3 minutes, or until the mixture begins to turn golden, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat.

Immediately stir in the cereal and dried fruit until well coated, about 30 seconds. Pour onto the baking sheet, using the back of a spoon to quickly spread in a smooth, thin layer. Sprinkle with the salt. Let cool completely, about 45 minutes. Break into 1-inch pieces. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

Calories	138	Cholesterol	0 mg
Total Fat	6.0 g	Sodium	32 mg
Saturated Fat	0.5 g	Carbohydrates	20 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	2 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	3.0 g	Sugars	13 g
Monounsaturated Fat	2.5 g	Protein	2 g

Dietary Exchanges: 1½ carbohydrate, 1 fat

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Learn and Live

Grilled Chicken with Strawberry and Pineapple Salsa

Serves 4; 3 ounces chicken and ½ cup salsa per serving

Grilled pineapple and fresh mint and strawberries combine with tangy lemon and a bit of hot pepper flakes to make an interesting salsa for grilled chicken.

1 teaspoon canola or corn oil

Salsa

2 slices fresh pineapple, each ½ inch thick, patted dry

1 cup whole strawberries (about 5 ounces), diced

¼ cup finely chopped red onion

3 to 4 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves

1 to 2 teaspoons sugar

⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

1 medium lemon

Chicken

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 4 ounces each), all visible fat discarded

2 teaspoons salt-free steak seasoning blend

¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat the grill on medium high. Brush a grill pan or grill rack with the oil. Heat the grill pan or rack on the grill for about 2 minutes, or until hot. Grill the pineapple for 2 minutes on each side. Transfer to a cutting board and let cool slightly, about 2 minutes, before chopping.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together the remaining salsa ingredients except the lemon. Grate 1 teaspoon lemon zest, reserving the lemon. Stir the zest and chopped pineapple into the strawberry mixture. Set aside.

Sprinkle both sides of the chicken with the seasoning blend and salt. Grill for 5 minutes on each side, or until no longer pink in the center. Transfer to plates. Squeeze the reserved lemon over the chicken. Serve with the salsa on the side.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

Calories	191	Cholesterol	66 mg
Total Fat	3.0 g	Sodium	223 mg
Saturated Fat	0.5 g	Carbohydrates	14 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	2 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	0.5 g	Sugars	10 g
Monounsaturated Fat	1.0 g	Protein	27 g

Dietary Exchanges: 1 fruit, 3 very lean meat

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Spring Greens with Salmon and Apricot-Ginger Vinaigrette

Serves 4; 2 cups salad and 2 tablespoons dressing per serving

This crunchy combination of spring greens, baby spinach, red cabbage, and snow peas is powered up with salmon and topped with a sweet apricot-ginger vinaigrette.

Apricot-Ginger Vinaigrette

¼ cup all-fruit apricot spread

¼ cup fresh orange juice

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons grated peeled gingerroot

⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

⅛ teaspoon salt

Salad

4 cups mixed salad greens (spring mix preferred), torn into bite-size pieces

2 cups baby spinach leaves

1 cup shredded red cabbage

1 cup fresh or frozen snow peas, thawed if frozen, trimmed and halved diagonally

1 7.1-ounce vacuum-sealed pouch pink salmon

In a food processor or blender, process the vinaigrette ingredients until smooth.

Put the salad ingredients except the salmon on a serving platter. Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss gently. Crumble the salmon on top. Serve immediately for peak flavors and texture.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

Calories	128	Cholesterol	18 mg
Total Fat	2.0 g	Sodium	366 mg
Saturated Fat	1.0 g	Carbohydrates	17 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	3 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	0.5 g	Sugars	12 g
Monounsaturated Fat	0.5 g	Protein	11 g

Dietary Exchanges: ½ fruit, 1 vegetable, 1½ very lean meat

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Learn and Live

Sweet and Nutty Stir-Fry

Serves 4; 1½ cups per serving

When you crave takeout but don't want to load up on saturated fat and sodium, try this quick and crunchy meatless meal-in-one.

4 ounces dried multigrain vermicelli or spaghetti, broken in half

2 teaspoons curry powder

Sauce

2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons soy sauce (lowest sodium available)

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon cornstarch

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

⅓ cup fresh orange juice

2 teaspoons grated orange zest

1 teaspoon canola or corn oil

½ cup thinly sliced onion

2 cups bite-size broccoli florets (about 5 ounces)

1 cup thinly sliced (not shredded) red cabbage

1 cup matchstick-size carrot pieces

½ cup unsalted peanuts, dry-roasted

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Prepare the pasta using the package directions, omitting the salt and oil and adding the curry powder. Drain well in a colander.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine the sauce ingredients except the orange zest, stirring until the cornstarch is completely dissolved. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and boil for 1 minute. Remove from the heat. Stir in the orange zest. Set aside.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the onion for 1 minute. Stir in the broccoli, cabbage, and carrots. Cook for 4 minutes, or until just tender-crisp, stirring frequently.

Transfer the pasta to a serving platter. Top with the broccoli mixture. Pour the sauce over all. Sprinkle with the peanuts.

Cook's Tip: Adding curry powder to the pasta water not only imparts flavor but also provides a bright yellow color.

Nutritional Analysis (per serving)

Calories	305	Cholesterol	0 mg
Total Fat	11.5 g	Sodium	261 mg
Saturated Fat	1.5 g	Carbohydrates	44 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	7 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	4.0 g	Sugars	14 g
Monounsaturated Fat	5.5 g	Protein	12 g

Dietary Exchanges: 2½ starch, 1 vegetable, ½ very lean meat, 1½ fat

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Take-A-Break Snack Mix

Serves 10; ½ cup per serving

Whether your schedule is go-go-go or hurry-up-and-wait, you'll be glad you packed these tasty tidbits for healthy snacking.

Cooking spray

¼ cup sliced almonds

1 tablespoon light brown sugar

2 teaspoons water

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 cups whole-grain oat cereal with yogurt-flavored coating

2 cups whole-grain wheat and bran flakes with raisins

½ cup dried unsweetened cranberries

½ cup dried unsweetened blueberries

Put a piece of aluminum foil about 12 inches square on a platter or baking sheet. Lightly spray with cooking spray. Set aside.

In a small nonstick skillet, dry-roast the almonds over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes, or until lightly golden brown, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the brown sugar, water, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the liquid has evaporated and the almonds are coated with the mixture, stirring constantly. Transfer to the foil. Let cool completely, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together the remaining ingredients.

Add the cooled almonds to the cereal mixture, stirring to combine. Store in an airtight container for up to 7 days.

Cook's Tip: For variety, substitute different nutrient-dense dried fruits, such as cherries, apricots, and plums, for the cranberries and blueberries. Cut them into ¼- to ½-inch pieces before adding them to the cereal mixture.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

Calories	139	Cholesterol	0 mg
Total Fat	2.0 g	Sodium	124 mg
Saturated Fat	0.5 g	Carbohydrates	28 g
Trans Fat	0.0 g	Fiber	4 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	0.5 g	Sugars	15 g
Monounsaturated Fat	1.0 g	Protein	2 g

Dietary Exchanges: 1 fruit, 1 starch

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