

LOW-CARB SMOOTHIES

More Than 135 Recipes to Satisfy
Your Sweet Tooth Without Guilt

Donna Pliner Rodnitzky



Ultimate Smoothies

Summer Smoothies

Slim Smoothies

Tipsy Smoothies

The Ultimate Low-Carb

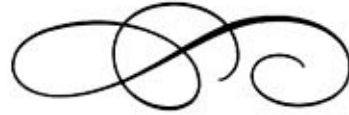
Diet Cookbook

Ultimate Juicing

Sinful Smoothies

Low-Carb Smoothies

More Than 135 Recipes
to Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth
Without Guilt



Donna Pliner
Rodnitzky


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It's impossible to express in words

the appreciation and admiration

I have for my husband,

Bob. He has been my rock

for more than thirty-five years.

It is because of his encouragement and

continuous belief in all my endeavors

that I have been able to write

Low-Carb Smoothies as well as my other cookbooks.

My wonderful children,

David, Adam, and Laura,

continue to astound me with their

wit, character, adventuresome spirit,

and pursuit of excellence.

They are an inspiration

for me always to aim higher.



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Introduction

A diet is the penalty we pay for exceeding the feed limit.

—ANONYMOUS



IN THE 1970S, DR. ROBERT C. ATKINS PUBLISHED the book *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution*. This book revolutionized the way millions of people dieted. Instead of encouraging us to restrict the amount of fat in our diet as most diet experts stressed at that time, Dr. Atkins told us to focus on reducing the daily intake of refined carbohydrates. He was convinced that dietary carbohydrates were the main culprit in causing people to gain weight, largely because carbohydrate-laden foods such as sugars and starches cause the body to increase the production of insulin, a hormone that promotes fat accumulation in the body.

While most people credit Dr. Atkins for introducing the low-carb diet, this way of eating can actually be traced back to England in the 1860s. It began with the dietary dilemma of an undertaker named William Banting, who was 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed 202 pounds. Because of this excessive weight he couldn't bend over, and any exertion left him exhausted. Since obesity was rare at that time, he was subject to public ridicule. His doctors suggested diuretics and Turkish baths, but by the time he was sixty-six years old, he had resigned himself to the belief that he would be obese until the day he died.

His fate changed when his physician returned from a seminar on diabetes that suggested a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet, usually recommended for diabetics, might also have an effect on obesity. Mr. Banting was told to eliminate bread, potatoes, beer, milk, sugar, and butter from his daily meal plan. While he continued to eat his customary four meals a day, he followed the diet and successfully lost forty-six pounds in less than a year. Banting was so elated with his success that he wanted to share it with the public. He wrote and distributed a twenty-two-page pamphlet entitled "Letter on Corpulence" that warned against eating foods that contained sugar and starch. Because of the immediate and overwhelmingly positive response to the first thousand copies of his publication, he printed and sold another fifty thousand. Not surprisingly, the medical community immediately attacked the diet and criticized it for not being studied to their satisfaction (sound familiar?). Mr. Banting, for his part, went on to live to be eighty-one years old in his newly slimmed state.

The popularity of Mr. Banting's diet lasted only a few years. It was later replaced by other diets, such as Fletcherism (slow eating) and Phtoline (the use of a purgative), to name just a few. Unlike fleetingly popular previous diets, though, the Atkins diet has continued to grow in acceptance, both by the medical community and the general population. Several other plans have also been published similarly promoting low-carbohydrate intake, such as the South Beach Diet, Sugar Busters, the Carbohydrate Addict, the Zone, and Protein Power. Each emphasizes the need to restrict carbohydrates in the diet, but individual authors offer a slightly different approach to the original Atkins concept.

As popular and effective as these diets are, many low-carb enthusiasts find it difficult to completely give up all the wonderfully satisfying foods and beverages they enjoyed in the past. Unfortunately, a sweet tooth can't be extracted by the dentist. One of the ways many of us enjoyed satisfying our sugar-loving incisors in 2005 B.C. (Before Carbs) was with a rich and syrupy smoothie. These mellow concoctions, made from the tantalizing union of fruit and fruit juice, are easy to prepare, inherently flavorful, and even provide significant health benefits. However, as tasty and

healthful as your favorite traditional smoothies may be, they are almost certainly not carb-friendly. Unfortunately, ~~traditional smoothie ingredients such as fruits, fruit juice, most yogurts, ice cream, and other dairy products contain~~ unacceptably high amounts of carbohydrates.

The good news is that I have overcome this obstacle. Today, with the amazing low-carb recipes found in this book, you can actually splurge on a flavorful smoothie without losing ground in the battle of the bulge. Get ready to discover in these pages that smoothies, when properly prepared, can be reinvented as a low-carb indulgence that is sweet and satisfying. By simply choosing only carb-friendly fruit, substituting zero-or low-carb ingredients, and adding a variety of sugar-free flavor enhancements, you can create a wonder-in-a-glass that is low-carb legal, yet amazingly rewarding in taste.

