

## Anything goes once you've got the necessities in place



Charmian Christie

Smoothies are personal. Some people like theirs so thick, frosty and bursting with berries, they verge on soft-serve ice cream. Others want a pourable, room temperature pharmacy in a glass. Whether you want a decadent poolside refresher or a healthy breakfast, smoothies are a fast, portable way to get your daily dose of fruit and vegetables.

At its simplest, a smoothie has enough liquid to turn fruit into a thick, creamy beverage. From there, it's a matter of personal taste. If you like yours cold, try frozen fruit instead of ice. It will deliver a chilled drink without watering down the flavour. Regardless of temperature, a delicious smoothie needs:

**Liquid:** Water is always an option, but for more flavour, try juice, milk (dairy, nut, rice or soy), coconut water, coffee, green tea, kefir or yogurt. The amount required will vary depending on the other ingredients added.

**Fruit base:** These fruits add sweetness and make the smoothie creamy. Frozen bananas, mangoes, peaches and papaya are good choices. Used sparingly, avocado, nut butters and coconut pieces will also add creaminess, while adding a bit of fat.

**Flavour fruit:** These fruits tend to have a high water content but are strong on flavour. Berries, citrus, grapes, kiwi and pineapple are excellent options to mix and match with your fruit base. Using these exclusively will make for a thinner, less creamy smoothie.

**Greens:** Many people skip this optional addition thinking greens will make their smoothie taste grassy or bitter. If you're new to smoothies, start with a handful of the less noticeable tender greens and ramp up to larger amounts of the bitter greens.

Tender greens include baby spinach, baby kale, celery, cucumber, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce and sweet peas. Bitter greens include kale, dandelion, mustard greens and arugula. Avoid broccoli and cauliflower as they can taste foul.

**Sweeteners:** If your fruit isn't sweet enough, add a touch of honey, maple syrup, agave or dried dates.

**Add-ins:** Anything goes here. You can add protein powders and/or flavour enhancers. Not sure what to add? Raid the pantry. Flavour add-ins range from vanilla extract to fresh ginger, cocoa nibs to chili powder or any spice you'd put in pumpkin pie. Alternatively, toss in a few sprigs of fresh herbs such as mint, basil, dill or cilantro for an unexpectedly refreshing taste. A tablespoon of flax, chia, hemp or sesame is a popular healthy-boosting addition.

### Smoothie success

For the best smoothies with the least amount of work, be sure to:

- Put the liquid in the blender first.
- Use frozen fruit for cold smoothies
- Buy good quality, eat-as-is fruit and vegetables.
- Add chopped fruit and vegetables, not

whole pieces.

- Start the blender on low and increase speed once the fruit has begun to blend.

### Fixing a smoothie

Sometimes our great smoothie inspiration doesn't emerge from the blender as delicious as you'd envisioned. If you think your kitchen-sink smoothie is destined for the drain, think again. If your smoothie is:

- Too thin:** Add more fruit base, some nuts or chia seeds.
- Too thick:** Add more liquid or water-based fruit such as pineapple, citrus, strawberries or watermelon.
- Too sour:** Add a sweetener or more sweet fruit like pineapple or grapes.
- Too bitter:** Add some lemon or lime juice. The acidity will neutralize the taste.
- Too bland:** Add pinch of salt, a squirt of citrus juice or a smidge of honey. Often these balancing flavours are all that's needed to take a smoothie from plain to perfect.

### Smoothies on the go

Smoothies don't keep long in the refrigerator. They tend to separate and lose some of the vitamins that make them such a wise choice. They can also morph. Left for hours, added greens become more pronounced and can overpower the fruit flavours, while chia seeds can turn a creamy smoothie into a gelatinous mass.

For make-ahead smoothies, blend a big batch and freeze in a single-serving mason jar or ice cube trays. When you're heading out, just grab a jar or pop several smoothie cubes into a portable water bottle. Once defrosted, give your jar or bottle a shake. No additional blending required.

Anatomy of a

Smoothie



### PICK A SMOOTHIE THAT SUITS

One method, five results. Use these diverse smoothie recipes as a springboard for your own personalized creations.

#### PÊCHE MELBA SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup (250 ml) plain kefir
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen peaches
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen raspberries
- 1 date
- ¼ teaspoon (1 ml) vanilla extract

#### CARROT, GINGER, PEACH

- 1 cup (250 ml) orange juice
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen mango pieces
- ½ sweet red-skinned apple, washed not peeled
- 1 cup (250 ml) chopped carrot, peeled
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fresh ginger root
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fresh lemon juice
- Pinch ground cinnamon, optional
- Pinch salt

#### CUCUMBER MINT SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup (250 ml) coconut or plain water
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) fresh lime juice
- ½ cup (125 ml) cubed frozen avocado
- 1 cup (250 ml) cubed English cucumber
- ½ Granny Smith apple, washed but not peeled
- 3 fresh mint leaves
- Pinch salt

#### BLUEBERRY BASIL SMOOTHIE

- 1 cup (250 ml) plain Greek yogurt
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen grapes
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen blueberries
- 1 generous handful baby spinach leaves
- 3 leaves fresh basil

#### CHOCOLATE COCONUT SMOOTHIE

- ½ cup (125 ml) coconut milk
- ½ cup (125 ml) cold black coffee or water
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen coconut chunks
- 2 dates
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) unsweetened cocoa powder
- Pinch chipotle powder (optional)
- Pinch salt

### METHOD FOR ALL SMOOTHIES

1. Place liquid in the blender and top with all other ingredients.
  2. Secure lid of blender. Turn blender on low. Pulse to break down larger pieces. Once the smoothie begins to liquefy, gradually increase the speed, and run until smooth and creamy. If necessary, add more liquid a bit at a time.
  3. Taste. Adjust as needed. Serve immediately.
- All recipes make two servings.



