

## Chapter 1

# Juicing for Better Health

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Fitting juicing into your life
  - ▶ Creating your own blends
  - ▶ Storing juice for optimum nutrition
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**W**e all know how many servings of fruits and vegetables it takes to get our RDA of nutrition each day. And we also know that it is rare to succeed in following those guidelines.

Juicing is a perfect way to increase the fresh fruits and veggies you eat, in a portable package. In this chapter, we show you how easy it is to create delicious juices that your whole family will love to drink.

## *Appreciating the Power of Juicing*

Juicing is simply a matter of breaking down foods, to release the juice within. Depending on the type of juicer you use, every part of the fruit or vegetable is liquefied, ensuring that you're getting all the vitamins, minerals, and fiber your body craves.

Which would you rather do: Eat a bowl containing 2 apples, 2 carrots, and a cup of spinach or drink a glass of sweet-tasting juice to start your day?

## *Getting in the nutrition*

You may ask yourself how juicing can benefit you and your family. Juicing with a conventional juicer does remove the fiber that whole fruit contains, but the vitamins and minerals are still available. These are a few reasons to incorporate this tasty food into your everyday living. If you are

## Finding the right combinations

How do you know what combinations to make? Start out with the basics and then get creative. Is there some fruit or vegetable juice you buy that you *know* you enjoy the taste of? Buy fruit in its whole form and juice it yourself. Have

your family become enthusiastic with the idea of making their own juice from the things they drink already. Try to replicate the combinations that you already buy. It will be less expensive and much fresher if you do it yourself.

- ✔ **Too busy for a sit down meal?** Juicing can bring a healthy meal to your glass. It takes mere minutes to whip up a fruity blend of nutrition; you can drink it while you check your morning e-mail!
- ✔ **Have picky or fussy eaters?** Kids seem to fall under this moniker, but plenty of adults don't like to eat most vegetables and fruits whole. Make a glass of juice and disguise the flavors of the less-than-appreciated foods.
- ✔ **Have a low appetite or elderly?** For those who just don't seem to ever be hungry, every bite holds extra importance. Juicing will fill their glass with nutrition and is often more appealing.

## *Drinking it raw or cooked*

Fresh juice is usually consumed right away, made from raw foods. Many juice enthusiasts believe that juice still contains healthy enzymes when it's raw, and that oxidation (foaming) is also detrimental to final product.

If you're like many people, you simply want healthy juice available, as much as possible. Juicing at home means you can have fresh, raw juice when the produce is in season, and you can can or freeze it for when it's not. Either way, juice is delicious and full of vitamins and minerals that we all need for a healthy diet.

## *Discovering the Types of Juicers*

Juicing equipment can be as simple as a sharp paring knife and citrus juicer, for a glass of orange juice in the morning. If you're going to be making fabulous fruit and vegetable combinations, however, you'll need to get a juicing machine.

Before deciding on the type of juicer to purchase, think about how often you'll be making juice. Do you want to cut and core all the pieces of fruits and vegetables, or would you like to use the entire piece of fruit? Most notably, if you're going to be juicing leafy greens and/or wheatgrass, check that the juicer will handle these types of foods. Many juicers cannot. These answers will factor in your choice of juicer.

Some juicers include

- ✔ **Manual juicers:** These juicers are just what they sound like. Used mainly for citrus fruits, these manual juicers use the pressure of your hand to squeeze out what you can from juicy fruits like oranges and lemons. These juicers are good for the occasional breakfast glass of OJ.
- ✔ **Hand-cranked juicers:** These juicers are also manual, but you crank a handle to power this type. Good for larger amounts of juice, these juicers can be hard to clean, so find out how it comes apart before buying. You need to core fruits and vegetables in order to go through this type.
- ✔ **Blender juicers:** Some juicers are actually high-powered blender types. These juicers are more expensive, but they make short work of peels and seeds, along with any sort of fruit or vegetable you throw into them. Their warranty is usually excellent and will last a lifetime.
- ✔ **Centrifugal juicers:** These juicers grind up fruits and vegetables and then use *centrifugal* (the ground up food swirls around so quickly that it is pressed outward) force to remove the juice from the pulp. These juicers come in a wide variety of quality and styles (and prices). Read all reviews before making a choice.
- ✔ **Masticating juicers:** These juicers also grind up fruits and vegetables, but are more efficient at removing juice from the pulp. The most enthusiastic juicers believe that masticating juicers are the best way to juice because they create less heat than centrifugal juicers. Masticating juicers can also handle leafy greens and other difficult-to-juice items easier.
- ✔ **Twin-gear juicers:** These high-end juicers can handle anything. They produce the least foam and least amount of heat when making juice. Some people believe that the quality of juice is reduced when it's aerated and heated. Because of their price, twin-gear juicers aren't for the beginning juicer. They're an investment for the serious juicer.