Adding smaller servings of fruit to smoothies is one strategy to keep the carb count at bay. To compensate for the diminished fruit content, a variety of carb-friendly protein powders is recommended to add both thickness and extra nutrition. Be aware, however, that there is a wide variance in the carb count among the different brands of protein powders, and this often suggests the use of one protein powder over another in a given recipe. For instance, I suggest using Zone Perfect protein powder in some smoothie recipes because it has 0 grams of carbohydrates and adds just the right amount of bulk, whereas I have included Amplify by Release dietary supplement in other recipes for its high protein content, even at the expense of a few more carbs. Please don't hesitate to substitute any of your favorite protein powders, even if only because it is what's readily available in your pantry or in the health section of your local supermarket.

Low-Carb Smoothies appropriately begins with a chapter entitled, "The Skinny on Low-Carb Diets: What's It All About?" This section starts with definitions of important terms such as carbohydrates and related topics including insulin, ketones, and glycogen. The accompanying discussion in this chapter will help you understand the philosophy behind the low-carb diet. If you are already following one of the low-carb diets or have reached your target weight, this may not be entirely new information. However, if you are curious about the diet or are contemplating trying it, my goal is to present enough basic information to provide a foundation that can be built upon by more in-depth discussions of the concept by scientists, nutritionists, and other experts in this area.

In [chapter 2](#), "Fruit for Thought: Low-Carb Smoothie Ingredients," you will discover the secrets of selecting and preparing the best carb-friendly fruits. [Chapter 3](#), "Getting Up to Speed: All You'll Ever Need to Know to Prepare a Low-Carb Smoothie," will help you become more familiar with the techniques and essential equipment you'll need in order to transform your kitchen into an eternal spring of low-carb smoothies. You will discover a host of helpful tips that will enable you to elevate every low-carb smoothie masterpiece you prepare to the absolute pinnacle of frosty elation.

As you browse through the following chapters containing smoothie recipes, you will find that each one is divided into two sections: one featuring Low-Carb Smoothies and the other, Ultra Low-Carb Smoothies. Using [chapter 4](#), "Simple Pleasures," as an example, you'll find that smoothies in the Low-Carb Smoothies section contain 10 grams of carbohydrates or less, while those in Ultra Low-Carb Smoothies have 6 grams of carbohydrates or less. In each chapter, this division will enable you to choose the recipes that best fit your diet plan, depending on how carb-stingy it is or may become. I chose those ingredients that had the absolute lowest carbohydrate count.

Be aware that different brands of similar low-carb products can actually vary significantly in true carbohydrate content. For example, I found that ½ cup of 4% milk fat cottage cheese can range from 3 to 5 grams of carbohydrates, depending on the manufacturer. Likewise, KĒTO brand instant sugar-free pudding has fewer carbs than the usual sugar-free variety readily available in supermarkets (you can find a list of suggested low-carb products in [chapter 8](#), "Mail-Order and Online Shopping").

Another thing to consider is the discrepancy between net carbs (or *effective* or *impact* carbs) and total carbs. For

example, the nutritional label found on the back of a gallon of low-carb ice cream may say it contains 20 grams of total carbohydrates per serving, whereas the label found on the front of the carton may claim that the same serving has only 3 “net carbs.” How can this be? According to the manufacturer, in this case only 3 carbohydrate grams actually raise the blood sugar level while the remaining 17, derived from sources such as fiber, sugar alcohol, and glycerin, have only a *minimal impact*. Until the FDA approves of labeling that makes a distinction between net and total carbs, I remain hesitant about purchasing products that claim to have a low net carb content but actually have a relatively high total carb count. In this book, only the total carb count is considered in each recipe.

With these principles in mind, you’ll be delighted to find three chapters devoted to mouthwatering low-carb smoothie recipes that will appeal to all smoothie enthusiasts. For example, you’ll be tempted by more than forty recipes in [chapter 4](#), “Simple Pleasures: Basic Low-Carb Favorites.” These delectable smoothies, made with a variety of low-carb ingredients but containing few fortifying ingredients, are among the lowest in carbohydrate content. Some of my favorite creations are Carb Talk, made with French vanilla-flavored Advant-Edge Carb Control shake, raspberry yogurt, raspberries, and strawberries, and Almond Chocolate E-Carbs, made with a low-carb chocolate beverage, strawberries, and raspberries, topped off with almond and chocolate syrups. Both are a low-carb fantasy come true.

The next chapter, “Frosty and Fortified: Pumped-Up Smoothies for Your Health,” contains more than forty recipes made with additional healthful ingredients such as flax or soybean products for their health-enhancing properties and protein supplements to bring each glassful closer to meal replacement status. Each smoothie in this chapter is a celebration of well-being that will also satisfy the snackaholic in you. If you’re looking for a way to add more flax to your low-carb diet, imagine sipping a strawful of Raspberry Flax, Not Fiction, a prescription in a glass that is made with soy milk, flaxseed oil, and raspberries. On the other hand, if you’re looking for a quick energy boost, consider mixing up a batch of Berry Fuel-Efficient Carbs, a protein powder-enriched blend made with French vanilla-flavored Advant-Edge Carb Control shake, blueberries, and raspberries.

