

WELLSPRING

THE HEALTH MAG

FOR THE JEWISH FAMILY

A Heart for All

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Wishes
No less
Baskin
the Bittes
4 holidays for
winter days

I'm Not Too Tired to Exercise

The evening
became the
midnight

The Battle of the Ridge Gets Only Fiver

Shah, but on
ridge, weight gain

It's a Brand New Day

12 credits for
12 credits for
12 credits for
12 credits for

Medical Cops

I thought I was
having a stroke - at
28 in a tough
country

FYI for infection



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no more, who
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meal prep the nutrition
profile of your food

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6 CRUNCHY SOUP CROUTON ALTERNATIVES

BY ESTI ASHER, MS, RDN, LD



Temperatures are dropping and soup season is upon us. Whether you're preparing your wholesome soup quickly on the stove or letting it simmer slowly in a Crock-Pot, this dish is very versatile and nourishing. To upgrade your soup to the next level, consider adding a non-crouton topping to mix in for additional texture and nutrition. These suggestions may work best for the blended variety of soup. Of course, traditional croutons are delicious and may fit into a balanced diet and lifestyle, but below are six examples of some additional soup toppings that can result in an upgraded final product.



Seeds

Varieties of seeds, such as shelled sunflower and pumpkin seeds, are additional examples of pareve proteins that can be added into soup (or salad) and will result in an increase in flavor, nutrient composition, and texture. Either raw or roasted seeds work well and can be a pantry staple. (Of course, be careful with young children, as seeds can be a choking hazard.)



Crunchy Tofu

Another versatile and pareve protein, tofu is a blank canvas with a lot of potential to retain whichever flavor profile you choose. If your goal is to make tofu crispy, it is important to opt for a firm variety and squeeze out excess liquid before cooking. Depending on the soup you're pairing it with, you may want to simply sauté or bake with oil and salt or become more adventurous by exploring different flavors via dressings, marinades, or sauces.



Roasted Edamame

Delicious as a side, a snack, within a trail mix, or even as a soup topping, roasted edamame is a protein-packed savory ingredient that's worthwhile having on hand. While it is simple to roast edamame on your own, there are often packaged varieties available in the grocery store for a prep-free option.



Roasted Root Vegetables

Unlike the other examples on this list, roasted root vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, parsnips, and beets are not a protein source, but rather an option that can provide a satisfying and dense bite to your soup. Roasting root vegetables on high heat with some oil and salt helps facilitate a crunchier final product.



(Meat) Crispy Deli

For a meat option, using a crispy deli meat such as pastrami or turkey can really add a wow-factor. This requires an extra step of sautéing the deli first, but the final product will be well worth it.



(Dairy) Crumbled Feta Cheese

For a dairy option, crumbled feta cheese (or any cheese, including parmesan, shredded cheese, etc.) can bring your food to gourmet status, while also adding protein and creaminess to your soup. If you're using feta, keep in mind its salty flavor, and season your soup with a bit less salt.

Esti Asher, MS, RDN, LD, is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Self-Care Enthusiast on a mission to help women reach their ultimate health and wellbeing potential inside and out. She shares credible, clear, and inspiring nutrition information with women via her virtual private practice. To contact Esti with feedback or inquiries regarding her nutritional services, please email her at: esti@estiashernutrition.com or visit estiashernutrition.com.

Omega-3 Fatty Acid Intake May Be Connected to Cognitive Function

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in foods such as salmon, tuna, sardines, nuts, and seeds, and plant oils, such as flaxseed oil and canola oil, have many health benefits. While most commonly recommended to help improve heart health, omega-3 fatty acids may also help control eczema, rheumatoid arthritis, and may play a protective role in cancer and other medical conditions. Moreover, a research study recently published in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology, suggests that a diet with a modest amount of omega-3 fatty acids may help preserve brain function.

A group of 2,183 adults with an average age of 46 who were “cognitively healthy”—i.e. without a history of dementia or stroke—were studied. The group participants had their omega-3 fatty acid levels measured, took tests for abstract reasoning, and participated in MRI scans that measured brain volume. The study showed that those who ate higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids had higher scores on their abstract reasoning tests, as well as larger average volumes of the hippocampus—an area of the brain that is connected to memory. These findings are preliminary and require further research, but they suggest additional support and reason to follow the current American Heart Association dietary guidelines of consuming at least two servings of fish per week.

Herbs and Spices Influence Gut Microbiome

Sometimes, it is the small, consistent changes that can have a sustainable and positive impact on our overall health. The typical American diet is often lacking in many beneficial nutritional components, such as adequate fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. The food we eat has an impact on our physiology and overall health.

A study published in *The Journal of Nutrition* concluded that adding herbs and spices, which are rich in polyphenolic compounds, to the diet of someone who is already practicing the typical American eating pattern can have a positive impact on their gut microbiome. Study participants were provided with a complete diet, including a mixture of 24 herbs and spices at the level of 0.5, 3.3, or 6.6 grams per day for a four-week period. A shift in the gut microbiome was seen, with the main improvement observed within the Ruminococcaceae family of the microbiome. Ultimately, the addition of herbs and spices caused shifts in the composition of gut bacteria within four weeks. Further studies are needed to better understand this impact, but in the meantime, adding more spices is simple, delicious, and likely to be beneficial in many ways. ♥