

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CONTROL FOOD CRAVINGS

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INTRODUCTION

Fighting with Food Cravings is real. It's a struggle we all go through. Food cravings make us consume extra calories and make us gain weight. There isn't any diet or workout plan that is going to work for us if we are not able to control our craving for foods. When we talk about food cravings, we mostly refer to foods which are high in calories and sugar content which make them unhealthy for our body. Craving for unhealthy foods is the number one reason for people falling off diets. Rarely do we hear people craving for fruits and vegetables or any healthy food item for that matter. The food items that we generally crave for and which are on the top of our lists are ice creams, cakes, chocolates, fried chips, pizzas, chicken wings, burgers, etc.

Food craving is not a disease in itself. However, it can become a leading cause for many diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, stroke and high blood pressure. Unhealthy food cravings can happen to anybody and can become a regular part of people's lives if not controlled. Many internal and external factors can worsen our food cravings.

This book explains how easy it gets for us to become victims of our own behaviour and our environment, keeping us trapped in this unhealthy act. It explains some very simple, easy to follow strategies, which will help you overcome the unhealthy food cravings, no matter how difficult you might think it to be.



CRAVING VS HUNGER

One of the biggest reasons why we indulge in overeating is that we often confuse our cravings with our hunger. Failing to distinguish between the two make us overeat.

Before getting into the factors that make us crave unhealthy food, let's first understand how we can distinguish between hunger and craving.

Hunger and craving, both make us want to eat, yet hunger is not the same as craving.

Hunger is controlled by our stomach. It usually occurs when we haven't eaten for a few hours or more, and it tells us that it's time for our body to get some energy now. It is usually associated with the rumbling in the stomach, headache or feeling of weakness - this is *Physical Hunger*.

Cravings, on the other hand, are controlled by our brain. They come on suddenly, and they feel urgent. We crave food even when it's not the time to fuel up. We crave food even

when we have just eaten a while ago. Cravings make us eat when we don't need to. Worst, they make us crave unhealthy foods which are loaded with calories. That's where the danger lies. We indulge in eating extra calories which are no doubt the biggest reason why we are overweight - this is *Psychological Hunger*.

When we are physically hungry, we are not looking for any particular food. Rather, we just want to satisfy that hunger, and even boiled chicken and dry spinach sound good to us. We just need to suppress that hunger. The desire to eat doesn't go away even if we wait; rather it gets intensified if we don't get something to eat soon.

When we are psychologically hungry, meaning when we have the craving, we want to have food with a specific taste or texture. It could be something crunchy or something sweet or something savoury. Foods that we usually crave for are chocolates, ice creams, pizzas, etc. Such cravings cannot be satisfied by an apple. Never. We just want that ice cream, and we will want it 'NOW.' Nothing else on earth will do.

It becomes important to listen to our hunger because our body needs fuel to function properly. Hunger will only get intensified if we do not eat, but once we are full, we want to stop eating, and we do not feel guilty after our hunger is satisfied.

Cravings, on the other hand, make us eat more than we normally would and we can continue eating even after we are full. Giving into our cravings make us feel good temporarily, leaving us guilty and miserable after we finish.

We know that craving is not good for our health and we must not give in to it. Food Cravings lead to overeating which leads to weight gain. Being overweight leads to many diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. We must be

able to understand the reasons behind those cravings so that they can be effectively controlled.

The first step to managing food cravings is to be able to identify if it's actually hunger or its just one of those cravings. Therefore, we must give some moment to think whether we are actually hungry or are just craving for a particular food, before we act upon it.

WHY DO WE HAVE CRAVINGS? HOW DO WE CONTROL THEM?

Cravings are natural and can happen to anybody and differ from person to person. Since we all have different tastes, we all have different cravings.

Some of the factors causing food cravings include the ones which are directly related to our behaviour and practices, while others which have a great influence on us indirectly.

Let's look at how we as individuals are directly responsible for giving rise to unhealthy food cravings within ourselves:



NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Food cravings are mostly triggered by our negative emotions rather than what we ate last. These emotions are powerful enough to influence our food choices, and it's usually the unhealthy food choices.

When we are stressed, angry, lonely, sad, or scared, these negative emotions make us crave for food that can bring comfort to us at that moment. Unfortunately, these 'Comfort Foods' are the high calorie, sugary foods such as chocolates, pizzas, ice creams to name a few. These foods relax us, relieve our stress and calm us down.

The type of food that we crave might depend on a particular type of our negative emotion. For example, when we are depressed, a dairy product such as cheese or ice cream relax us. When we are anxious, we will want something crunchy such as chips or roasted nuts.

In another instance, having a bad day at work might cause you to come back home and indulge in unhealthy eating. Gobbling down that big chunk of chocolate cake from the fridge might give that moment of joy and make you forget about the day, but it will only leave you feeling guilty and making you go back to eating again.

When we are stressed, our body releases the hormone called Cortisol which signals the brain to reach for comfort foods which are high in sugar and calories. When we give in to this demand by eating sugary foods, a message is immediately sent to the brain to release a 'Feel Good' hormone called Dopamine - this is the reason why we feel all pepped up and happy after eating these sugary foods.

Research has shown that sugar can be as addictive as any other abusive drug such as heroin and morphine. However dangerous this may sound, but the fact is that these drugs release the same 'Feel Good' hormone, Dopamine just as it is released while having sugary foods. If this hormone can lead to serious addiction to abusive drugs, it can definitely lead to serious addiction to sugary foods and no doubt, being in this addiction will only lead us to a vicious cycle of weight gain and related illnesses.

Since cravings can often be related to your emotions and your mood rather than when you last ate, before giving into them, follow some of the simple suggestions given below to control them.

➤ Deal with the problem:

- Take a moment and ask yourself “Am I really hungry?” If it’s been 3-4 hours since the last time you ate, then it’s most likely that you’re hungry. If not, then you’re probably just having an emotionally based craving.
- If it’s something worrying you, then most likely you will fall for junk foods because it kind of numbs your problems. Of course, just temporarily. So the best thing to do instead would be to deal with the problems you are facing directly. Ask yourself, what is really going wrong with you. Go to the root causes and understand what’s triggering it.
- Ask yourself why you are getting the craving? Is it because you’re lonely, or anxious? Or is it because you are angry about something? You could also be eating if you are just bored and have nothing else to do.