The frosty creations in [chapter 6](#), “Maintenance Low-Carb Smoothies: Now That You’ve Taken It Off, Keep It Off!,” are designed to appeal to those of you who have successfully reached your target weight and simply want to maintain it. While it remains important to avoid foods that are truly not carb-friendly, it may be possible to add just a few more carbs to your daily meal plan at this stage. In keeping with this slight shift in your low-carb plan, you will note that the definition of Ultra Low-Carb and Low-Carb in this chapter have been slightly ratcheted up to accommodate the more liberal carb intake that successful dieters earn. With just a few more carbs, you’ll discover that these wonderful creations are a perfect snack to indulge in when you are tempted to “fall off the wagon.”

Finally, [chapter 7](#), “The Garnish Factor: How to Embellish a Low-Carb Smoothie,” contains recipes for edible garnishes that will enable you to transform any of your favorite low-carb smoothie creations into a visually striking and impressive presentation without adding too many extra carbs.

The recipes featured in this book will convince you that smoothies can easily be transformed from fattening to flattering. Whether you indulge while in the Zone or on a South Beach, you’re due for some entirely legal satisfaction in a glass!

The Skinny on Low-Carb Diets

What's It All About?

*If you wish to grow thinner,
diminish your dinner.*

—H. S. LEIBERMAN

UNDERSTANDING THE METABOLIC AND NUTRITIONAL principles behind the low-carbohydrate diet is not rocket science, but without an adequate discussion outlined in simple terms it can seem that way. There are only a few simple definitions that you need to familiarize yourself with in order to clearly understand the scientific theory behind the diet and how it allows you to lose weight in an easy and healthful way. So, before delving into the explanation, let's define those terms that will set you on the pathway to becoming a first-class carbomeister.

- **Calorie** Officially a measure of heat, a calorie, in dietary terms, is a measure of the amount of energy the body can derive from a particular food. The more calories provided by a foodstuff, the longer it will take the body to “burn up” that nutrient.
- **Carbohydrate** Carbohydrates are one of three major nutrient groups that provide energy for the body, the other two being protein and fat. All carbohydrates are composed of either single sugars or strings of sugar bound together. Single sugars, such as table sugar (sucrose), fruit sugar (fructose), and dairy sugar (lactose), are referred to as simple carbohydrates. Plants bind excessive sugars together, resulting in complex carbohydrates often referred to as starches. Most complex carbohydrates, such as potato starch or wheat flour, are edible and digestible, but some, such as cellulose (from celery), cannot be digested.
- **Glucose** Glucose (also known as dextrose) is a simple sugar found in fruits and honey. It is also the form of sugar that circulates in the human bloodstream. The blood level of glucose is the major stimulus for insulin secretion from the pancreas.
- **Glycogen** Glycogen is the form in which the body stores excess glucose in the liver and muscles. It is essentially composed of a number of glucose molecules strung together. Glycogen is an energy storehouse for the body, and when needed, it can be broken down into glucose and released from its storage sites.
- **Glucagon** Glucagon is one of two major hormones produced by the pancreas (the other is insulin). When the blood sugar level is low, glucagon is released and acts to stimulate the liver to break down its stored glycogen into glucose and release it into the bloodstream. This hormone also promotes the breakdown of protein and fat to produce energy when blood glucose is not at an adequate level for the body's needs.
- **Glycemic Index** The glycemic index of a carbohydrate-containing food is a measure of the degree it raises your blood sugar after it is eaten. For example, white bread raises

blood sugar higher and faster than apples, so its glycemic index is high, while apples get a low glycemic index rating.

- **Insulin** Insulin is one of two major hormones produced by the pancreas (the other is glucagon). It is released by the pancreas when the blood glucose rises and then helps transfer glucose into cells where it can be used as a source of energy. In fatty tissue, insulin promotes the conversion of excess glucose to fat, and in the liver it causes excess glucose to be stored as glycogen. In muscle, it promotes the entry of amino acids, the building blocks of protein. Diabetes is due to inadequate production of insulin, reduced sensitivity to its effect, or both. When insulin secretion is excessive, this hormone can elevate cholesterol levels and inhibit the breakdown of previously stored fat.
- **Ketones** Ketones are chemicals that result from the breakdown of fat that occurs when the body does not have enough glucose for energy production and the liver's store of glycogen has been used up. Although there are always some ketones circulating in the bloodstream, fasting or a very low-carbohydrate diet increases the amount of these substances, creating a condition referred to as *ketosis*.

