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A perfect blend

A healthy, fruit-based beverage that goes down easy, a smoothie is a tasty and fun way to drink your nutrients

STORY BY SUSAN BLOOM • JANUARY 20, 2012

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It seems almost no one can resist the taste of smoothies, and for good reason: These milkshake like beverages – incorporating fresh fruit, ice and a range of other popular flavors and ingredients – can be easy, quick, delicious and nutritious snacks, desserts or meal replacements.

First brought to the market in the 1960s by ice cream shops and health food stores, smoothies hit the mainstream the last 10 to 15 years when they became mainstays at cafés, coffee shops, fitness clubs and franchises, resulting in a ready-to-eat and made-to-order smoothie industry estimated to exceed \$6 billion in sales this year, according to research specialist Mintel.

Perhaps no one is more convinced of the comprehensive health benefits offered by mixing fresh fruit, nutrients and protein in a blender than Smoothie King, a franchise founded in 1973 that now includes more than 600 locations in the U.S. and points worldwide. South Amboy resident David Diamant, 37, owns two of New Jersey's 10 Smoothie King franchises – in Middletown and Red Bank – and is a firm believer in smoothies.

"Smoothies are 'great nutrition in a cup,'" Diamant says. "The fact is, it's much easier for the body to absorb nutrients in liquid form than as solids, so smoothies can be nutritious options that also taste great."

While a small portion of the chain's 90 menu items fall under the indulgence category and contain ice cream, the overwhelming majority are designed to achieve one or more nutritional or weight-loss goals.

The Angel Food smoothie, for example, which is the franchise's most popular seller, offers a boost of vitamin C and potassium through its blend of strawberries and bananas, while the Lean1 smoothie is a low-calorie, high-protein, high-fiber option promoting weight loss.



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From left: Angel Food, Pomegranate Punch, Green Tea Tan Strawberry X-Treme, Pumpkin and Blueberry Heaven. (PHOTO BY DOUG HOOD)



David Diamant, owner of Smoothie King in Red Bank and Middletown.

Any of the basic smoothies can be enhanced with nutritional ingredients that target a specific area, such as bone and joint health (an extra dose of calcium, magnesium and vitamin D); antioxidant (vitamins A, C and E, selenium and extracts from pomegranates and goji and acai berries); energy (ginkgo biloba and Siberian ginseng); and digestive and immune systems (active probiotics).

At Dean's Natural Food Market in Ocean Township, health consultant Susan Niven touts smoothies' versatility.

"An hour or two before a workout, a smoothie can be a nutritious option that keeps digestive stress on the body relatively low before exercising, while the addition of compounds like maca, chia and coconut oil can boost your endurance. Post-workout, smoothies can be an efficient means of getting protein to rebuild muscle. Otherwise, they can be a refreshing way to cool off in warmer weather," she says.

Smoothies also are helpful for those who require alternatives to eating, Niven says, and Diamant agrees.

"We have many dentists who send patients over when they've had a procedure that restricts them from eating solid foods," he says. "Smoothies are also great for people going through chemotherapy, who have experienced associated weight loss and immune system impairments. In addition to helping to counteract the metallic taste in their mouth from chemo, specially formulated smoothies can provide an extremely nutrient-dense, high-calorie, high protein option for people whose systems have been compromised."

"There's a convenience to putting it all in a shake and drinking it," Niven says. "Smoothies are a very condensed way to get a lot of nutrients efficiently."

"Smoothies are extremely healthy alternatives to fast food (that) don't require you to sacrifice taste," Diamant adds. "Thanks to smoothies, people don't have to be afraid of health foods anymore."

Smoothie King
65 Broad St., Red Bank
1159 Route 35, Middletown
732-747-2130 | 732-671-3430

Dean's Natural Food Market
1119 Route 35, Ocean
490 Broad St., Shrewsbury
732-517-1515 | 732-842-8686

Recipes:

CHOCOLATE LEAN1 SMOOTHIE

1 tablespoon peanut butter
1 frozen banana
2 scoops Lean1 chocolate protein powder blend
5 to 6 ounces of water, skim milk or soy milk
5 to 6 ice cubes

Blend well.
Contains 25 grams of protein and a healthy dose of potassium.

DAVID'S STRAWBERRY BANANA BLAST

6 ripe strawberries
Half or whole frozen banana, to taste
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
A drop of honey
5 to 6 ounces of water, skim milk or soy milk
5 to 6 ice cubes

Blend well.



Heather Ann DiMarco, an employee of Dean's Natural Food in Ocean Township, creates a Spirulina Surge smoothie.

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Recipes courtesy of David Diamant

DEAN'S SPIRULINA SURGE

1 organic banana

¾ cup organic blueberries

½ teaspoon spirulina (a blue-green algae)

1 cup organic apple juice

5 to 6 ice cubes

Blend well. A nutrient-dense smoothie that delivers high energy

Recipe courtesy of Dean's Natural Food Market

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