➤ Distract yourself:

Researchers believe that cravings last for 10 to 20 minutes and the desire to eat goes away if you are distracted. When you are really craving something, and you just want to have it at that moment, try this. Promise yourself, that you will have it, but after 15 minutes, not now. Train yourself to say this to yourself. You will notice that after 15-minutes you would have forgotten about it and that it would have passed. You will feel glad you didn’t have it.

You need to distract yourself that moment till the craving passes. Believe me, try it and it's not tough – There are many ways to divert your focus from food. You have so many choices; you just need to pick one.

Find something to do, something you love rather than thinking of eating that stuff. Divert your focus. Try the following suggestions :

- Call up a friend or a family member, you enjoy talking to, who you love to share things with and who can give you great advice.

- Answer some emails

- Listen to music

- Continue with the book you've started to read

- Do the laundry

- Clean up your cupboard

- Do some fun exercises such as Zumba to improve your mood. Switch to YouTube, use the space in your living room and have some fun. Ask a friend or family member to join you. It will be fun, killing those cravings. Technology today, has made things so simple for us. We just need to use it the right way in order to benefit ourselves.

➤ **Avoid situations and people**

Sometimes we let little things affect us in a negative manner. Don't let little things annoy you. Don't be annoyed seeing the unmade bed of your teenager, don't be annoyed seeing the wet towel over the sofa. If you have annoying neighbours, ignore them. It's not worth fretting over these little things. Avoid people and situations that might make you upset. The more you maintain your peace of mind, the more you will have control over your cravings.

➤ **Learn Stress - Management**

Learn to manage stress since it is the primary trigger for food cravings.

- Relax yourself with deep breathing exercises or meditation. Meditation improves our focus, enhances positive thinking, makes us happy and calms and helps us fight addiction.

- Go for a walk. Go out and get yourself pampered by going to a spa, for a facial, manicure or pedicure. Relax yourself.

Kill those negative thoughts which lead you to feel sad and depressed and make you look for joy in unhealthy food options. It will save you loads of unwanted calories which would make you overweight and make you stressed even more. Distract yourself, and you will see that your craving just passed by without you giving in to them. You will feel great.

➤ **Practice Positive Affirmations**

Our negative thoughts keep us continuously trapped in our negative actions. The only way to come out of them is by acting in a positive way. We will be able to act positively only when we decide to remove our negative thoughts, which can be done by practicing positive affirmations.

Positive affirmation or positive self-talk is an effective way to ward off negative feelings and controlling those cravings. Learn to do positive affirmations.

This is how you can do it. When you get those cravings, tell yourself that you won't give in to them. Tell yourself that, this will not benefit you, it will not help you out of your problem, giving in to your craving will leave you craving for more. Such positive affirmations will help you step back and make healthy choices and thus help fight those cravings.

Constantly remind yourself that you can overcome your cravings and that it's not impossible. Start your day with positive affirmations that you can stay away from junk food. Remind yourself that it doesn't bring any good to your body rather just temporary pleasure leaving you regretful and then craving for more, later on. Ask yourself, what is more, important to you. That junk food that you have been craving for an hour or that body that you have been craving for your whole life.

The reason why self-affirmations are crucial because we don't realize that most of the time we are using 95 percent of

our subconscious mind and not the 5 percent of our conscious mind. Our subconscious mind plays a huge role, holds the key to our health, wealth, and happiness. If we can learn to access this power, we can change any area of our lives. We try many things, but then ultimately take a u-turn and end up right back from where we started because we don't think consciously.

For example, when we watch a sad movie, we try not to cry but we end up crying even though we know it's just a movie, we all know it's not happening in real time and forget that there is a camera in front. That's how strong our subconscious mind is. It takes over our conscious state. Similarly, when we see something sweet and savoury, our subconscious mind is telling us to have it even though our conscious mind knows it's not good for our health. We still have it. We get overpowered by our subconscious mind.

Our positive thoughts help us act better and develop good habits. When you have that mind-set, controlling your cravings will become easy. Remind yourself that food is not your anti-depressant, it doesn't solve your problems. Every time you succeed in saying 'No' to your cravings, you reach one step closer to the 'Yes' to healthy eating.

If we can take our mind and emotions away from the food that is not good for our body, we can be a lot healthier. Having a positive mind-set can help us achieve our goals regardless of the challenges in our way.



JUNK FOODS IN OUR HOMES

Keeping junk foods stocked up in your homes is another reason why you give in to your cravings easily. It will become even more difficult for you not to have the unhealthy food that you love, when it's there right in front of your eyes. Just the sight of them can be very tempting and irresistible.

If you keep bringing the junk food in your home, you are only setting yourself to fail. You will not create a temptation for yourself, if you do not have these foods in your home. Get rid of them. Get rid of those crisps, those cookies, those chocolates from your home. Clean up your cupboards.

Replace the junk food in your homes with healthier options such as fresh fruits, cottage cheese, nuts like almonds,

walnuts, hummus etc. Keep fruits such as apples, bananas, vegetables like crunchy carrots, cucumber at hands reach. Have some hummus nearby instead of mayonnaise and enjoy the veggies. So that when you need something quick to satisfy yourself, you can have these handy rather than rush out to unhealthy options like sweets and chocolate, etc.

It's easier not to have these foods when you live by yourself. But controlling your food choices can get difficult at times if you have kids or parents living with you who love these foods. The best thing you can do is to store them away from your sight, high up in the cupboard, out of reach, out of sight. In fact keep to a minimum to prevent other family members to get addicted to the unhealthy food options too.

While shopping for grocery, avoid the junk food aisle, go to where the fruits and vegetables are. Never go shopping for food when you are starving. It will only make you fall for unhealthy options which will satisfy your hunger quickly. You will be loading your shopping trolley buying food that your body doesn't need and wasting money too.

DEHYDRATION

Studies suggest that we often mistake our thirst for hunger. Even mild dehydration can alter a person's mood, energy and one's ability to think clearly. So do not wait until you are thirsty. Drink enough water throughout the day and keep yourself hydrated to minimise the cravings.

Water is the largest component in our body. It makes up of approximately 45 to 70 % of our total body mass. We lose water while breathing, sweating, urinating and even during digestion. Therefore the cells, organs, and tissues in our body need that replacement to perform well. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water everyday.