With these definitions in mind, how does the low-carbohydrate diet work? In the simplest terms, the body's response to a carbohydrate meal is to secrete insulin, while at the same time suppressing release of the other pancreatic hormone, glucagon. As we age, excessive insulin secretion can occur in response to even ordinary amounts of carbohydrates in the diet because of insulin resistance, a condition in which our cells respond subnormally to the hormone, requiring the pancreas to secrete more of it just to achieve a normal effect. One of the basic underlying principles of the low-carbohydrate diet is that insulin (especially excessive insulin) has potentially negative health effects, while the opposite is true for glucagon. After a high-carbohydrate meal, insulin tries to store the excess glucose derived from the meal as glycogen in the liver and muscles. Because this storage capacity is limited and easily saturated, insulin next turns to fat as a storage vehicle for the remaining glucose. Not only does excess insulin promote the deposition of fat in this way, it may also have other negative health effects, such as elevation of blood cholesterol and retention of fluid and salt.

Now that you understand the metabolic and nutritional principles behind the low-carbohydrate diet, you are ready to become a convert to this exciting way of dieting, or, if you're already converted, to exclaim a few hallelujahs. The common thread running through all low-carb diets is the requirement to restrict the daily consumption of all foods that are high in carbohydrates. It sounds simple, but this may be a challenging feat for many of us to accomplish, and giving up traditionally high-carb foods that have always been a source of enjoyment and satisfaction can be a major stumbling block. Enter *Low-Carb Smoothies*. Not only the promise of being able to enjoy some of the same treats that you savored in the pre-carb era can help you make the leap to a true low-carb lifestyle.

Fruit for Thought

Low-Carb Smoothie Ingredients

Time flies like an arrow.

Fruit flies like a banana.

— GROUCHO MARSH

FRESH FRUIT IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT of most smoothies. While many of these delectable bundles of vitamins have a high carbohydrate count, a wide variety of more carb-friendly orchard bounty remains available for use on your mission to create the perfect low-carb smoothie. The objective of this chapter is to acquaint you with these carb-friendly fruits and to guide you in choosing, storing, and preparing them. To begin with, it is important to realize that choosing fruit that is smoothie-ready can be very deceptive, especially if your choice is based on appearance alone. At first glance, a peach may look ripe simply because of its rich color. There are, however, a number of other less obvious but equally important attributes to consider. You should attempt to determine whether the fruit has a fresh aroma, how heavy or dense it is, and whether it is firm yet yields slightly to gentle pressure. These characteristics are often more important than the fruit's color. The good news is that once you become a fruit connoisseur, you will find that it's actually quite easy to determine whether fruit is ripe.

I am certain that as you become more familiar with the wide array of fruit available, you will delight in the excitement of including it in this new generation of delicious smoothies. As you navigate the aisles of your favorite farmer's market or produce department, I hope you find the following information useful in your quest for the best nature has to offer.

APPLE

Apples are believed to have originated in Central Asia and the Caucasus. They have been cultivated since prehistoric times. They were brought to the United States at the beginning of the seventeenth century and later to Africa and Australia. Today, more than a hundred varieties of apples are commercially grown in the United States.

Apples, whether red, green, or yellow, all have a firm, crisp flesh. They are a rich source of fiber. Some apples have a sweet flavor with a hint of tartness, while others are less sweet and more tart. Most apples are delicious when made into a smoothie, but your flavor preferences will determine the best variety for you. Apples are available year-round, but are at their peak in October and November.

Selection

When choosing an apple, look for one that is firm and crisp with a smooth, tight skin. Mo

important, the apple should have a sweet-smelling aroma. Avoid any apple that has a bruise or blemished skin. Buy the organic variety whenever possible. Most nonorganic apples are heavily sprayed with pesticides and later waxed to preserve them and keep them looking fresh. This can affect the taste, not to mention your health. Should you find a worm in an organic apple, simply remove the unwelcome visitor when you cut the apple, thereby removing any health or aesthetic concerns. Wash all apples in cool water and dry them well before cutting. Uncut apples can be stored in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to several weeks if they are kept separate from other fruits and vegetables.

APRICOT

The apricot is a round or oblong fruit measuring about two inches in diameter with skin and flesh that are golden orange in color. It is a very sweet and juicy fruit with a single, smooth stone. The apricot is native to North China and was known to be a food source as early as 2200 B.C. Apricots are available from May through July.

Selection

When choosing apricots, look for those that are well colored, plump, and fairly firm but yield slightly when gently pressed. An apricot that is soft to the touch and juicy is fully ripe and should be eaten or used in a smoothie right away. If an apricot is hard, it can be placed in a brown paper bag and allowed to ripen at room temperature for a day or two. Avoid apricots that are green in color because they will not ripen or be good for consumption. Refrigerate ripe apricots in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to a week. Wash them in cool water just before using them.

BANANA

The banana has been around for so long that according to Hindu legend, it was actually the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. It is also believed that the banana was widely cultivated throughout Asia and Oceania before recorded history and that the Spanish colonists introduced banana shoots to the New World in 1516.

Bananas have a high glycemic level and should be avoided when following a low-carb diet. For those who have achieved their weight-loss goal, adding a banana to one's diet is a healthy alternative. Bananas are available year-round.

