

NUTRITION



Marina Augusto

SOUP, A HEALTHY MEAL ALL YEAR ROUND

SUMMERTIME is practically upon us and the habit of eating soup is slowly disappearing. But the fact that the temperature is rising is not a reason to put this Mediterranean dish aside.

As a hot comforting meal, a light main course or a cool dish for hot summer days, soup should always be part of our diet, given its multiple health benefits:

- **The fullness effect:** Due to its high liquid and fibre content, soup helps you feel satiated. Soup is a great choice for losing weight due to its low-calorie content. It also controls appetite. Starting a meal with a bowl of soup results in a sensation of comfort helping to prevent obesity. A large bowl of soup rich in pulses and dressed with a dash of olive oil contains no more than 180 calories, compared to other main meals which can contain 450 to 650 calories.
- **Increase vegetable intake:** Soups are an excellent option for increasing the amount of vegetables in your diet. Soup is made by cooking vegetables in water, therefore, vitamins and minerals are not lost in the process. As the water used is not discarded, nutrients are not lost. Water that is used for cooking vegetables should not be discarded as it can be used for cooking rice or making soup.
- **Disease prevention:** Thanks to its high antioxidants,

soup helps prevent cardiovascular diseases (e.g. by controlling cholesterol levels) and certain types of cancer. The temperature necessary for cooking soup is relatively low, so there is no building up of carcinogenic substances, as is the case when frying.

- **Prevents constipation:** Due to its high fibre and liquid content, soup helps to prevent digestive problems such as constipation. It contributes to a good bowel function and also to your daily liquid requirements.
- **As a main course:** By adding protein such as meat,

fish or eggs or pulses and cereals (e.g. lentils or beans with noodle or rice), soup can also be a nutritionally rich main course. For people with chewing problems, these delicious dishes are a good option.

- **Perfect dinner for children:** It isn't always easy to find a dish that children like when, at the same time, you have to provide them with the nutrients they need. Soup is the perfect option. Not only vegetables, but other precious ingredients can be added to soup, eggs, lentils, peas, bread, fish or seeds. Children don't always drink enough

water, so soup helps to ensure a correct hydration, which is very important for the metabolism, guaranteeing the child's correct development.

To ensure that soup is a healthy choice, some preparation aspects are important:

- **Avoid adding stock cubes** as they contain large amounts of salt and unhealthy types of fat.
- **Avoid packaged or canned soups**, as salt content is normally very high and they sometimes contain sugar. Always read the labels and compare the sodium content.

- **Adding cream or butter** will increase the calorie content, so if you don't want to gain weight, avoid them.
- **Add green leafy vegetables** (watercress, cabbage, lettuce) or pre-washed baby spinach to a creamed vegetable soup.
- **Use frozen vegetables** if you don't have fresh ones.
- **For a low sodium soup**, add some grated ginger, cinnamon for a pumpkin soup, coriander, parsley or mint leaves instead of salt for flavour.
- **For a low carbohydrate and calorie soup**, use cauliflower, courgette or chayote for the base instead of potatoes.

- **Freeze leftover soup** in separate labelled containers for quick use.

Hot vegetable soup with chard leaves**Ingredients for 4 portions:**

¼ cauliflower
1 courgette
6 fresh mushrooms
1 onion
2 carrots
½ turnip
2 mint leaves
Chard leaves

Method:

Cook previously chopped vegetables in water, add mint leaves and blend. Add chopped chard leaves and cook. Lastly, add a dash of olive oil, salt to taste and serve.

Cold Cucumber Soup with Yoghurt**Ingredients for 4 portions:**

1 leek
2 cucumbers
¼ cauliflower
1 onion
1 yoghurt – sugar-free

Method:

Cook all chopped vegetables in water, blend and allow to cool. Add yoghurt and salt to taste, mix well and serve topped with a thin slice of cucumber.



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