Start your day with a glass of water. Always carry a bottle of water wherever you go. Drink a glass of water before going to bed so that you are not dehydrated in the morning.

Next time when you feel that craving, drink a big glass of water. You may find that craving fades away because your body was actually thirsty. You can also try this. Have a glass of water and have some nuts. Wait for 20 minutes. It will crush your cravings.

Staying hydrated not only prevents cravings but it also helps maintain a steady heart rate, flushes out toxins, and is good for our skin. We not only feel better, but we look better too.

LACK OF SLEEP

One of the major causes of stress is lack of proper sleep. Sleep deprivation increases Ghrelin in our body, which is the hunger-boosting hormone. This hormone increases our cravings for sugary and starchy foods, for example cookies and breads.

Sleep deprivation can sabotage your health and lead to weight gain in other ways too. For example, when you don't get enough sleep, you will be sleepy the next day at work. This will make you consume extra cups of coffee to help you concentrate on your work. Sleepiness will also cause you to skip your gym or your routine exercise for the day. You will come back home even more tired and won't have the energy to cook and will opt for a quick fix unhealthy takeaway. So get proper sleep to avoid the trouble. It's important that you stick to strict bed time routine to keep yourself relaxed for the next day.

As recommended by the National Sleep Foundation we must aim to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Proper sleep helps us make better decisions of what we can eat.

LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Lack of physical exercises plays an important role in increasing our craving for unhealthy food. Some form of daily exercise must be included in our daily routine. Exercise releases the 'Feel Good' Hormone, Dopamine, which is the same hormone released after consuming sugary foods and abusive drugs. So why not get addicted to exercise which makes our body and mind strong and healthy rather than get addicted to the unhealthy, sugary foods which destroy our body, mind, and soul.

Proper blood supply in our body is essential for our different organs to perform well. Exercise improves the blood circulation in our body. Proper blood circulation also transports the stress hormone to the kidneys from where it is flushed out of our system. This reduces the stress within us and reduces our food cravings.

Even light exercises such as walking and stretching out can bring down the blood sugar level and prevent cravings. Just twenty minutes of exercise three times a week has been seen to reduce the hormone level by 15 %. It's a known fact, that when we participate in regular physical exercises, our body actually doesn't not crave for unhealthy foods.

UNSTEADY BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS

Maintaining a steady blood sugar level in our body is key to controlling our cravings. We must avoid the fluctuations in our blood sugar levels. Highly processed foods, such as white pasta, white rice, or sweets are simple sugars which get digested very quickly. This results in the quick release of energy, causing spikes in the blood sugar level. And because these foods get digested too quickly, they cause the blood sugar level to drop quickly too, resulting in energy crashes, leaving us hungry again and craving for more.

So it's important to avoid foods which are simple sugars. We must consume foods that take longer to digest and result in the slow release of energy, keeping the blood sugar level balanced. This keeps us fuller for long, and hunger is delayed, thus no cravings.

Given below are some of the effective ways you can keep the blood sugar level steady, keep you fuller for long and delay hunger.

1. Replace simple carbohydrates in your diet with complex carbohydrates :

Complex carbohydrate such as wholegrain bread, pasta, brown rice, wheat, quinoa, lentils, chick peas, soy beans, kidney beans, fruits and vegetables such as apples, pears, and proteins such as fish, lean meat, etc. take longer to be broken down, resulting in the slow release of energy thus keep our blood sugar level balanced and prevent spikes.

2. Include more fibre-rich food in your diet :

Foods rich in fibre also take longer to digest, keep us full for longer and delay hunger. Therefore, fibre-rich foods such as vegetables, whole grains, beans and fruits also prevent blood sugar spikes.

It is interesting to note that it is easier to consume half a cheese burger than to consume four apples, both of which are 200 calories each. It's better to eat food that fills you up with minimum calorie intake.

3. Have frequent meals throughout the day :

Frequent meals keep us full, prevent us from reaching the starving mode and will not make us crave. At starving mode, our will power is weakest, and we get the worst cravings.

One way of keeping track of your meals throughout the day, is by maintaining a Food Diary. This will help you plan your daily meal intake and help you keep track of all that you are eating. You can go through it at the end of the day to see what you have eaten and where you went wrong and how you can improve the next day.

The following chart gives a good example of meal plan for a day.

The meals and snacks in the chart are spread out throughout the day, avoiding long hours of hunger thus preventing craving.

TIME	MEAL	FOOD	QUANTITY
8 a.m.	Breakfast	Boiled eggs	2
		Whole grain bread	2 slices
		Banana milk shake	1 glass
11 a.m.	Snack	Apple	1
		Nuts (almonds / walnuts)	A handful
2 p.m.	Lunch	Brown rice	A small bowl
		Stir fried mixed vegetable	A small bowl
		Grilled chicken	Palm size
5 p.m.	Snack	Prepared hummus	2 – 3 tblsp tblsp
		Celery sticks / carrot sticks	3 ounces
8 p.m.	Dinner	Whole grain bread / Chapatti	1
		Lentil soup	Small bowl
		Green salad	Small bowl

So to control our cravings we must keep the blood sugar level steady, in the fat burning zone by consuming whole grain food and food rich in fibre and high in protein and eating regular meals throughout the day.



MISSING NUTRIENTS

Cravings are the body's way of telling us that something is missing in it. Because we fail to provide it with the essential vitamins, minerals, and fibre it needs, we make it crave for foods.

Our unhealthy eating habits deprive our body of these essential nutrients which are crucial for our body's craving and hunger mechanism. Junk foods such as chocolates, cookies, and pizzas have very little nutrition value and are high in sugar and calorie content. Since these foods do not contain the essential nutrients that our body needs, our body does not recognize them and is unable to signal us to stop when we eat them. On the other hand, when we feed our body with the essential nutrients it needs, it will signal us to stop telling us that it is satisfied and doesn't need anymore of it.

Feeding our body with junk food all the time not only deprives it of essential nutrients, but it also increases the craving for more junk food. When we increase the intake of junk food, we cannot expect ourselves to crave for healthy food. For example, eating an apple once in a while will not benefit us if we are constantly feeding our body with unhealthy stuff. It has to be the other way round. We will be able to cleanse our body of this craving if we have more of good stuff inside us than the bad stuff.