Selection

Bananas are picked when they are green and sweeten as they ripen. When choosing a banana, look for one that is completely yellow. The riper a banana, or the more yellow its skin, the sweeter it is. Bananas that are yellow but have green tips and green necks or that are mostly yellow except for light green necks are also ready to eat. Green bananas will ripen at room temperature in two or three days. Alternatively, they can be placed in a brown paper bag to accelerate the ripening process. If a tomato or apple is added to the bag, the bananas will

ripen even faster because fruit cells produce a colorless gas called ethylene, which stimulates ripening in many fruits and some vegetables. Ripe bananas can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator for a couple of days.

BLACKBERRY

The blackberry is a small black, blue, or dark red berry that grows on thorny bushes (brambles). These berries are oblong in shape and grow up to one inch in length. The United States is the world's dominant producer of blackberries. Blackberries are at their peak in flavor and availability from June through September, but may still be found in some supermarkets from November on into April.

Selection

When choosing blackberries, look for ones that are plump and solid with full color and a bright, fresh appearance. Place them in a shallow container to prevent the berries on top from crushing those on the bottom. Cover the container and store it in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for one to two days. Wash blackberries in cool water just before you are ready to use them.

BLUEBERRY

Native to North America, the blueberry has the distinction of being the second most popular berry in the United States. It has been around for thousands of years, but was not cultivated until the turn of the twentieth century. Today, 95 percent of the world's commercial crop of blueberries is grown in the United States. Blueberries are at their peak in flavor from mid-April to late September. They are available in the southern states first and gradually move north as the season progresses.

Selection

When choosing blueberries, look for those that are plump and firm with a dark blue color and a silvery bloom. The bloom on blueberries is the dusty powder that protects them from the sun; it does not rinse off. Avoid any berries that appear to be dull because this may indicate that the fruit is old. Blueberries should be prepared in the same way as blackberries, washed just prior to use, but they can be stored unwashed for a longer time in the crisper bin of the refrigerator, from three to five days.

KIWIFRUIT

The kiwifruit, about the size of a plum, grows on a vine. It has a brown fuzzy skin and a luscious sweet-and-sour emerald green pulp that surrounds a cluster of black seeds. Kiwifruit originated in the 1600s in the Yangtze River valley in China, where it was called Yangtao. In 1906, Yangtao seeds were sent to New Zealand, where the fruit was renamed the Chinese

gooseberry. In 1962, the Chinese gooseberry was shipped to the United States, where it was again renamed the kiwifruit in honor of New Zealand's famous national bird. Kiwifruit are at their peak from June to October.

Selection

When choosing a kiwifruit, look for one that is light brown, has a sweet aroma, and is firm yet will give slightly when pressed. Kiwifruit will ripen at room temperature in three to five days. Kiwifruit can also be placed in a brown paper bag along with an apple or banana to speed the ripening process. Store ripe kiwifruit in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to three weeks.

ORANGE

Fresh oranges are widely grown in Florida, California, and Arizona and are available all year long. The two major varieties are the Valencia and navel. Two other varieties grown in the Western states are the Cara Cara and Moro (similar to the blood orange). Moros are available from December through May and Cara Cara from late December through March.

Selection

When selecting an orange, look for one that is heavy for its size and firm. Avoid oranges with a bruised skin, indicating possible fermentation, as well as those with a loose skin, suggesting they may be dry inside. Although oranges can be stored at room temperature for a few days, their flavor is best when they are kept refrigerated for up to two weeks.

PEACH and NECTARINE

Grown since prehistoric times, peaches were first cultivated in China. They were later introduced into Europe and Persia. It is believed that the Spaniards brought peaches to North America, Central, and South America. Spanish missionaries planted the first peach trees in California.

Numerous varieties of peaches are available, and they are broken down into rough classifications. One type of peach is the freestone, so named because the pit separates easily from the peach. Another variety is the clingstone, in which the pit is firmly attached to the fruit. The freestone is the peach most often found in supermarkets because it is easy to eat, while clingstones are frequently canned.

The nectarine is a smooth-skinned variety of the peach.

Peaches and nectarines are ripe in the summer months and are at their peak in taste from July to August.

Selection

When picking peaches, look for ones that are relatively firm with a fuzzy, creamy yellow skin.

and a sweet aroma. The pink blush on the peach indicates its variety, not its ripeness. Avoid peaches with a wrinkled skin or those that are soft or blemished. A ripe peach should yield gently when touched. To ripen peaches, keep them at room temperature and out of direct sunlight until the skin yields slightly to the touch. Once they are ripe, store them in a single layer in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to five days. Wash peaches in cool water just before you are ready to use them.

When choosing nectarines, look for those with bright red markings over a yellow skin. Avoid any with a wrinkled skin or those that are soft and bruised. The nectarine should yield gently to the touch and have a sweet aroma. To ripen nectarines, place them in a brown paper bag and keep them at room temperature. Once they are ripe, store them in a single layer in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to a week. Wash nectarines in cool water just before you are ready to use them.

