

From the Food Bank Kitchen

Perks of Peanut Butter

Peanut butter (PB) is available in many types and styles—smooth, chunky and extra chunky as well as lower fat options. Peanuts are actually a legume, not a tree nut, and are in the same plant family as peas, lentils, chickpeas, and other beans. Studies show that eating peanuts and nuts regularly in moderation (¼ c portions) helps against heart disease and weight gain. When purchasing, try to find PB without added hydrogenated oils (trans fats), or sugar added. Reduced-fat peanut butters have the same number of calories as regular, but they tend to have more sugar and typically more hydrogenated oil than regular kinds, so aren't generally recommended. PB typically contains 100-150 milligrams of sodium per serving; no salt added versions are available.



Many people spread PB on crackers, toast or bread, and often combine it with jelly or fluff in sandwiches. It can also be added to various sauces, soups, stews, and even smoothies. There are many recipes for muffins and cookies and other baked goods that include PB. An estimated 4-6% of the US population is allergic to peanuts, and eating just a tiny bit can result in severe allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. If interested in allergy-friendly alternatives, try soy nut butter and sunflower seed butter.

Storage: Unopened jars should be kept in a clean, cool, dry place. Do not freeze. When first opened, most “natural” peanut butters will have a layer of oil at the top that should be thoroughly stirred in. (TIP: until opening, store upside down so the oil is at the bottom, then stir in when you open the jar). Natural PB usually requires refrigeration after opening— refer to the container for details. Once stirred and refrigerated, the oil shouldn't separate again.

Nutrition Facts: (2 Tbsp) contains 190 Calories, 16 grams fat, 6 grams carbohydrate, and 7 grams protein. While the amount of fat may seem high, most of the fat is the heart-healthy monounsaturated type. Peanut butter is also high in vitamin E, antioxidants, potassium, and the B vitamins niacin and folate — all of which provide health benefits.

Other peanut butter ideas:

See also nationalpeanutboard.org for lots more info on peanuts!

- Top pancakes or waffles with 1-2 Tbsp peanut butter, or add 2 Tbsp to oatmeal for nutty flavor and extra protein
- Spread onto a flour tortilla and roll up with apple or banana slices
- Dip for carrot or celery sticks (or try 1 Tbsp peanut butter, 1 Tbsp vanilla yogurt and a tsp of honey as an apple dip!)
- Substitute peanut butter for tahini if preparing homemade hummus from canned chickpeas
- Spread 1-2 Tbsp on apple or pear slices or on a banana cut lengthwise as a satisfying snack
- Make “Ants on a Log” snack for kids: spread peanut butter inside a celery stick, then place raisins on top
- Make a quick peanut sauce to top chicken, pasta, or cooked vegetables (see recipe below)

Asian Noodles with Peanut Butter Sauce

Eight (1-cup) servings

Source: cookingmatters.org

Try also on Ramen noodles, broccoli, or chicken.

If avoiding gluten, use a rice pasta or other gluten-free type.

- 1 (16 oz) package pasta (whole wheat preferred)
- ¼ c peanut butter
- ½ c warm water
- ¼ c low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp cider vinegar
- 4 tsp sugar
- 1 (10 to 12 ounce) bag frozen vegetables, such as broccoli or snow peas, thawed
- *Optional: 1-2 tsp red pepper flakes (for heat)*
- *Optional: add ½ tsp powdered garlic or ginger to sauce*

Directions: Cook pasta using package directions. While it cooks, make sauce by combining in a medium bowl the peanut butter and warm water. Stir into a smooth, thin sauce. Add soy sauce, vinegar, and sugar, and mix until sugar dissolves. If using, stir in red pepper flakes. In a microwave-safe bowl, add thawed frozen veggies and 1/2 cup water. Cover and steam 2-4 minutes till heated through; drain. Pour peanut sauce and steamed veggies over cooked, drained pasta. Toss to combine. Serve warm or cold. (Optional: top with sliced cooked chicken, chopped peanuts, or chopped scallions or cilantro).

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 290, Fat 6 gm, Saturated Fat 1 gm, Sodium 250 mg, Carbohydrate 50 gm, Fiber 7 gm, Sugar 6 gm, Protein 10 gm*