

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Dips and Sauces

Want a child to eat their veggies? Let them dip them in something. Want an easy way to perk up the flavor or make a simple dish look classy? Dress vegetables up with a sauce, or pair meats with a fresh salsa. Sauces have been around for centuries. Dips are newer invention that have become very popular in recent years. Salsas have been transformed from a tomato/herb mixture to include fresh fruits, hot peppers and some unusual combinations. All are wonderful ways to add color and flavor to our foods.

The new fresh fruit salsas are certainly healthy, with little sodium or fat and plenty of flavor, even some fiber. But a lot of our sauces and dips are still stuck in the bad old days of high sodium and higher fat, mostly artery-clogging saturated fat. Even the pasta aisle has problems. It used to be that if you went looking for spaghetti sauce, all you would find were tomato-based sauces. There were different versions, from garlic to sausage, but they were still mostly tomato. Now there are shelves full of creamy Alfredo-type sauces based on cream, cheese and butter, or fat, fat and more fat. Stick to tomato versions for less fat and more fiber! Choose a lower sodium variety (read the labels), and pair with a whole grain or high fiber pasta for a very healthy, quick and economical meal.

Dips and sauces have traditionally been made from sour cream, mayonnaise or melted cheese. More fat! Now some fat is fine. Without fat we couldn't absorb

vitamins A, D, E or K. Fat carries flavors. We wouldn't have such bright colors or intense flavors without some fat. But the rising rates of heart disease and obesity suggest that we don't need such pure fat on top of our healthy vegetables.

The convenience of ready-made dips is certainly wonderful. We can grab a carton of dip, a bag of baby carrots, and we're ready for the church pot luck in minutes, with a healthy offering no less! But take a look at that label and you might change your mind. Just 2 tablespoons of dip can have over 100 calories, mostly from saturated fat. Ouch! No wonder our cholesterol goes up when we think we're eating right.

But don't give up on dips and sauces, there are plenty of health alternatives that are super quick to prepare. Take that high-fat dip for example. Here's how to make a fat-free, high calcium and protein dip. Use ranch, Italian or any flavor salad dressing you prefer. This version has only about 100 calories in a full cup! Big difference.

Easy Healthy Dip

1 32-oz container plain, fat-free yogurt

1 pkg salad dressing powdered mix

Line a sieve or colander with enough coffee filters to cover it. Measure 3 cups of yogurt into the sieve and place over a bowl. Refrigerate 45 minutes to several hours. The longer it is refrigerated the thicker the dip will be. You need about 2 cups of thickened yogurt. When the yogurt is as thick as you want, transfer to small bowl, stir in the salad dressing mix and refrigerate overnight to allow flavors to blend. The whey that dripped out can be used in a smoothie. It's slightly tart, like the yogurt, but has proteins and some sugar. If you let the yogurt drip too long and it gets too stiff, stir a little of the whey or some milk into the mixture.

If the child in your house prefers colors, stir in a bit of ketchup (for pink) or

mustard (for golden). For a sweet dip for fruit stir honey (or low cal sweetener), lemon juice and a bit of cinnamon or nutmeg into the thickened yogurt.

Pesto is another sauce that is delicious and popular. But, since it's usually made with olive oil it can be super high in calories. Here's a lower fat and just as delicious version. Walnuts are easier to find than the traditional pine nuts, and their antioxidants are super-heart healthy.

Creamy Pesto

3 cloves garlic, peeled	2 cups fresh basil leaves, firmly packed
1 Tbsp walnuts	1 Tbsp olive oil
1/4 cup fat free, low sodium chicken broth	1 Tbsp lemon juice
1 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese	salt, pepper to taste

In blender, mix together garlic, basil and walnuts. With motor running slowly add chicken broth, then oil and juice. When smooth stir in cheese, salt and pepper.

Spread this on Italian bread, use as a sauce on pasta or to garnish bean soup.

Delicious!

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