RASPBERRY

It is believed that red raspberries spread all over Europe and Asia in prehistoric times. Because they were so plentiful and delicious growing wild, it was not until the 1600s that raspberries were cultivated in Europe. Those that are cultivated in North America originate from two groups: the wild red raspberry, native to Europe, and the red variety, native to northeastern America.

Selection

When choosing raspberries, it is always best to buy them when they are in season—usually starting in late June and lasting four to six weeks. If you are fortunate enough to live near a berry farm, take advantage of it by visiting at the beginning of the season to get the best pick. Select berries that are large and plump, bright, shiny, uniform in color, and free of mold. Avoid any that are mushy. Before refrigerating raspberries, carefully go through the batch and discard any that show signs of spoilage. Place the raspberries in a shallow container to prevent the berries on top from crushing those on the bottom. Cover the container and store it in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for one to two days. Wash raspberries in cool water just before you are ready to use them.

STRAWBERRY

Strawberries date as far back as 2,200 years. They are known to have grown wild in Italy in the third century, and by 1588, they were discovered in Virginia by the first European settlers. Local Indians cultivated the strawberry as early as the mid-1600s, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, this fruit was widely grown in many parts of North America.

The strawberry grows in groups of three on the stem of a plant that is very low to the ground. As the fruit ripens, it changes from greenish white in color to a lush flame red. The strawberry does not have a skin but is actually covered by hundreds of tiny seeds.

Selection

The best time to buy strawberries is in June and July when they are at their peak of juiciness and freshness. As with raspberries, if you are lucky enough to live near a strawberry farm, a picnic or your own day trip is a wonderful family outing as well as an excellent way to get the very best of the crop. Look for plump, firm, and deep-colored fruit with a bright green cap and a sweet strawberry aroma. Strawberries can be stored in a single layer in the crisper bin of the refrigerator for up to two days. Wash them with their caps in cool water just before you are ready to use them.

TANGERINE

Tangerines, also known as Mandarins, are a close cousin of the orange. Native to Southeastern Asia, they have been widely cultivated in orange-growing regions of the world. While tangerines resemble an orange, they are smaller in size and oblong in shape but can be slightly flat on each end. Another variety of the tangerine is the clementine, sometimes called an Algerian tangerine. Clementines are a cross between a Mandarin orange and a Seville orange and are usually seedless. Because all tangerines have a loose, puffy skin, these sweet, juicy fruits peel easily and their sections can be readily separated.

Selection

Choose tangerines that have a deep, glossy orange skin and are heavy for their size. Tangerines are usually ripe and ready to eat when you buy them, but they can be left on the kitchen counter for up to one week at a cool room temperature or stored in the crisper bin of the refrigerator away from vegetables for up to two weeks.

FREEZING FRUIT

Because fruit is so perishable, you may want to freeze some while it is in season to store for later use. By purchasing an ample quantity to freeze, you can be certain of having on hand a supply of any fruit you know will not be available after a certain date when you need it to prepare one of your favorite low-carb smoothies. Also, there may be times when already ripened fruit isn't needed immediately. Freezing prevents overripening and allows it to be utilized at a later time.

To make a low-carb smoothie with the optimal consistency, it is important that you freeze for thirty minutes or more any fresh fruit you use. Using partially frozen fruit also helps maintain your smoothie at an ideal icy-cold temperature.

Whether you are freezing fruit for immediate use or for storage, the basic preparation is identical.

- When you are ready to freeze apricots (which should be cut in half with their stones removed) or berries, place them in a colander and rinse them with a gentle stream of cool water. Pat them dry with a paper towel.

- To freeze a peach or nectarine (remove its stone), wash it and cut it into small pieces.
- To freeze a banana or kiwifruit, remove its skin and either slice it or freeze it whole and then slice it later, before use.
- Before freezing oranges and tangerines, remove the peel and pith, break each into segments, and remove any seeds.
- To prepare apples for freezing, remove their peels and seeds before cubing.

Place the prepared fruit on a baking sheet lined with freezer paper, plastic-coated side facing up to prevent it from sticking to the surface. (In a pinch, wax paper or parchment paper can be used instead.) If you are storing the fruit to use at a later date, transfer it to an airtight plastic bag. Label the contents, mark the date on the bag, and freeze the fruit for up to two weeks. Most fruit can be kept in the freezer this long without a loss of flavor. If you are preparing the fruit for immediate use, freeze it for at least thirty minutes, after which time it will be ready to add to your other smoothie ingredients.

HOW MUCH FRUIT SHOULD I BUY?

To determine how much fruit you will need to make a smoothie, consult the list below for an estimate of the quantity of fruit (in number of cups) you'll actually end up with once the skin, hull, seeds, pit, and core are removed. You can use the average weight per individual fruit provided in the table, or to be more precise, you can weigh the fruit, using the supermarket scale, before you purchase it.