## Finding Your Ingredients

Just like most healthy diets, juicing requires the freshest ingredients. Of course, it would take monumental planning to drink only juices that were in season. Luckily, your technique for juicing changes based on the time of year your desired ingredients are purchased, keeping nutrition high and costs as low as possible.

### Going organic

Of course, talking about juicing means talking about organics. When choosing your fruits and vegetables, keep in mind that you're going to be juicing every part of the produce. If your fruits are not organic, many of the chemicals and waxes applied to them will not wash off. Using nonorganic foods for juicing isn't necessarily a bad thing; it just means that you have to remember to wash items very well and peel them before pushing through the juicer.



As long as your juicer can handle it, if the fruit or veggie is organic, you don't need to peel it.

### Growing or buying

If at all possible, growing your own produce is the least expensive way to begin juicing, but you don't have to, however. Buying your juicing items local is the next best thing to your own garden. In fact, because juicing requires a large quantity of fruits and veggies, sometimes buying from your local farmstand makes more sense.

When buying from a farmstand or farmers' market, ask some basic questions before buying your juicing foods:

- ✓ **Is it organic?** Either way, you can use the produce, but you do need to know if the skins need to be removed or can be eaten.
- ✓ **What is in season?** Buying seasonal items are usually the least expensive and freshest way to purchase them. Ask your farmer what is fresh today, what is going to be soon, and what he has growing. That way, you can plan and create juice blends that can incorporate things as they ripen.

## Gathering Tips on Techniques

Juicing enthusiasts, from busy moms to raw foodists, seem to have their own specific technique that they think is best. Having some flexibility, however, makes sense when juicing.

In the spring and summer, you can buy fresh, inexpensive produce and juice like crazy. You can also start canning and freezing juices to drink during the winter months, when produce is at its highest price. That way, you enjoy healthy juice all year round.

### Choosing your flavors

With an endless variety of flavors, you'll be sure to invent some favorite juice blends. Choose sweet things to balance tart or stronger flavored things. You will soon be throwing together mixes that even your pickiest tasters will love. If you're just starting out, here are some flavor profiles to look for:

- ✓ **Sweet tastes:** Sweet flavors include carrots, most fruits, beets, and red cabbage. Add to vegetable mixes to please the sweet lovers.
- ✓ **Juicy extenders:** These ingredients are fairly neutral in taste and give a lot of juice for their size. They're great to dilute stronger flavors and help fill the glass while saving you money. Try watermelon, honeydew, green grapes, cucumbers, or zucchini.
- ✓ **Rich flavors:** Add items like dark grapes, any stone fruits, papaya, and bananas when you want that rich, nectar-like flavor of an expensive juice blend.
- ✓ **Green flavors:** These flavors are wonderful for that cleansing, bright taste we often attribute to healthy living. The greens are full of chlorophyll and vitamins everyone needs. Try adding a handful at first and then increase the amount as you like. Some greens that add sparkle to your juice are wheatgrass, dandelion greens, spinach, and kale. Parsley and other herbs are also popular, but are a bit more strongly flavored, so start with a bit less of these greens.



Think about the flavor components you're adding. Are they mainly sweet? Strongly flavored? Balance them with extenders to create a full cup of perfectly flavored juice.

## *Timing your juicing*

Timing your juice is important for the best flavors. No matter if you're juicing for the pantry or making fresh juice for immediate consumption, it's always best to be ready to either preserve or drink it right away.



Fresh produce makes fresh juice. Allowing juice to sit in the refrigerator or, worse, at room temperature results in the juice continuing to age or decay. Always plan on juicing to drink right away or juicing to preserve immediately.

## *Storing and Preserving*

Juice is a wonderful keeper. It tastes just as fresh and good if previously frozen or canned, as it does when used immediately. The trick is to have your supplies at the ready, when the produce ripens, and then get the juice from the tree to the freezer or jar in record time.

## *Keeping your juice fresh*

To get the best nutrition out of it, you must keep your juice fresh. To keep your juice fresh, buy ripe, clean fruits or vegetables and don't allow them to sit around for longer than a day or two, before turning them into juice.

If you're canning or freezing, have a plan of action before you bring home a bushel or go pick boxes of something. Be ready to store them in juice form. The produce will not only be healthier for you in the end, it will be less overwhelming when you end up with three bushels of apples that are ripened at the same time.

## *Storing tips*

Store your juices in airtight freezer containers if frozen, and canning jars that fit the size juices your family will consume right away. If you're canning for one or two people, for example, you may need to preserve in pints instead of quarts.



Freeze juice right in glass jars if you have the room. Remember that juice will expand, so leave ½-inch headspace. And do handle the jars carefully. Using clean glass jars is a great way to recycle any you may be collecting.

When your juice is canned, store it in a cool, dark place. Light can fade your juice, and many people believe that some nutrients are lost in these juices. Remember to use the FIFO (First in First Out) method: Use the oldest juices first, adding fresh juice jars to the back of the row so that the easiest ones to access are the oldest ones.