



# ... It's Worth the Trip!



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

### Mayonnaise-Free Chicken Salad Sandwich

Building a healthy eating pattern to promote optimal health, weight and performance is not just about calories. It is also about eating nutrient-dense foods. Some experts even advise that it is more important to focus on nutrient-dense foods more than counting calories. This is because nutrient-dense foods provide more nutrients than calories and are great at filling you up and providing a good source of energy. For example fruits and vegetables have more nutrients than they do calories. This is the reason why MyPlate recommends filling your plate with half fruits and vegetables. In addition, foods made with whole grain, like whole wheat pastas and bread, oatmeal, brown rice, etc. offer a greater nutrient density than their refined counterparts, like white bread, breakfast cereals with added sugar, and white rice.

*The Dietary Guidelines for Americans* encourages that the large majority of the foods we consume be nutrient-dense while limiting the number of foods that are high in empty calories or “empty-calorie foods.” This will help control weight by helping to control the intake of excessive calories. A great place to start is to choose lean protein foods most of the time, be cautious with the amount of spreads and butters used, and limit food choices with added sugar. Aim to have at least 80% of your diet made up of nutrient-dense foods like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and low-fat dairy, but also remember to include healthy fat food sources from foods like fatty fish, nuts, avocado, and heart healthy fats in this 80%.

Unlike nutrient-dense foods, empty-calorie foods are usually nutritionally poor food choices. This is because they tend to have more calories than nutrients and don't offer the volume to help you feel and stay satisfied. It is easy to eat a lot of them, and still be hungry, which easily leads to excess calories. How many of us can really feel satisfied with a small order of French Fries. Examples of empty-calorie foods include baked products like cookies, cakes and pies, fried foods like French fries and chips and items that are battered, sugar sweetened beverages like juices and sodas, dips and sauces and puddings and ice cream. Aim to limit your food choices to no more than 20% of empty-calorie foods in your diet. Be mindful when you eat empty calories. Be sure to limit your portion size(s) and aim to not use them as the main item for your meals or have them be your go-to food when you are truly hungry.

This meal highlights a twist on the standard chicken salad. This recipe uses avocado and Greek yogurt in place of mayonnaise to make it more nutrient-dense, while removing the unhealthy fat and empty calories of mayonnaise. The sandwich in this meal features a whole wheat food. Serve it alongside a bed of fresh baby spinach greens with sliced strawberries or another tangy fruit.



#### Directions:

1. Peel and pit one medium/large ripe avocado, chop ¼th of a small onion, and thinly slice one celery stalk.
2. In a medium bowl mash together the avocado and ¼ cup of Greek yogurt until smooth; then add the ½ tsp. garlic powder and the chopped onion, celery; then blend.
3. Add about 12 oz. of cooked chicken (canned chicken, drained, works well), ¼ cup of dried cranberries, and 2 tsp. of apple cider vinegar; blend well.
4. Add salt and pepper to taste and, if needed, add a little more Greek yogurt to suit your desired level of moistness.

**Serves: 4**

5. Make 4-6 sandwiches, using whole grain bread, divide the chicken salad evenly amongst the sandwiches.
6. Serve 1-2 sandwiches per plate alongside a bed of fresh spinach greens, topped with a few slices of strawberries, a few crushed peanuts, and a small drizzle of your favorite salad dressing.

#### Notes:

This salad is also tasty on top of a bed of your favorite salad greens.

Mashed avocado, with Greek yogurt and a dash of vinegar, is also a great homemade dressing to top salads.

DISCLAIMER: YOU MAY USE ANY LIKE PRODUCTS OF ANY BRAND IN MAKING THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL. THE PICTURES HERE ARE NOT AN ENDORSEMENT OF THESE PRODUCTS.

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