One way to understand which nutrient our body lacks in, we need to look at the food we crave. This will help us provide our body with the right nutrients. For example when we crave for chocolate the chances are that our body lacks in magnesium. Sadly, our body will not be able to tell us that. For if we knew, we would be able to control our cravings to a great extent by having the right food and providing the right nutrients to our body.

Refer to the following chart to find the nutrients your body lacks when you crave for certain foods.

Food Craving	Nutrient Deficiency	Nutritious Food
Bread	Nitrogen	Green leafy Veg, nuts, seeds, legumes grains
White pasta, bread & pastries	Chromium	Onion, lettuce, tomato, cinnamon, grapes
Crisps, Salty Foods	Chloride	Celery, olives, tomatoes, kelp, Himalayan sea salt
Chocolate	Magnesium	Raw cacao, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, fruit, green veg
Fizzy/Soda drinks	Calcium	Broccoli, kale, sesame seeds, legumes, mustered, turnip greens
Coffee/ black tea	Sulphur	Cruciferous Veg, cranberries, horseradish, garlic, onion
	Iron	Beans, legumes, seaweed, cherries, red meat
	Phosphorous	Citrus fruits, green leafy veg, banana, tomatoes, seaweed, black olives
Crunching Ice cubs	Iron	Beans, legumes, seaweed, cherries, red meat

As long as we are going to need essential nutrients, we are going to have the cravings. Junk food does not satisfy us like healthier food does, because junk food does not contain the nutrients that our body needs.

So to reduce the craving we need to increase the intake of healthy food, we need to eat a well-balanced diet, by adding fruits and vegetables and increasing fibre intake.

Continuous intake of healthy food will increase craving for healthy food and reduce the craving for unhealthy foods.

FOOD TRIGGERS

If you know what triggers your cravings, you will be able to prepare in advance to control it. Taking certain precautions can save you a lot of calories. For example, do not stay hungry before going to a party or to a restaurant or movie. You might think that staying hungry will save you calories and will make up for the extra calories in these places. Rather, it will only make you overeat. These places won't have the healthier food options, so don't go there starving. Have a fruit before leaving or carry an apple in your purse for example. When you are mentally prepared, you will be able to make better decisions of what to eat when you are out.

DO NOT COMPLETELY DEPRIVE YOURSELF

Cutting out completely on certain foods is not the answer to controlling food cravings. In fact, it will do just the opposite. Even when you are controlling your diet and trying to eat healthy, denying yourself completely may actually result in bingeing and overeating.

Cutting out completely will make socializing difficult for you. You will start avoiding going out with friends and family because you have decided to give up these foods completely. This will only make you lonely, sad and depressed and you will overeat to fill that void.

You cannot give up on any food completely - its, not a good idea. You must allow yourself for small cravings periodically otherwise you will be craving and thinking of these foods all the time. Let's face it. When you ask a small child not to touch something, ninety-nine percent chances are that he will touch it. If I ask you now not to think about the colour of your hair, do you think you won't think about it? Similarly, depriving yourself completely is absolutely a bad idea.

However, listening to your cravings occasionally does not mean that you can finish the whole bucket of ice cream in one go - this is not called treating yourself. Rather you must keep the treat to up to one serving only.

You know all the junk food out there; you know how they taste and how they smell. You know that they are always going to be there and you can have it whenever you want. So do not eat them as if there is no tomorrow. Make up your mind to not become a slave to it. Stick to healthy eating and treat yourself sometimes.

Another way to treat yourself right is to avoid buying the large, multi-pack snacks from supermarkets. When you know you have the tendency to finish the whole bunch, buy single packs. Buy smaller chocolate bars available at the stores. That will be just enough to satisfy your cravings occasionally.

Human beings have inbuilt desires and temptations which need to be handled in the right way. Allowing yourself some flexibility and small amounts of comfort food here and there will actually prevent your cravings from the getting the best of you.

CHOOSE HEALTHIER OPTIONS

Eating healthy doesn't have to be boring and tasteless. You can make healthy eating just as fun as eating junk foods by replacing your cravings for junk food with healthier options.

Whatever it is that you crave for, whether its sweets and desserts, or savoury food like chips, you can make healthier options and replace it with something good.

Following are some of the healthy swap ideas you will love. They are much less in calories and taste good too :

HEALTHY FOOD SWAPS

Swap	For	Save (kcal)
Cappuccino/Latte	Americano/Green tea	300
Breakfast cereal	2 hard boiled eggs	260
Dried Fruit	Fresh fruit	80
2 Biscuits	2 Oatcakes	100
Cream Cheese	Cottage cheese	100
Chips	Roasted sweet potatoes	250
Chips	Roasted Parsnip chips	300
Swap	For	Nutrient Benefits
Crisps	Nuts	Omega and vitamins
Sweets/Sugar	Dates/figs	Vitamins & Minerals
Breakfast cereal	Porridge & Nuts	Carb & protein

Not This	Try This
Mayonnaise	Hummus / Avocado & Greek yogurt
Ranch Dressing	Balsamic Vinegar
Bread or Crackers	Apples or lettuce
Mince/ground beef	Ground turkey
Soda	Water flavoured cucumber or lemon
Ice cream	Frozen yogurt
Bread crumbs	Rolled Oats
Sour cream	Greek yogurt / Tzatziki
Butter	Coconut oil
White rice	Ground cauliflower
Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes
Table salt	Sea salt
Pasta	Grated courgette

You will find that your body actually gets smarter when you feed it with the right nutrients.

When we think of healthier options, most of us make this mistake of switching to artificial sweeteners in order to control our sugar intakes. Surprisingly, artificial sweeteners are also prescribed to patients with diabetes. We don't realize that they do just the opposite.

