



Plant-Strong Snacking


By Rip Esselstyn
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Like most people, I love to snack. When I was a triathlete, training four to eight hours and burning over 5,000 calories a day, I had an enormous appetite and snacks were a major part of my life--I couldn't go more than an hour without noshing on something. As a firefighter, snacking helped me pass the hours and soothe the nerves between emergency 911 calls and the frequent amounts of downtime.

However, instead of reaching for the typical range of cookies, donuts, cupcakes, ice cream, candy, and soda pops which are lining the countertops/staples at almost every firehouse, I reached for a variety of healthy snacks that work to enhance my health and my mood rather than hinder it.

When the snacks you choose are healthy, you perpetuate a positive cycle of eating.

Here are some of my favorite healthy snack ideas:

1. **Fresh fruit:** My current favorites are sliced up watermelon, honeydew, cantaloupe, mangoes, and black grapes. I always have a bowl waiting in the fridge.
2. **Vegetables:** In my refrigerator you'll almost always find sliced red and green bell peppers, carrots, cucumbers, cherry/cherub tomatoes and broccoli. I love dipping these in homemade hummus ([click here to see my recipe](#)). 
3. **Whole grain crackers:** These days my choice is the intense Wasa cracker. I often have up to three; the first with a thin layer of peanut butter and low sugar jam, the second just with jam, and if I have a third, it's naked.
4. **Small potatoes:** I always make a ton for snacking. These are filling and satiating especially dipped in [hummus](#), [salsa](#), or ketchup.
5. **Chips:** Create your own out of whole grain pita bread or corn tortillas. Dip them in [plant-strong salsa](#).
6. **Sliced heirloom tomatoes with balsamic vinegar and cilantro:** In the heat of summertime, these refrigerated babies will make you think you've died and gone to heaven.
7. **Leftover ears of corn:** Sometimes I think these are just as good cold as they are warm--especially in the middle of an Austin summer.
8. **Homemade trail mix:** 2 cups of whole-grain cereal, 1/2 cup raw old-fashioned oats, 1/2 cup chopped dates, 1/4 cup raisins, 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped, 1/4 cup almonds, chopped: This is a nice concoction to take with you on camping trips, when you're traveling, or when you're just hungry in your own house. Check out our other delicious [vegan camping meals](#).
9. **Bowl of healthy cereal:** I usually munch on a bowl of cereal at some point during the day in addition to my Rip's big
10. **Salad:** I can usually tell when I haven't been eating enough leafy greens because I find myself craving a salad as a snack--I quickly pour an [oil-free dressing](#) over some mixed greens or shredded romaine lettuce along with two or three sliced vegetables.
11. **Frozen Grapes:** These little nuggets of nature make great all natural popsicles. Pick thirty or forty off of the stem and place in a bowl in the freezer--I can snack on these all day.

Next time you reach for a [snack](#), make it plant-strong!