

The ten best snacks to have around

Walk down the grocery aisle labeled “snacks” and you realize that food manufacturers have hijacked this category so effectively that most consumers can only comprehend a snack as something that comes in a brightly colored package, often with licensed characters. The actual food variety in that package is generally limited to the four “c’s;” chip, cookie, candy, crap.

It’s time to take back the snack. With all of those colorful packages screaming at your kid, it’s easy to forget that nature itself has provided a number of perfect portion-size individually wrapped snacks. Take apples, for example; the wrapper is edible and you can even compost the core and plant the seeds. All for pocket change. Here are some other “new” old ideas when it comes to snacks to keep handy and say “Yes!” to:

1. **Vegetables**
With or without a healthy dip. But kids do love to dip.
2. **Fruit**
Bring back the fruit bowl, front and center. It’s not just decoration anymore. Dried is second best to fresh.
3. **Nuts**
We’re crazy about them.

4.

Popcorn

Good old-fashioned popcorn, the favorite, crunchy whole-grain snack of kids everywhere. (To learn how to make your own microwave popcorn, see page 242.)

5.

Cheese

Cheese just tastes so good, even the healthier, lower-fat options. Calcium and protein are an added bonus. Also consider low-fat cottage cheese mixed with fruit or yogurt sweetened with honey or fruit.

6.

Edamame in the pods

If popcorn were a legume, well, it would be edamame. Plus, it's just plain fun to squirt the beans out of the pod to eat them.

7.

Low-sugar, whole-grain cereals and crackers

Sometimes it's all about the crunch. Look for options made with healthy oils and limited sweeteners.

8.

Hard-boiled egg

Cook up a bunch at a time, and you'll always have a filling, protein-rich snack on hand.

9.

Make-your-own trail mix

Let kids mix their own trail mix using favorite dried fruits, whole-grain pretzels, nuts, seeds, and dried cereals. Keep in an airtight container.

10.

Milk with honey

Funny how adding just a touch of honey turns regular old milk into a treat. If you're near a microwave, add a few drops of vanilla extract, and then heat it until steaming warm. Yum.