

Thinking Outside the Box!



10-Minute Pantry Staples Chicken Salad

There are so many recommendations out there on what ingredients and what type of food items to avoid that it can be confusing and even discouraging. For example, there are a lot of tag lines stating that sugar must be avoided and it offers no nutritional value. Yes, it is true that table sugar offers truly no nutritional value in relation to vitamins, minerals, fiber or protein and it is considered a simple carbohydrate. It actually does have a purpose in scientific reactions in some recipes for baking and when used, within reason, in some dishes it makes the item palatable.

Another example is that processed items should be avoided and fresh ingredients should be used. For the most part this is true but there are exceptions. First, some canned and frozen items like canned tomatoes and frozen vegetables may actually have more vitamins and minerals in them than their fresh counterparts. The key is to be sure to choose items that have no or low amounts of sodium and aim to avoid those with added sugar and fats. Furthermore, if forgoing processed items creates such a burden that the healthy strategy of cooking more meals at home is not attainable and one mostly defaults to fast foods or limits the variety in the diet, then this line of thinking isn't truly beneficial.



For sodium, yes it's true that most Americans eat above the recommended daily limit of 2,400 mg per day. For most, this excess is due to choosing too many high-sodium foods and/or eating them in excess. Most fast food such as burgers, fries, pizza, etc. are loaded with sodium and tend to have even a higher level than their counterparts prepared at home and, dare one say, even the semi-prepared ones ready for re-heat found in the grocery store.

Finding balance is key. For example, added sugar should be limited to no more than 50 grams per day. If a recipe makes 4-6 servings and just a 1 tbsp. to add a bit a flavor, the overall sugar grams per serving is less than 5 grams. This is far less than purchasing a sugar sweetened beverage. This line of thinking holds true related to adding a bit of higher sodium items into recipes also as well as adding a little salt to enhance the flavor. In order for food to provide nourishment, it must be eaten. Your diet doesn't have to be bland and discouraging to qualify as "good" for you.

For the general public, health messaging based in science does not encourage avoiding items in the diet in order to build a healthy eating pattern. Instead the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans", recommends limits. This means that even added sugar, higher sodium items, salt, and even processed foods can be included in your diet. There just has to be a balance on how much.

This recipe, uses the numerous, *forbidden* items that inappropriate messaging promotes the vanquishing of to dispel this thinking. Further this recipe actually has the seal of approval from a registered dietitian, a person who has the training and license to give trusted, scientifically accurate nutrition advice.

Ingredients: 4 servings

- 16 oz. canned chicken breast, chilled
- 1 tbsp. balsamic or apple cider vinegar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup dill pickles, chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup red onions, finely diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup celery, diced
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup nonfat, plain Greek yogurt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, plus 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp. sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste.
- 13.5 oz. can of no sugar added Mandarin oranges, chilled
- 8 cups of fresh greens (baby leaf spinach, kale, and/or field green mix)

Directions:

1. Drain canned chicken breast and discard the liquid.
 2. In a medium-sized bowl, add all of the ingredients except the oranges and greens.
 3. Gently fold the ingredients together until well mixed.
 4. Drain and discard the juice from the mandarin oranges.
 5. Serve by placing $\frac{1}{4}$ of the fresh salad greens on a large plate or bowl. Top with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the chicken salad and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the mandarin oranges
- before preparation so they will be nice and chilled prior to making the recipe.
 - If the chicken salad, is a bit too dry for your liking, add a little bit more yogurt.
 - Consider switching out the dill pickles with chopped apples or jicama.
 - Consider using the chicken salad in to make a wrap.
 - To up the protein content in this recipe, consider adding 1-2 chopped boiled eggs.

Notes:

- Place the canned chicken and oranges in the fridge the night

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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