

From ORGANIC GARDENING

7 Food-Swaps That Will Make You Skinny



Simple Swaps = Healthy Weight-Loss Results

You don't have to sit out summer picnics to start slimming down. Sure, warm-season gatherings often involve gut-busting carbs in the form of starchy breads, pastas, and potato products, but you can still savor the season without causing the numbers on the scale to creep up. In fact, many of the top food swaps that will whittle down your waist are super fresh this time of year, readily available in gardens and farmers' markets across the country during the growing season.

Lettuce Instead of Hot Dog Buns

The Swap: Don't let a starchy bun weigh down your summer cookouts! Instead, wrap your hot dogs in a nutrient-packed outer leaf of red- or green-leafed lettuce. Want extra crunch? Choose romaine.

Carbs Avoided: 19 grams

More Health Perks: Lettuce is loaded with isothiocyanate, lutein, zeaxanthin, and isoflavones, healthy compounds that protect against Alzheimer's, lung cancer, and macular degeneration.

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Summer Squash Instead of Hash Browns

The Swap: Summer squash is a readily available, affordable substitute for carb-heavy potatoes. To prep, grate summer squash (zucchini or yellow summer squash), mix in an egg as a binder, work into patties, and fry in olive oil.

Carbs Avoided: About 15 grams per hash-brown patty

More Health Perks: Summer squash is a solid source of magnesium, a mood-regulating mineral that also protects heart health and reduces disease-promoting inflammation.

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Cabbage or Collard Greens Instead of Bread

The Swap: Summer means quick and easy sandwiches—less time in the kitchen and more time outside enjoying warm-weather activities! Avoid a post lunch energy crash by ditching your standard two slices of bread and instead wrapping your sandwich ingredients in a raw cabbage or collard-green leaf.

Carbs Avoided: 24

More Health Perks: Cabbage and collard greens promote healthy cholesterol levels. These cruciferous veggies also contain potent anticancer compounds.

Photo: Mitch Mandell



Spaghetti Squash Instead of Pasta

The Swap: Switch out spaghetti for the noodlelike flesh of spaghetti squash and you'll enjoy the same consistency without the excess carbs.

Carbs Avoided: 30 grams per cup

More Health Perks: Winter squash is full of cancer-fighting antioxidants alpha- and beta-carotene.

Credit: Thomas MacDonald



Cauliflower Instead of Potatoes

The Swap: Potatoes are full of simple carbs that cause an unhealthy spike in blood sugar. Instead of mashed potatoes, try steaming fresh or frozen cauliflower, adding a bit of butter (the kind from cows raised on pasture is the healthiest), a bit of milk, and puree.

Carbs Avoided: 30 grams per cup

More Health Perks: Cauliflower is from the cruciferous vegetable family. People who ate just four servings of these vegetables a week slashed their risk of dying by 26 percent, according to Johns Hopkins researchers.

Photo: Mitch Mandell



Pancakes

The Swap: Pancakes are a breakfast staple, but if you indulge in these refined-carb patties too often, you're likely to feel zonked by noon due to the food's energy-crashing effects. Instead, use a mixture of whole-grain oatmeal and protein-packed cottage cheese to create your own healthy pancake mix. Mix together half a cup of old-fashioned oatmeal, a quarter cup of low-fat cottage cheese, two eggs, and a dash each of vanilla extract, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Process in a blender until smooth. Cook the mixture like a regular pancake.

Carbs Avoided: 45 grams per pancake

More Health Perks: Add a tad of 100 percent pure maple syrup (not the kind sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup), and you'll be able to enjoy a pancake-light treat that also reduces inflammation and fights enzymes that can lead to diabetes.

Photo: Mitch Mandell



Pizza

The Swap: Forget that floury crust that wreaks havoc on your waistline and trade it for a nutrient-packed Portobello mushroom as a crust!

Carbs Avoided: 20 grams per slice

More Health Perks: Portobello mushrooms are bursting with selenium, a nutrient vital for immune-system health.