## Summertime BBQ Pulled Pork Lasagna Skillet

Serves 3-4 People (1-2hr prep time / 15 min assembly / 12hr cook time)

### Ingredients

- 1 Pork Shoulder from Stemmler's
- 1 Package Fresh Lasagna Sheets
- 2 Cups Shredded Smoked Cheddar from Stemmler's
- 1 Container Ricotta or Cottage Cheese
- 1 Bottle Oatshine BBQ Sauce (from Stemmler's)
- 1 Cup Mushrooms (Sautéed)
- 1 Cup Greens (wilted) like Swiss Chard, Kale
- 1 Can of Diced Tomatoes (strained)
- 1+ Cup Bacon from Stemmler's (chopped)
- ½ Bunch Fresh Asparagus (seasoned & grilled)
- ½ Cup Butter (melted with 2 cloves minced garlic)
- 3 Green Onions (thinly sliced)
- 1 Half Baguette

### Ingredients for the Rub

- 2 Tbsp Montreal Steak Spice
- 2 Tbsp Montreal Chicken Spice
- 2 Tbsp Italiano Seasoning
- 2 Tbsp Brown Sugar
- 1 Tsp Kosher Salt
- 1 Tsp Garlic Powder
- ½ Tsp Pepper

### Instructions:

1. Step one is making the pulled pork. It can be purchased already cooked/sauced, which is fine, however it's always better to make your own. I normally dry rub the pork shoulder with the above mixture. Once it is fully covered, wrap in saran and leave in the fridge for about 6 hrs. To slow cook the pork, you can dry roast it by placing the unwrapped shoulder on a baking sheet with parchment paper. Set in a 200F oven and let it go for 12 hours uncovered (I normally do this overnight). A slow cooker can also be used. Add the rubbed pork, 1 chopped onion, 2 chopped celery stalks, 1 chopped carrot, 6 garlic cloves, 4 thyme & rosemary sprigs, 1 cup of your favorite BBQ sauce (Oatshine) and 1 cup of red wine or beer). Cover the rest with beef stock and set the slow cooker for at least 8 hours.
2. You can get the garlic bread ready anytime. Slice a baguette into 1 inch pieces but don't cut through the bottom; leave it in one piece. Stuff the slits with smoked cheddar, bacon and sliced green onion. Drizzle the entire loaf with the melted garlic butter then wrap it tightly in parchment and foil. Set aside.
3. Once the pork is done and cool enough, start to shred it. If you used the slow cooker, strain & discard the vegetables and herbs then start to simmer the liquid down to about ½ of what it was. You can use it to add back into the pork to keep it moist.
4. Oil your cast iron skillet\*\* (or you can cook the bacon in it), wipe with a soft cloth and place some BBQ sauce in the bottom. Add some of the precooked/fresh lasagna noodles to cover the sauce. Layer the skillet with some pulled pork and some chopped bacon, covering the noodles. Add ¼ cup of bbq sauce & ¼ cup of the strained tomatoes. Top it with some of the shredded smoked cheddar. Layer the skillet again with more noodles. Next you can add the sautéed mushrooms, grilled asparagus and the wilted greens. Carefully spread your soft cheese now and top again with another layer of noodles. Then one more layer of pork and bacon, bbq sauce, tomatoes and cheddar along with the last of the noodles. Top with more sauce so the noodles are covered then add the rest of the shredded cheese (and bacon if there's any left).
5. Make sure your BBQ is turned on and hot. Reduce the heat on one side to medium and shut off the other side. We will be placing the skillet on the turned off side of the grill (indirect heat). This will save the bottom from burning with direct contact. Close the bbq lid and check after 30 minutes to see if the cheese has melted and is bubbling. If so, pull it off and let it rest for 10-15 min. During that time, you can put the garlic bread on the grill to heat up (10 min or so).
6. Cut the skillet lasagna into wedges to serve and some slices of garlic bread. Enjoy it with a favourite summer salad and an ice cold beverage! Enjoy.
7. NOTE: To make a vegetarian version, substitute the pork with grilled veg (such as eggplant, peppers, zucchini)

\*\*For Cast Iron Care please visit this link\*\* <https://www.epicurious.com/expert-advice/how-to-wash-season-and-maintain-cast-iron-cookware-article>



For more information on Chef Scott Yates please visit: [chefscottcooks.com](http://chefscottcooks.com)

3031 Lobsinger Line Heidelberg Ontario, N0B 2M1 Tel: (519) 699-4590

w w w . s t e m m l e r m e a t s . c a