FRUIT	How Much to Buy	Average Weight	Number of Cups
Apple	1 medium	6 ounces	1 cup
Apricots	3	8 ounces	1 cup
Banana	1 large	10 ounces	1 cup
Blackberries	½ pint	6 ounces	1 ¼ cups
Blueberries	½ pint	8 ounces	1 cup
Kiwifruit	3	8 ounces	1 cup
Nectarine	1 medium	8 ounces	1 cup
Orange	1 medium	10 ounces	1 cup
Peach	1 medium	8 ounces	1 cup
Raspberries	1 box	6 ounces	1 ¼ cups
Strawberries	7 to 8 medium	6 ounces	1 cup
Tangerine	1 small	5 ounces	½ cup

Getting Up to Speed

All You'll Ever Need to Know to Prepare a Low-Carb Smoothie

*In department stores,
so much kitchen equipment is bought
indiscriminately by people who just
come in for men's underwear.*

—JULIA CHILD

ASIDE FROM FABULOUS TASTE, A UNIQUE ATTRACTION of smoothies is that they are unbelievably quick and easy to prepare. With very little effort, you can enjoy a satisfying and richly flavored drink within minutes. With such an unbeatable combination of good taste and ease of preparation, it is no wonder smoothies have quickly become one of the most popular culinary rages of our era.

You don't need to have an extensive array of equipment in your kitchen to prepare a low-carb smoothie. In fact, all you need is a modest number of essential tools: a sharp knife for prepping fruit, measuring spoons and cups, a rubber spatula to remove every last drop from the blender, airtight freezer bags for storing freshly cut fruit in the freezer, and, of course, the essential blender (or food processor).

You might want to consider, in addition, a few optional items of equipment. As you glance through the garnish recipes found in this cookbook, you will note the mention of two useful tools not considered standard kitchen equipment. The first, a silicone mat, is a reusable laminated food-grade silicone sheet with a nonstick surface that is used to line a baking sheet. The second, a mandoline slicer, is a handheld kitchen implement containing a variety of cartridge blades that perform precision cutting of foods in several modes such as very thick, very thin, and julienne, just to mention a few. Again, these are very helpful items, but neither is an absolute necessity.

Finally, although a food processor can be used to make a smoothie, most smoothie experts would agree that a blender is definitely the preferred appliance. Unlike the blender container, the food processor bowl is wide and low, causing food to be sent sideways rather than upward by the spinning blade. This motion results in food striking the sides of the container with less incorporation of air than the upward motion produced by a blender. Moreover, when a food processor is used to purée fruit and ice, it often leaves small chunks of ice behind, as opposed to a blender, which breaks up the ice and fruit into tiny particles. Still, if a food processor is all you have, it should do fine. Your smoothies just won't be as perfect.

THE BLENDER

The blender is the most important piece of kitchen equipment when it comes to making

proper smoothie. Credit for the invention of this indispensable appliance goes to Stephen Poplawski, who, in 1922, first conceived of placing a spinning blade at the bottom of a glass container. By 1935, Fred Waring and Frederick Osius had made significant improvements on the original design and began marketing the Waring Blender. The rest is history.

A blender basically consists of a tall and narrow stainless steel, plastic, or glass food container fitted with metal blades at the bottom. These blades usually have four cutting edges placed on two or four planes allowing for the ingredients in the container to hit multiple cutting surfaces. The rapidly spinning blades cause an upward motion, creating a vortex in the container that allows for the incorporation of more air in the final product, giving it a smoother consistency.

When selecting a blender, you should assess certain basic qualities, including its durability, ease of operation and cleaning, capacity, and noise production. With such a wide variety of blenders from which to choose, I hope the following information will help you narrow your choice.

- Blender containers typically come in two sizes: thirty-two ounces and forty ounces. If you will routinely be preparing smoothies for more than two people, choose the larger one.
- Blender motors come in different sizes. Those with 290-watt motors are adequate for most blending jobs but not optimal for smoothies. Those with 330- to 400-watt motors, considered to be of professional caliber, are excellent for crushing ice, a very important feature for creating the best smoothies.
- Blenders can be found with a variety of blade speed options, ranging from two speeds (high and low) to multiple (between five and fourteen) speeds. Variable-speed models provide more options, such as the ability to liquefy and whip.
- The blender should have a removable bottom for ease of cleaning.
- Container lids should have a secondary lid that can be easily removed. This allows for the addition of ingredients while the blender is turned on.
- Avoid plastic container jars because they become scratched over time and do not wash well in the dishwasher.

Recently, new blenders specifically designed for making smoothies have become available. One whirring wizard, called the Smoothie Elite (by Back to Basics), has several features including a custom stir stick to break up the air pockets, an ice-crunching blade that assures consistent smoothie texture, and a convenient spigot at the bottom of the container that serves up the finished product.

Once you have decided on the features you would like in a blender, I encourage you to visit several appliance or department stores and personally view the various models available. The salesclerk should be able to provide you with information to further help you in making the best decision.

The Internet is another resource for gleaning valuable information. Many of the companies that manufacture these appliances have very informative sites describing their individual product, and some also provide a phone number so you can speak to a representative.

