

[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

Craving Carbs? These Are the 3 Healthiest Kinds You Can Eat



Carbohydrates are one of those macronutrients that seem to always get a bad rep. The paleo diet and the keto diet, which make headlines regularly, aren't exactly "carb-friendly," focusing on high-protein and high-fat foods, respectively.

As a registered dietitian and founder of Tovita Nutrition, I know that carbohydrates are an important fuel source for our bodies and therefore should be included in a healthy diet—and I also know that sometimes, when you have a carb craving, nothing else will satisfy it! However, not all carbs are created equal, and it is important to be wise about the sources of carbs we choose. Here are some of my favorite, go-to carbohydrate sources:

1. Beans and Legumes

Legumes like lentils or chickpeas and beans like...well, you name it: kidney beans, black beans, navy beans, and more, are sources of carbohydrates but, more importantly, incredible sources of fiber! For instance, a ½ cup serving of cooked kidney beans boasts about 10 grams a fiber!

Dietary fiber offers a host of benefits ranging from promoting regular bowel movements to facilitating satiety to even lowering cholesterol. Furthermore, these foods are packed with micronutrients like folic acid, copper, potassium, iron, zinc, and various B vitamins and contain phytochemicals like lignans and polyphenols.

They're extremely versatile as they can be the main event of any meal (hello, lentil soup!) or function as a side dish (brown rice and beans, anyone?).

2. Sweet Potatoes

When it comes to carbs, I've always been Team Sweet Potato. They're an excellent source of vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene) and a very good source of vitamin C, copper, manganese, various B vitamins, and, of course, fiber.

While many of us remove the skin before cooking, I recommend keeping the skin on when you prepare these guys! The skin is rich in fiber and minerals like potassium. My latest sweet potato concoction is "sweet potato toast"—I simply pop sliced sweet potatoes into a toaster until they're cooked through, then top them with peanut butter and cinnamon. So delicious!

3. Fruit

I've had countless clients ask me if it's OK to eat fruit because "fruit is all carbs and sugar." My answer? An emphatic "yes! Please eat your fruit!" And no, it's not all carbs and sugar!

While fruit contains carbohydrates and, of course, contains natural sugar, it also provides loads of antioxidants, vitamins, and fiber that help our bodies function optimally. This being said, there are some fruits that offer a wider range of health benefits than others. Berries (think blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, etc.) are my favorite type of fruit because they're rich in fiber, antioxidants, and lower in sugar than some of their fruit counterparts. They're high in the antioxidants anthocyanin and resveratrol, which help to protect our cells by preventing free radical damage.

While everyone needs to decide (ideally with the help of a doctor and registered dietitian) what diet is ultimately the best for their needs and goals, I always coach my clients to not fear carbs but instead to choose ones that help support their nutrition needs.

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