



# ... It's Worth the Trip!



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

### On the Go **INSTANT OATMEAL**

In the morning, time is a limitation on how much you can focus on making a nutritionally dense breakfast that assists with optimal health and prepares you for your day. Yet, starting the day with a nutrient dense, high-performance breakfast when you are already strapped for time or while traveling can be difficult. This is why many Americans default to skipping breakfast, going to a drive-thru, or grabbing something from a vending machine that may be limited in nutrients and loaded with sugar, fat and calories. Start the day with a nutrient-dense breakfast as a strategy for optimal performance. This behavior has shown to actually improve dietary choices throughout the day and decrease snacking on lower quality nutrition foods. When you're short on time, portion size and calorie count is more likely to be much larger than if you were more mindful in planning your meals.



Studies show that eating a good breakfast helps kids pay more attention in school. In fact, eating something is better than nothing, but why settle for just something? By planning in advance you can help prepare a meal for your kids that help fuel their brain while warding off hunger until lunch time. This way they can learn optimally and play hard at recess. An optimal breakfast would include complex carbohydrates, fiber, healthy fats, and protein. If you're trying to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables, you can easily sneak them into breakfast without overwhelming your kid. Opting for a more nutritionally dense breakfast that's just as easy and so much more satisfying is easier than you think. Quick oats are fast, easy, and your kids can eat them while you're tying their shoes. The older kids, can be taught to make them while still managing to pack their bags and make the bus.

Plain oatmeal may sound bland, but the potential is huge. You can add flavor while making it more nutritionally dense. To save money and avoid added sugar, choose the bulk containers of oatmeal. This way you can control the ingredients that are added. Just be sure to keep the amount of sugar and fat you add in check. Also, aim to avoid adding unhealthy fat.

Start with a bulk container of oatmeal and then experiment with adding some healthy fat such as flax or chia seeds or a few walnuts. Use a little cinnamon and fruit to add flavor. A fun family activity is to have an oatmeal bar on the weekend by making a batch of oatmeal and setting out a variety of nutritious items for people to mix into their oatmeal and make their own creation. The possibilities are limitless because oats can be enjoyed hot, cold or even in muffin form. Start by checking out recipes for nutritious oatmeal breakfasts. In the meantime, here is a recipe that creates a big batch that can be at the ready for you and your family when you are "on the go."

#### Ingredients: 12 servings

- 6 cups of plain instant oatmeal (in the bulk container)
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 tbsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped walnuts
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  cup dried fruit without added sugar, such as raisins, cranberries, apricots, apples, etc.

#### Directions:

1. Use any combination of dried fruit that is desired, or just use one type. Cut the fruit to be the size or a little larger than a raisin and then measure to amount called for in the recipe. If using walnut halves, crush them so they are just a little smaller.
2. In a large bowl mix all of the above ingredients together. Transfer to an air-tight container.
3. To prepare, scoop about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the mixture into a microwave safe bowl or mug and then add.  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of water (or however much you find you need to get to your desired consistency), and mix well. Microwave on high for 60 seconds and let stand for one minute to cool and thicken before eating.

#### Notes:

- If using rolled oats instead of quick oats, the cooking time may need to be increased by 30 seconds. Begin with 60 and stir, then continue for 30 seconds.
- Store it in an airtight container and use it within 12 weeks.

- Before scooping out your servings, make sure to gently shake the mix as contents may have settled.

#### Tips:

- To increase the protein content and add a little flavor, consider using vanilla flavored whey protein powder instead of the nonfat powdered milk. Measure out enough to equal 12 servings, per the protein powder directions. Use protein powder that provides 18-20 grams per serving.
- Add a little sweetness, by adding stevia or honey after cooking, if desired.
- Use this mix when you are traveling, packed in an airtight container or a sturdy re-closable bag. Measure out the number of servings to cover the days of your travel. This can be heated up in the room using a coffee mug. If no microwave is available, use the coffee maker in the room to heat the water, and then pour it over the dry mix. Cover it and let it sit for 3-5 minutes.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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