



## 10 Ways Nutritionists Enjoy Chocolate

Stir it in oatmeal or yogurt, or enjoy a small square by itself. You have the experts' approval.



No need to wait until after dinner to enjoy some dark chocolate – try it in a morning smoothie instead.

By [Keri Gans](#) Feb. 11, 2015 | 11:07 a.m. EST + More

With [Valentine's Day](#) just a few days away, I'm sure that chocolate is on the minds of many. But really, who am I kidding? Chocolate is on the minds of most people every day. The good news is that [chocolate can be good for you](#).

Its main ingredient, cocoa, is packed with antioxidants, specifically flavanoids, and research has shown that it may reduce risk factors for [heart disease](#), improve cognitive function and lower cholesterol levels. However, not all types of chocolates contain high levels of flavanols, so the key is to look for a type that has been through less processing (especially Dutch processing) and has more nonfat cocoa solids.

Also, what's important to remember is just because something is good for you, more is not necessarily better. Unfortunately, calories from chocolate can add up and [portion control](#) becomes very important. Who better to ask how to enjoy it daily than my nutrition pals? Here's what they said:

*"I love to chop dark chocolate squares and [whip it into a smoothie](#). This adds a healthy dose of good fat, minerals and antioxidants, and tastes amazing paired with any fruit, from frozen cherries to banana to fresh pear. Plus, I love savoring every sip and letting the little bits of dark chocolate melt on my tongue. And the chocolate perfectly complements natural seasonings, such as fresh grated ginger, ground cinnamon or fresh mint." – Cynthia Sass, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of "Slim Down Now: Shed Pounds and Inches with Real Food, Real Fast"*

*"I love to make my own dark chocolate bark by melting dark chocolate chips, pouring onto parchment paper-lined baking sheet, sprinkling on goodies like cayenne, sea salt and hemp seeds, and then setting in the fridge for a few minutes. When you make your own chocolate, it allows for [creative flavor combos](#) plus an extra nutrition boost from superfood toppings." – Dawn Jackson Blatner, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of "The Flexitarian Diet"*

*"I like it simply unwrapped! A plain piece of good old milk chocolate, especially if it's a little warm or about to melt from sitting in my purse, just makes me happy! I also like to dip big, ripe strawberries in chocolate sauce every once in a while, but really, nothing for me is as satisfying as having a piece of chocolate all by its lonesome." – Elisa Zied, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of "Younger Next Week"*

*"People often wait until [dessert](#) to enjoy chocolate. Seriously, it's so wonderful, why put off the glory until the end of the day? Rather, consume it at breakfast. I mix a teaspoon (or two) of dark chocolate cocoa in my morning container of [nonfat Greek yogurt](#) and top it with a high-fiber cereal. I am in chocolate heaven by 9 a.m. Can you think of a better way to start your day?" – Joan Salge Blake, registered dietitian nutritionist and spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*

*"My favorite time to have just a bit of chocolate is after a [tough morning workout](#). I sprinkle about five dark chocolate chips (like 70 percent cocoa) on my ready-to-eat cold overnight oatmeal/berry/walnut mix. Just a few grams are enough for some added crunch. On the rare occasion that I do have dark chocolate, I prefer to consume it following a workout when my body is craving carbohydrates and my metabolism is kicked into overdrive." – Jim White, registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*

*"I love dark chocolate on its own, but sometimes I need a little more substance. When I do, I pair chocolate with nuts, seeds and dried fruit to get that salty/sweet combo. I buy dark chocolate chips or chunks and add them to my favorite trail mix or granola blend. It's my perfect mid-hike snack."* – Rachel Begun, registered dietitian and culinary nutritionist

*"My favorite way to enjoy chocolate is really simple: a few squares (about half an ounce) of 72 percent cocoa dark chocolate with some natural peanut butter on top. I've always loved the peanut butter and chocolate combo (Reese's peanut butter cups were my favorite as a kid) and this lower-sugar version does the trick."* – Patricia Bannan, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of "Eat Right When Time is Tight"

*"I love using chocolate to create [unconventionally healthful snacks](#), like my dark chocolate dessert hummus! I just puree chickpeas, bananas, unsweetened cocoa powder, raspberry jam and nut butter, and add a sprinkle of balsamic vinegar, vanilla extract, sea salt and cayenne with a simmered mixture of almond milk and semi-sweet chocolate. I dunk fresh fruits into it. It's different- – and delicious!"* – Jackie Newgent, chef, nutritionist and author of "The With or Without Meat Cookbook"

*"A quick, low-sugar snack or dessert to [curb my sweet tooth](#) and indulge my craving is 1 tablespoon of natural peanut butter on a square of 72 percent dark chocolate. If I need a chocolate fix in the morning, I add a tablespoon of unsweetened cocoa to my morning oatmeal before cooking, then I top it with nuts and berries."* – Holley Grainger, registered dietitian nutritionist

And lastly, my favorite way to enjoy chocolate – which is very close to Zied's – is a simple square of dark chocolate. Truthfully though, most days my square of chocolate comes in the form of a circular, chocolate calcium supplement. I satisfy my chocolate craving – and get a daily dose of calcium and [vitamin D](#). For me, it's a win-win.

How do you satisfy your chocolate craving?



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