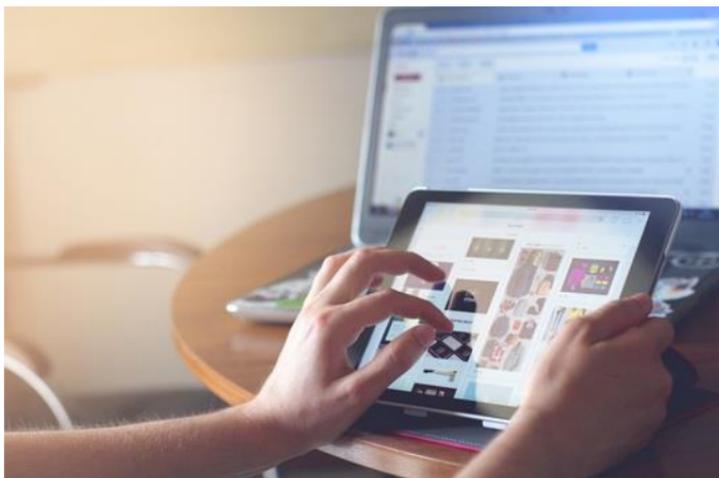
Research has shown that sweeteners like aspartame worsen insulin sensitivity to a greater degree than sugar. Artificial sweeteners actually promote weight gain in more ways than one. It tricks our brain, making us believe, that we didn't use sugar for our tea or coffee.

If you absolutely must take sugar alternatives, these are better options. They are natural and not harmful for the body.

Below are some good examples of sugar alternatives :

- Xylitol – made from the bark of birch trees and looks and tastes like sugar. These are lower in calories and doesn't cause tooth decay 1: 1 ratio. Equal to 1 tsp
- Stevia – made from the herbal plant and is used in food and drinks. These are natural sources and better than the processed ones.

Switching to healthier options is an efficient way to control food cravings. Eating a variety of food is equally essential to keep us motivated. Go healthy but include various options in your diet. If you don't give yourself much choice, then you will get bored, and it's possible that you will go back to unhealthy options again. So spice it up, have more choices



MAKE INTERNET YOUR BEST FRIEND

In today's internet age, we can get almost everything online. Use Google search to research about healthy foods your body needs. Find out what fruits and vegetables you can include in your diet that you love.

Use social media such as FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM / YOUTUBE to gain knowledge on healthy body and mind.

Use YouTube to find simple methods of cooking healthy meals, to find different types of exercises you can do at home. Listen to people about their inspirational journey on weight loss or healthy eating, find out how they did it.

Don't waste your time watching television serials one after the other which don't take you anywhere, which don't

improve your current lifestyle. They only make you stay on that couch longer, munching on unhealthy snacks, biting your nails wanting to know what's coming next. The stories on the screen are never ending. They are always going to be there. Find something that would make a Positive Impact in YOUR life story.

All this doesn't suggest that you must cut yourself off or isolate yourself from the world of entertainment. Rather, this suggests that you definitely need to analyse how much time you are giving to something that is not benefiting you at all. Make the right choice. There is a never-ending pool of resources out there. You just need to find the right one for you.

Follow groups on social media which are promoting health and healthy eating. Learn about healthy eating and physical exercises from others, share your experiences and your progress with others. Surround yourself with people who will support you in maintaining a healthy lifestyle - this will keep you going and make you feel good about yourself. Unfollow junk food bloggers for that matter on social media. They will only bring up unhealthy foods on your screens and add to your cravings rather than reduce it.

Remember that you are not alone. There are others who are going through the same struggle just like you are and that you can make a difference to your life if you make a decision and work on it.



INFLUENCED BY THE ENVIRONMENT WE LIVE IN

We understand that our negative emotions and our unhealthy lifestyles such as inadequate sleep, lack of physical activities, mindless shopping for junk food, all of this make us crave unhealthy food. Yes, we are responsible for our cravings to a great extent, but what is it that doesn't let us think twice before we feed our negative emotions with junk food? What is it that makes stocking unhealthy food in our homes easier than stocking healthier food items? It is understood that the more we eat junk food, the more we get addicted to it. So what is the main reason that is making it easier for us to get addicted to these foods day by day to an unacceptably dangerous point?

We all need to take these questions seriously.

Let us look at some of the external factors that are making it increasingly difficult for us to control our cravings.

FOOD INDUSTRY

The reason why we easily fall for junk foods is that we are living in the era where junk foods are cheaper and readily available everywhere compared to the healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables.

It makes me wonder how the raw, healthy fruits and vegetables are more expensive than the foods which have gone through a series of processes to make it refined and processed.

A good example would be a chicken burger which costs £0.99 whereas a bowl of salad cost £3.39.

Food Industry across the globe has adopted the unhealthy practices, to make junk food easily accessible to all. These practices are well explained below :

➤ Tasty and Cheap

No doubt, processed foods involve a lot of machinery and production costs, but since these are being produced in thousands and millions, the costs get spread out. They also become cheaper because of the additives used to increase the shelf life of these products. So the more they make, the cheaper they get.

Customers buy these foods not only because they are affordable but also because these are made tastier by the

added sugars and artificial flavours. By making these foods 'Hyper-palatable' the food industry makes the customers come back for these irresistibly appealing foods again and again. Huge amounts of money are being spent on making the foods tasty so that we can become hooked to them forever.

If we notice, eighty percent of food items in grocery stores are spiked with sugar. Foods such as ketchup, soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit juices, cakes, cookies, crisps, ready-made meals are all spiked with sugar in dangerous amounts.



The word 'Healthy' in most packages trick you in buying them. Every food sold as 'Healthy', doesn't guarantee it to be healthy. We are unaware of the fact that most of the foods marketed as 'Healthy' are actually packed with sugars and unhealthy components. We must know what's in our food before buying them.

For example products such as Honey are considered to be highly healthy, but we don't realize that most honey we buy in the supermarkets are far from healthy. They are sold in processed form with no trace of pollen and lack beneficial

vitamins and enzymes. These are removed due to the pasteurization and the processing. You must look for raw organic honey which is full of vitamins, nutrients, and enzymes and contain powerful antioxidants, which help stabilize blood pressure and blood sugar levels and boost our immune system.

The processed and refined foods that we consume daily have high amounts of sugar in them, doing great damage to our system.

Look at the recommended sugar intake for women which is 6 tsp or 24 gms per day and for men is 9 tsp or 36 grams per day.

The average soft drink is at least 20 ounces and contains 250 calories equivalent to 15 tsps of sugar. That's way above the total sugar requirement per day.