Finally, *Consumer Reports* and similar publications provide comparison quality ratings of variety of blenders.

HELPFUL TECHNIQUES

Now that the blender (or food processor) has taken its rightful place, center stage on your countertop, it is time to rev it up and make a low-carb smoothie. I hope you found equipping your kitchen with the necessary tools to make smoothies a relatively easy process. You will be pleased to learn that mastering the techniques required to prepare them is no more difficult. In fact, preparing a smoothie may be one of the most uncomplicated tasks you will ever perform in your kitchen. All you have to do is simply place the appropriate smoothie ingredients in a blender and you will end up with a wonderfully delicious final product. However, for those who want to create the “truly perfect” low-carb smoothie, I have discovered a few additional techniques that will help you reach that lofty goal.

- To get the most delicious fruit, buy it when it is in season and at its peak in flavor.
- Before freezing fruit, wash and dry it, then follow the preparation instructions given in the previous chapter.
- Store-bought individually frozen fruit can be substituted for fresh frozen fruit, but should be used within six months of the purchase date. Avoid using frozen fruit that is packaged in sweetened syrup.
- To be certain that you have a supply of your favorite seasonal fruits, stock up before they are no longer available for purchase. Although fruits have the most flavor when they are kept frozen for only one to two weeks, they can be kept in the freezer for a slightly longer amount of time and still be edible.
- When adding ingredients to a blender, always add the liquid first, then the frozen fruit, and the ice cream last.
- If the fruit you have frozen becomes clumped together, gently pound it within the sealed bag with a mallet or blunt object until the pieces separate.
- If the smoothie is too thin, add more fruit. Conversely, if the smoothie is too thick, add more of your favorite low-carb beverage.

Simple Pleasures Basic Low-Carb Favorites

*The difference between try and
triumph is just a little umph!*

—MARVIN PHILL

SMOOTHIES ARE ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED and refreshing taste treats to have emerged in recent years. The cool creations described in this chapter, made with a simple combination of carb-friendly fruits and a variety of low-carb shake mixes, soft drinks, and flavor enhancers, are a delicious low-carb alternative to the traditional high-carb variety that sinfully resemble malts, milkshakes, or blizzards. It is important to realize that the carb count in many ordinary smoothies can be deceptively high unless they have been prepared with careful attention to the ingredients used. One example of the techniques employed in this book to avoid this megacarbohydrate trap is to use strawberries and raspberries frequently to provide just the right amount of sweetness and texture, while still remaining faithful to the low-carb spirit. The resulting low-carb pleasures are not only delicious, they deserve at least one more kudo: With every swallow you are on your way to fulfilling the American Cancer Institute's recommendation to include at least two to three servings of fruit in your diet each day.

As you glance through this chapter, you will be impressed with the great variety of low-carb smoothies that can easily be created with a combination of carb-friendly fruits, and I feel confident that you will be delighted with the flavorful and satisfying result that each recipe provides. Be ready to be impressed when you try Strawberry Scorn on the Carb, a refreshing smoothie featuring strawberries blended with a low-carb dairy beverage, banana syrup, and vanilla-flavored Atkins shake mix. If you're a raspberry devotee, then you will be thrilled with the taste of Raspberry Carb Shark, a delicious blend of raspberries, raspberry syrup, low-carb dairy beverage, and raspberry-flavored ice cubes.

Keep in mind that a little experimentation with the suggested ingredients is allowed, depending on your taste or what is readily available in your pantry. For example, you will notice that one of the key flavor enhancers in many low-carb smoothies is a sugar-free syrup. While I may suggest using strawberry syrup in a smoothie made with strawberries and raspberries, feel free to experiment with a raspberry, blueberry, or even pineapple syrup instead. Don't hold back; just dive in and create your own signature smoothies. You'll be amazed at how a few spins of your blender can liberate you from low-carb boredom.

simply pleasures



ULTRA LOW-CARB SMOOTHIES

These smoothies
have **6** grams
of carbohydrates
or less.

Almond Chocolate E-carbs



Make someone's day by e-mailing this tantalizing low-carb recipe along with a special greeting.

1 SERVING

¼ cup chocolate Carb Countdown (or favorite low-carb) dairy beverage

2 tablespoons creamy vanilla-flavored Atkins Advantage (or favorite low-carb) ready-to-drink shake

2 tablespoons sugar-free almond syrup

2 tablespoons sugar-free chocolate syrup

¼ cup partially frozen raspberries

¼ cup partially frozen diced strawberries

Place all the ingredients in a blender container in the order listed. Place the cover on the container. Turn on the blender and process by pressing the pulse button, while on the lowest blade-speed setting, until the ingredients are mostly blended. Continue mixing without the pulse function by pressing the highest blade-speed setting button until the mixture is smooth (it may be necessary to turn off the blender periodically and stir the mixture with a spoon, working from the bottom up). Turn off the blender. Pour the smoothie into a glass and garnish with a [Chocolate-Dipped Strawberry](#), if desired.

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