



Healthy Summer Mocktails—No Sugar Crash Required

By Mary Margaret Chappell
2025-06-06 10:00:08



Mocktails are having a major moment, and Forks Over Knives is raising a glass to the trend. The booze-free beverages are refreshing, celebratory, and easy to enjoy any time of day. But many mocktail recipes lean heavily on sugary juices or syrups, which can make them more like liquid desserts than healthy sips. That's why we're serving up a guide to mocktail techniques that achieve vibrant flavor with less sugar. Using a few smart techniques, the whole-food sweetness of fruits, and natural flavor boosters such as citrus zest, it's easy to skip the added sugar and still mix up something spectacular.

In this guide, we'll show you how to prepare delicious, healthy mocktails using four classic cocktail-making techniques: poured, shaken, blended, and muddled. Each one opens up fun, easy ways to mix up drinks that are light, bright, and just sweet enough—no refined sugar required.

Poured

Simple but effective, a poured mocktail is made by layering different liquids directly in a glass. It's a fuss-free method that lets the natural flavors shine—especially when you use whole-fruit purées instead of store-bought juice blends.

Pro Tips

- The key to a great poured mocktail is the order of ingredients: Start with flavorings like purées or citrus juice, then add juice or tea, and finish with sparkling water.
- When serving a crowd, prep the glasses with fruit purée and other non-carbonated ingredients ahead of time and top them off with bubbles just before serving.



Poured Mocktail: Nectarine Bellinis

5 minutes | Makes 4 (6-oz.) drinks

Why nectarines instead of peaches in this classic cocktail? Because they're sweeter than their stone-fruit cousins, you don't need to add any refined sugar. Just splash in some sparkling water and you've got a delicious fizzy libation.

3 nectarines, peeled, pitted, and cut into chunks
Sparkling water
Nectarine slices, for garnish (optional)

1. Place the nectarine chunks in a blender. Cover and blend until smooth. Spoon 2 Tbsp. of the nectarine purée into each of four champagne flutes. Top off with sparkling water. Garnish

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each glass with a nectarine slice, if desired.

Shaken

Shaking ingredients with ice not only chills them quickly but also aerates them, creating a lighter texture and subtle froth.

Pro Tips

- Fill your shaker halfway with ice and shake for 10–15 seconds until the outside is frosty. No shaker? Use a lidded jar or insulated mug.
- To keep added sugar in check, use a small amount of date syrup, maple syrup, or another unrefined sweetener—and let warming spices or extracts help build flavor.



Shaken Mocktail: White Russian Iced Latte

5 minutes | Makes 2 (8-oz.) drinks

In this creamy combo, date syrup plays a key role with its caramel-like sweetness. Vanilla extract and a dusting of cocoa powder round out the date syrup's flavor notes to mimic the taste of coffee liqueur that's used to make White Russian cocktails.

½ cup cold coffee
½ cup plant-based milk
2 tsp. to 1 Tbsp. date syrup
⅛ tsp. pure vanilla extract
Dusting of unsweetened cocoa powder, for garnish

1. Fill a cocktail shaker halfway with ice. Place all

the ingredients except the cocoa powder in the shaker. Cover and shake until the liquid is ice cold and frothy. Divide the drink and the ice between two 8-oz. glasses. Sprinkle with cocoa powder.

Blended

Who doesn't love a blended drink? From slurpy daiquiris to sorbet-like frappuccinos, slushy concoctions of fruit and other ice-cold ingredients are irresistible. Freezing the fruit ahead of time means you don't need added ice or added sugar to get that thick, frosty consistency.

Pro Tips

- Use frozen fruit (like watermelon or mango) and freeze juices or plant milks in ice cube trays for naturally sweet, ice-cold drinks.
- Start by blending part of the frozen ingredients with liquid to get things moving.



Blended Mocktail: Frozen Watermelon Margaritas

8 hours | Makes 4 (8-oz.) margaritas

Frozen watermelon chunks blend up into a smooth sorbet-like base for these sour-sweet mocktails. Try sprinkling the tops with a pinch of ancho or chipotle chile powder to give them a smoky kick.

3 cups 1½-inch-chunks of seedless watermelon
½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice

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⅓ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
2 tsp. grated orange zest
1 tsp. grated lime zest
Lime slices, for garnish

1. Place the watermelon chunks on a baking sheet lined with a silicone baking mat or a piece of parchment paper. Freeze 8 hours or overnight.
2. Fifteen minutes before serving, take the watermelon out of the freezer to partially thaw. Place the partially thawed watermelon pieces in a blender with all the remaining ingredients, and blend until smooth. Divide among four glasses, and garnish with a lime slice.

Muddled

Muddling (aka mashing) herbs and citrus in a mocktail glass simultaneously releases the ingredients' juices and aromatic oils and melds their flavors.

Pro Tips

- Use a muddler or the rounded handle of a wooden spoon or kitchen spatula.
- Get the citrus juice going first: Start by muddling citrus quarters in the bottom of the glass, then add the herbs and continue until fragrant. This keeps the herbs from getting mashed to a pulp (literally). Avoid over-muddling, which can make herbs bitter.



Muddled Mocktail: Minty Mojito

5 minutes | Makes 1 (12-oz.) mojito

No rum or sugar syrup needed in this healthier version of the Caribbean favorite, which is made with sparkling apple juice or sparkling cider.

10 to 12 large mint leaves
½ lime, preferably organic, cut into 4 pieces
½ cup sparkling water
½ cup sparkling apple juice/cider
Mint sprig, for garnish (optional)

1. Place lime pieces in a tall 12-oz. glass. With a muddler or handle of a wooden spoon, crush or muddle the lime until the fruit releases its juice. Add the mint leaves and muddle 10 to 15 seconds until the mixture is fragrant. Fill the glass with ice, then add ½ cup sparkling water and top off with apple juice or cider. Garnish with a mint sprig.