Extra sugar consumed by us leads to storage of fat in our body, making it insulin resistant, leading to Diabetes and other weight related diseases. Foods which are high in sugar and fat not only cause life-threatening diseases but they also kill the good bacteria in our gut and feed the bad ones. This creates an imbalance by outnumbering the beneficial bacteria, weakening our immune system and making us prone to all sorts of health problems such as poor digestion, colon cancer, ulcerative colitis, etc.

➤ **Deceiving commercials**

If producing life-threatening food products at low prices wasn't enough, the food companies are attracting more and more customers to buy their products through their deceiving commercials. These commercials make it so easy for us to become victims of fast food joints such as Mc Donalds, Burger King etc., making us buy 'Happy Meals' with attractive toys for our children and exposing them to unhealthy eating at a very early age.

Junk food companies are actually worse than the tobacco companies as they target young children through their aggressive marketing. Food addiction is increasing obesity in children at an early age where they are too young to even make conscious decisions about healthy eating.

➤ **Offer Prices**

Another reason why we buy food in excess is because they are being sold on offer prices. Rarely do we find offers on healthy food items but these offers are mostly available on unhealthy food. This way supermarkets are over-promoting the unhealthy food items with their '*Buy more with Less*' offers. We get carried away with the cheaper price options for bigger packs and multi-buys. Our homes are thus heavily stocked with junk food.

➤ Portion Size

It's true that the more we eat, the more our appetite increases. Increase in the portion sizes of unhealthy food items have contributed to a great extent in increasing our appetite, thus addiction for these foods. Portion sizes of junk foods such as burgers, cookies, pizzas, hot and cold drinks have increased over the years adding to the increase in our cravings and thus our calorie intake.

You can get a very clear picture of the portion increase of junk foods over the years from the following image.



We have got so addicted to junk food that we have deprived our bodies of essential nutrients it needs to keep us healthy.

Consumption of processed and refined foods is the root cause of most illnesses and diseases. Obesity has become a global phenomenon and we are more likely to spend years in disability. The unhealthy practices of the food industry are

making us and our children sick and prone to all sorts of diseases. Junk foods not only cause sugar addiction, but it also causes aging and early wrinkles.

No wonder we are spending more money on healthcare than on healthy food. It's an irony seeing a high street banner promoting McDonalds on one side and an advertisement for weight loss supplements on the other side which are no good either.

If we spend more on quality food, we would be saving so much on our medical bills. We are sadly the victims of marketing. Everything is about junk food. It is everywhere. Even gas stations stock up unhealthy food items, maximising the chances of impulse purchases. The struggle is real.

STEPS WE CAN TAKE

Food industries will continue to do all they can to trick their customers in order to promote their brands. Unfortunately, they play a major role in worsening our food addictions rather than correcting it, making it more and more difficult for us to lead a healthy life.

The more you consume these products, the deeper you fall into their trap and become more addicted to them day by day. There are certain steps you can take to protect yourself from becoming their victims.

➤ **Educate yourself**

You can prevent yourself and your children from becoming the victims of the Food Industry, by educating yourself about the foods that you buy. One of the ways is to understand what is in your food before buying it, by understanding about food labelling on packages. This will help you make healthier choices.

When going for shopping, read the Nutrition Facts on the food labels. Avoid foods which are high in sugar, fats, and salt. For example, any food containing 15 gm or more sugar per 100 gm is high in sugar and must be avoided.

It is also important to note the serving size while reading food labels. For example, if a particular food item says that it contains 12 gms of sugar, note that it refers to one serving of 100 gm. If you consume the whole pack which actually contains two servings, that means you have consumed 24 gms of sugar which is much above the recommended intake.

Following is a quick guide to understanding food labelling done on various food. You can keep a printout of this and use it as a guide when you are going for shopping. This will help you make a healthy choice while shopping for food.

Readings in RED mean the food is unhealthy. For example if the sugar content in the food is above 15 gm per 100gm of serving, then it must be avoided.

Pocket Guide To Labelling

	SUGARS	FAT	SATURATES	SALT
HIGH Per 100g	> 15g	> 20g	> 5g	> 1.5g
MEDIUM Per 100g	5-15g	3-20g	1.5-5g	0.3-1.5g
LOW Per 100g	< 5g	< 3g	< 1.5g	< 0.3g

You must also check for *Colour Coded Nutritional Information* printed on the front of the food packages. (Refer to the image below)

This type of nutritional information tells you at a glance if the food has high, medium or low amounts of fat, sugar, salt or saturated fat.

The following image is a food product which is healthy with low-fat content and medium amounts of sugar and salt. These are marked in Green and Amber colors. There is no nutrient marked in Red in this food package.



Green means Low

Amber means Medium

Red means High

Any red on the label means the food is unhealthy and must be avoided or cut down. The more greens on the label, the healthier the food. Amber means neither high nor low and can be eaten most of the time.

➤ **Avoid Fast Foods**

Avoid taking your kids to fast food joints. Avoid ordering pizzas just because you are getting two for the price of one. Do not bring in ready to heat meals at home. These seem quick and easy when you don't have time to prepare a planned meal, but can be detrimental to your family's health. The more you feed your kids with these, the more you will get them asking for more.

➤ **Incorporate Healthier Options**

It's not important to celebrate your special days with junk foods only. You must try to include healthier options too while celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. In fact, you must encourage more of healthier options. Incorporate events which can include healthy eating and fun physical activities. It can be a basketball match or a football match with friends or a fun swim with family or a weekend family hike. These events can be organized to celebrate any special day. Let your family, specially your kids associate their special days as being fun and healthy. Help them build healthy habits and enjoy them too.

CONCLUSION

Our body is a gift from God. It is given to us as a trust. We must treat it well. We have all the things it needs, around us. By not providing it with proper food, proper rest and physical activities, we are misusing it and depriving ourselves of the benefits it can bring to us.

Food Craving is by far the worst way of treating our body, making us overeat and suffer from various life threatening diseases. It's amazing how our body gives us the warning signs about something we are not doing right. It's an irony we don't listen to those signs long before it's too late. Imagine yourself suffering from a chronic heart disease because YOU caused it. How sad is that? We were created to be lean and strong. Not overweight and weak and hurting. An unhealthy body hurts only us, not anybody else.

This book explains how we as individuals are responsible to worsen our cravings, not to mention the deliberate attempts of the food industry. This book also explains the various strategies such as educating ourselves about food and health, practicing self-control, building healthy habits which must be adopted in order to keep us away from this harmful act.

