

# Food for Thought

September 2011

## Choosing Breakfast Cereals

Cereal is a quick, easy, nutritious way to start the day. Research has shown that eating healthy cereal is associated with higher intakes of fiber and calcium as well as with lower blood cholesterol and a lower body mass index (BMI). Although a bowl of cereal is a simple breakfast, it really can have many nutritional benefits.



### What a Breakfast Cereal Should Provide:

When choosing a cereal it should be nutrient dense, made from whole grains and with little or no added sugar. In general look for hot or cold breakfast cereals that a one ounce serving contains:

- 100 to 200 calories
- At least 3 grams of fiber, but preferably 5 grams or more
- 8 grams of sugar or less
- Less than 3 grams of fat, and no trans fat
- Meet 10 to 25% of your Daily Value for vitamins and minerals (e.g. iron, folate, B6 and B12).

### Healthy types of cold cereals include:

- toasted oats
- whole grain flakes
- bran flakes
- shredded wheat

Cereal is quick and easy to prepare, which makes it a great option for busy families, and it is something that children can prepare. If your favorite cereal is not the most nutritious choice, then try mixing it with one that is. When combined they will give you the flavor you like and the nutrients you need.

**Cooked cereals** are also a great choice. There are many types of cooked cereal including oatmeal, cream of wheat and grits.

### To add flavor and nutrition to cooked cereals:

- Top with fresh fruit.
- Blend in chopped fruit (fresh or dried), nuts or grated low-fat cheese.
- Use 100% fruit juice, 1% or fat-free milk as the cooking liquid.
- Add dry milk to fortify with extra calcium.
- Flavor it with spices (e.g. cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice or cloves).



## Cereal Squares

- 3 Tbsp butter or margarine (margarine must have at least 65% vegetable oil)
- 10-ounce bag large marshmallows
- 6 cups toasted oat cereal
- 6-ounces low-fat or fat-free flavored yogurt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup diced dried fruit that complements yogurt flavor



Grease the square baking dish. Microwave butter and marshmallows uncovered in a microwavable bowl, stirring after every minute, until smooth. Stir in cereal. Press about 4 cups of cereal mixture firmly into the greased baking dish. Spread yogurt evenly on top of the cereal mixture in the baking dish. Mix dried fruit and remaining cereal mixture. (If cereal mixture has hardened, microwave uncovered on high for 30 seconds to soften.) Spread remaining cereal and dried fruit mixture on top of the yogurt. Press firmly into the baking dish with damp hands. Refrigerate for 30 minutes or until bars are firm. Store in the refrigerator.

## Breakfast Parfait

- 2 cups granola
  - 2 cups low-fat or fat-free yogurt
  - 2 cups fresh or canned fruit
1. Layer in a cup  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup granola,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup yogurt and  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup fruit.
  2. Top with a spoonful of yogurt.
  3. Refrigerate any leftovers. Makes 6 servings

Sources: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/food/pdf/hgic4224.pdf>; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1153>; <http://extension.psu.edu/healthy-lifestyles/healthful-eating-patterns/hike-for-health-recipes/bread-group/summer-cereal-squares>; <http://ross.osu.edu/topics/family-nutrition-program/recipes> retrieved 8/25/11

## Ask A Nutrition Advisor

The Extension Nutrition Program (ENP) offers FREE classes that can help you learn how to Eat Well for Less! Ask for the Nutrition Advisor in your county for more information:

Benewah	245-2422	Bonner	263-8511
Boundary	267-3235	Clearwater	476-4434
Idaho	983-2667	Kootenai	446-1680
Latah	883-7161	Lewis	937-2311
Nez Perce	799-3096	Shoshone	446-1680

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### To contact the ENP Coordinator:

Kali Gardiner, R.D. – ENP Coordinator  
1808 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

Phone: 446-1680  
E-mail – [kalig@uidaho.edu](mailto:kalig@uidaho.edu)  
Website - [www.agls.uidaho.edu/enp](http://www.agls.uidaho.edu/enp)

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local food stamp office, or call 1-800-221-5689 for Idaho's toll-free number. The University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, provider and educational institution.