However, understanding these strategies is not enough. What is more important is to have the right mind-set. Most of us are not able to do our best because of the doubt which we have within us. Our doubt makes us believe that we will never overcome our cravings.

Food cravings can differ from person to person and be more difficult to control for some than the others. No matter how difficult it may be, it is not impossible to control these cravings. It is not impossible to have a healthy body and mind.

You have to first believe that you CAN overcome these cravings using the right strategies. You will have to remove the doubt from within yourself. Otherwise you will be trying, but will not be able to give your best and in your gut you will believe that it is never going to happen. The only enemy you have, which can prevent you from creating a change for yourself is your doubt. You cannot afford to doubt yourself. There are many people out there who will have doubts in you.

With the right mind set, you will be able to create a new lifestyle, the lifestyle, which will give you the power, the energy and the body you deserve. You will be able to free yourself from the unhealthy addiction once and for all. You need to do it for yourself and to become role models for your kids to make sure that they don't get caught in this unhealthy lifestyle.

Last but not the least, stay grateful and love yourself. You will no doubt make healthy decisions for yourself and will be able to keep yourself happy. Remember we all have flaws, none of us are perfect, but if we make up our mind, nothing in this world can stop us from achieving our goals.

I hope you enjoyed reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. If you benefitted from this book, please leave a review. This will help bring this book to more readers who will benefit from it too.

For any Questions and Suggestions please write to me at :
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Visit my website www.bodymindfitmuslimah.com to read posts on healthy body and mind.

Coming up next is your Free Recipe Book with many healthy dishes to satisfy your cravings. Enjoy 😊.

YOUR FREE RECIPE BOOK

This recipe book provides healthy and tasty alternative to the foods you love. They are quick and easy to make, rich in vitamins and minerals and low in calories. Now you can treat your cravings without feeling guilty.





DELISH CARROT CAKE

**Per Serving 254 calories, 11 gm fat, 34 gm carbohydrate,
3 gm fibre, 5 gm protein**

Ingredients

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup oat flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour of choice , $\frac{2}{3}$ cup flax seed meal, 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ cups whipped, dessert topping, 2tsp baking powder, 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp Himalayan pink salt, 3 cups finely shredded carrot , 4 eggs, lightly beaten, $\frac{1}{2}$ granulated sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut oil, 2 ounces low fat cream cheese, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar

Method :

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Crease and lightly flour two 8 inch round cake pans. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine flour, flaxseed meal, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice, baking soda, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt. In another bowl, combine carrots, eggs, sugars and oil. Add carrot mixture, all at once into dry ingredients. Spread butter into prepared pans.
3. Bake 25-30 minutes until toothpick inserted comes out clean. Cool in pans for 10 minutes, then invert into rolling rack. Let cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make frosting - beat 2 ounces cream cheese until smooth. Beat in $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla. Gradually add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whipped topping into cream cheese mixture until completely mixed, then add remaining whipped topping and finish mixing.
5. Top a cake layer with half of the frosting. Place second layer on top, spread top with remaining frosting.



Sugar Balls

Ingredients

- 7 – 8 pitted dates
- 21 gm cacao powder
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1.4 tsp salt
- 2 – 3 tbsp water
- 40 gm cacao nibs
- 140 gm mixed seeds / nuts

Coating of your choice

- cacao powder
- desiccated coconut
- chia seeds
- sweet sprinkles

Method

1. Add nuts/seeds to a food processor until finely ground
2. Add cacao powder, salt and vanilla extract. Mix well
3. Chop dates and add into processor and process until a chunky paste forms
4. Pulse in the cacao nibs
5. The dough should be sticky when presses between your fingers. If its not, add a small amount of water (a tsp at a time)
6. Place I fridge for 30 minutes
7. Shape dough into small balls and roll in coatings of your choice
8. Freeze for 20 minutes or until firm
9. Store leftovers in the fridge for up to 7 days



OMEGA BURSTING PROTEIN PUDDING

Method

Mix 2 tbsp of Chia Seeds in 1 cup water or almond milk

Leave in the fridge overnight

Next Day

Put 'Chia Gel' in blender

Blend in on high for 1 minute

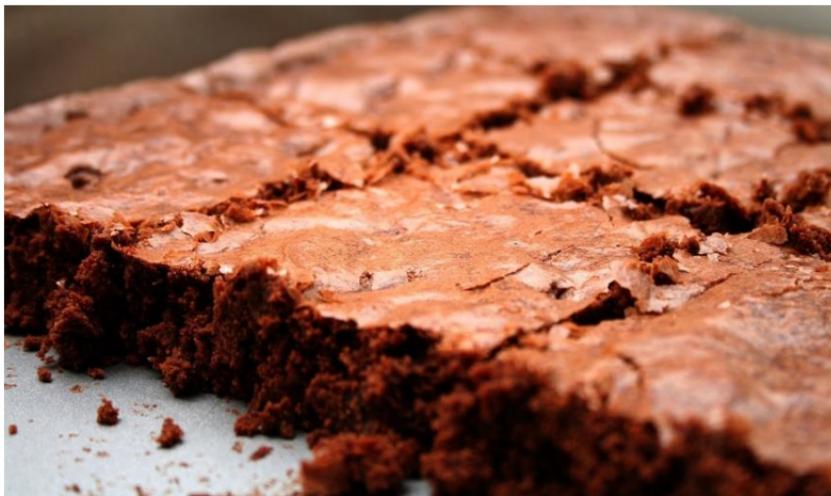
Add 1 tsp cocoa

(Optional : tsp of honey or maple syrup may be used to sweeten)

Decorate with strawberries

Enjoy

You can play with the desired amount of each ingredient for desired consistency.



FRUIT & VEGETABLE BROWNIES

Ingredients

2/3 cup homemade or unsweetened apple sauce

2 very ripe medium bananas

2 tsp vanilla extract

3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 1/2 tsp baking soda

1 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

1 whole egg

2 cups shredded zucchini (put on paper towel for few minutes to absorb moisture)

2 cups old fashioned rolled oats

1/2 cup flax seeds

Method

1. Add oats and flax seeds to blender, grind until fine powder. Put in large mixing bowl.
2. In blender, add apple sauce, banana, vanilla and egg. Blend until mixed. Set aside
3. Add cocoa, baking soda and powder, and salt to oat/flax mixture. Mix until even colour.
4. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients, mix thoroughly. Then add zucchini and mix again
5. Put mixture into greased 9 x 13 baking pan
6. Bake in preheated oven at 350 degrees for 35 – 45 minutes
7. Allow to cool for 10 – 15 minutes before turning onto wire cooling rack



VEGETABLE CRISPS / CHIPS

Ingredients

(Can be your choice of vegetables)

Parsnips – peeled , 2 sweet potatoes, purple or golden beets, carrots

Fine salt

Olive Oil

Cayenne Pepper

Method

1. Using a peeler or slicer prepare your vegetables and preheat the oven to 375 degrees
2. Place the vegetable slices on paper towels in a single layer and sprinkle with sea salt. Let stand for 15 minutes and blot dry. Lightly coat baking sheets with oil
3. Place vegetable slices in a single layer on the baking sheets. Bake until crisp, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with sea salt. Let cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes.
4. Repeat with more vegetables slices



HEALTHY MUFFIN

Ingredients

(Makes 12 Muffins)

1 ½ cups fine oatmeal flour

1 ½ cups all Bran or 2 cups of Bran Flakes

1 tbsp of brown sugar

1 tsp of ground cinnamon

1 tsp of baking powder

1 tsp of baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)

¼ tsp of salt

1 cup raisins / dried cranberries

1 cup grated carrot (1 medium size carrot)

½ cup sunflower / pumpkin / linseed seeds

½ cup walnuts chopped roughly (optional)

1 ¾ cups of milk

¼ cup of vegetable or olive oil

1 egg lightly beaten

1 rind of a lemon or orange

Method

1. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, cereal, sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, dried fruit, seeds and carrot
2. Add milk, oil, egg and lemon or orange rind. STIR TO JUST COMBINE.
3. Spoon the mixture into a non-stick muffin tin (no need to grease the wells). Bake in a hot oven at 200 degrees C (190 Degrees C for a fan oven) for 25 minutes or until the tops are firm to touch and a skewer comes out clean.



CHOCOLATE AND BERRY MOUSSE POTS

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

159 calories per serving

75 gm Dark Chocolate, grated

4 tbsp (60 gm) low fat yogurt

2 large egg whites

2 tbsp (30 gm) caster sugar

350 gm berry mix (blueberries, raspberries,
strawberries)

Method

1. Melt the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water, making sure the bowl doesn't directly touch the water
2. Once melted, allow it to cool for 5 – 10 minutes, then stir in the yogurt
3. Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then whisk in the sugar and beat until stiff again
4. Fold the whites into the chocolate mix – loosen the mixture first with a spoonful of egg white, then carefully fold in the rest, keeping as much air as possible
5. Put berries into small glasses or ramekins, then ass mousse on top
6. Chill in the fridge until set



CHOCOLATE AND CRANBERRY MUFFINS

Ingredients

(Serves 6)

176 calories per serving

125 gm self raising flour

½ tbsp. cocoa powder

½ tsp cinnamon

½ tsp baking powder

45 gm sweetener

45 gm dried cranberries

15 gm dark chocolate

60 gm low fat yogurt

60 ml skimmed milk

1 tbsp sunflower oil

1 small egg, beaten

Method

1. Heat oven to 180 C / 160 C Fan / Gas 4
2. Line a 6 hole muffin tin with paper cases
3. Sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder and cinnamon into a bowl. Stir in the sugar and cranberries
4. Microwave the chocolate on Medium for 1 - 1 ½ minutes, stir and set aside
5. Mix the yogurt and milk with the oil and egg
6. Make a well in centre of the dry mix and gently stir in the liquid
7. Drizzle half the chocolate over the mix, gently fold in until swirled, then repeat with the remaining chocolate. Take care not to over mix
8. Spoon the mix into the muffin cases and bake for 15 - 20 minutes until risen and firm to touch



STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

198 calories per serving

85 gm low fat digestive biscuits

200 gm extra light soft cheese

200 gm 0% fat greek yogurt

4 tbsp sweetener

3 - 4 drops vanilla extract

100 gm strawberries, sliced

2 tbsp reduced sugar strawberry jam

Method

1. Put the biscuits in a plastic bag and bash with a rolling pin until you have chunky crumbs
2. Divide between 4 glasses or small bowls
3. Beat the soft cheese, yogurt, sugar and vanilla together until smooth
4. Spoon over the crumbs and chill until you are ready to serve
5. Stir the jam in a bowl until oose
6. Gently stir in the strawberries
7. Divide the strawberries between the cheesecakes and serve



CAULIFLOWER MASH

This is a good alternative to Potato mash. The texture and flavour is similar to mashed potatoes, and it's healthier too. This is great to make when you have that starchy carbohydrate cravings. Cauliflower mash also fills you up keeping you fuller for longer.

Method

Cauliflower Mash is very simple to make.

Steam cauliflower florets until tender, drain, and blend in a food processor with some ghee or butter

Garnish with salt and pepper.



HEALTHY STRAWBERRY FROZEN YOGURT

Ingredients (Serves 4)

4 cups frozen strawberries

½ cup plain yogurt (fat free or full fat)

3 tbsp honey

1 tbsp fresh lemon juice

Method

1. Add the frozen strawberries, honey, yogurt and lemon juice in a food processor. Process for about 4 to 5 minutes until the mixture is creamy
2. Serve the frozen yogurt immediately or store in the freezer for up to about a month



HEALTHY YUMMY HUMMUS

(Use in place of Mayonnaise)

Ingredients

One cup (425 gm) chick peas /garbanzo beans

¼ cup (59 ml) fresh lemon juice

¼ cup (59 ml) well stirred tahini

Half of a large garlic clove, minced

2 tbsp olive oil

½ tsp ground cumin

2 to 3 tbsp water

Paprika for serving

Method

1. Using a food processor or blender combine the lemon juice and tahini
2. Add the olive oil, cumin and minced garlic to the mixed tahini and lemon juice, processing for another 45 seconds
3. Drain and wash your chickpeas. Add them to the mixture in two stages so that the blender doesn't clog up
4. Add water if the mixture is too heavy

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