



Valentine's Day Snack Ideas

We often think of candy when it comes to Valentine's Day but there are lots of ways to celebrate with fun, special foods.

- Use heart shapes! Cookie cutters or a steady knife can create heart-shaped toast, pancakes or English muffins. Top with peanut butter and red jam or jelly.
- Yogurt parfait with yogurt, a red fruit (raspberries, watermelon, red apples, etc.) sprinkled with granola or your favorite cereal.
- Heart-shaped pizza-shape pizza dough or bread dough into a heart. Spread with your favorite tomato pizza sauce. Add your choice of toppings.

Try this quick, healthy snack at home or for your child's Valentine's Day party. The heart-shaped cereal makes it cute and fun to munch! Feel free to change ingredients to whatever you have on hand.

Valentine's Day Snack Mix

Yield: 1 servings

Ingredients:

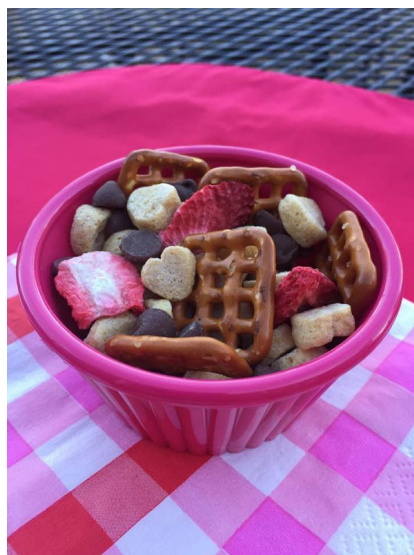
- 2 cups pretzels
- 2 cups heart-shaped cereal
- 1 cup freeze-dried strawberries
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Stir together all ingredients.
2. Store in an airtight container.

Nutrition Information:

- Serving Size (½ cup):
- Calories 118
- Total Fat 4g
- Sodium 132mg
- Total Carbohydrates 21g
- Fiber 2g



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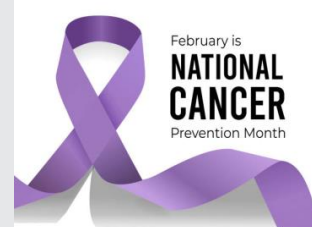
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Sweet strawberries are so tempting at Valentine's and any day – should you give in?

Excerpts from article by Michael Merschel, American Heart Association News
(Deborah Pendell/Moment, Getty Images)

Whether it's their heart shape, their seductive coloring or just the fact they make such sweet company, strawberries often are associated with romance.

And if strawberries be the food of love – eat on, experts say.



Strawberries not only taste good, they come with benefits that make them easy to embrace, nutritionally speaking.

Arpita Basu, an associate professor of nutrition at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has led several studies on strawberries and finds them "pretty unique from a public health nutrition perspective."

For starters, she praises them for being low in calories and high in nutrients. Precise amounts, Basu said, vary by the fruit's variety and ripeness. But according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one cup of whole strawberries has only 46 calories. With that comes almost 85 milligrams of vitamin C. That's more than a day's supply for an adult woman, and about 94% of what's recommended for an adult man.

Strawberries also are low in sodium and are a good source of several other vitamins and minerals, including potassium, which is important for healthy heart, nerve and kidney function, as well as muscle contraction. A cup provides 220 mg, about 8% of a woman's daily needs, or 6% of a man's.

Basu also celebrates strawberries for having high levels of phytochemicals – plant-based compounds that are believed to provide multiple health benefits.

Several studies have gone straight to the heart in support of strawberries:

- A 2007 study in the [Journal of the American College of Nutrition](#), using data collected over 16 years from more than 34,000 overweight, postmenopausal women in the Iowa Women's Health Study, linked eating strawberries to lower risk of dying from heart disease.
- A 2020 analysis of several strawberry studies [published in the British Journal of Nutrition](#) said strawberries "significantly reduced" levels of C-reactive protein, a marker for inflammation that can be used to assess heart disease risk.
- In 2021, a small, carefully controlled [study in the Journal of Nutrition](#) suggested strawberry consumption helped blood vessels work better in people with moderately high cholesterol.
- Also in 2021, another small, carefully controlled study led by Basu and [published in the journal Nutrients](#) found that obese adults with high cholesterol who ate two and a half servings of strawberries a day saw improvements in insulin resistance.

All that, and tasty too. Which is probably why strawberries now are grown in every state and around the world. In the U.S., per-capita consumption grew from 2 pounds per person in 1980 to 8 pounds in 2013, according to the [USDA](#). If you're feeling tempted to indulge in strawberries – go right ahead, Basu said.

Basu, whose research has received support from the California Strawberry Commission, said you can choose fresh or frozen. "Frozen strawberries give you nutritional value that's very similar to the fresh fruit."

If you go for fresh, examine the containers carefully; strawberries can spoil quickly. Experts say you should look for red fruits with bright green caps. Don't cut or rinse them until you're ready to serve.

Strawberries made into jelly or jam lose a lot of nutrition and gain a lot of sugar in processing, Basu said. But for a healthy dessert, she enjoys strawberries with a little whipped cream.

And if you're thinking about chocolate-dipped strawberries for your love (or yourself), that can be OK, she said. Chocolate adds sugar, but if you choose dark chocolate, "you're going to get lots of cocoa," which is high in healthy flavonoids.

Strawberries' taste and convenience can make them an easy way to fit more fruits and vegetables into the day. "Changing behavior is always difficult," she said. "But it's relatively easier to add something that people may like to eat, rather than changing the whole diet."

Love Walking

With Valentine's Day in February thoughts often turn to love. Anyone who has been in a relationship for any length of time knows that love is not just a feeling; it is an attitude of acceptance and a choice to make the relationship last. Habitual walkers say "I love to walk!" because they understand that a love for walking also includes an attitude of acceptance and choosing to love walking.

When you walk encourage a friend or loved one to walk with you. The two most influential ways to do so are to quote a credible source, such as the American Heart Association or the Centers for Disease Control, and to talk about the benefits. People are more likely to be physically active if they are encouraged by the benefits rather than hearing a negative fear message.

Walking LOVES me! Just as love relationships are two-way give and take, walking gives benefits when you give time to walking. Research has shown that walking at least 30 minutes a day is beneficial in the following ways:

- Walking inspires by giving a person time to think and get creative.
- Walking gives hope. Physical exercise such as walking reduces depressive thoughts.
- Walking reduces the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and symptoms of arthritis.
- Walking lowers the risk of obesity and helps you maintain a healthy weight.
- Walking reduces your risk of osteoporosis.

Perk up your love for life in February and choose walking! Embrace the challenge positively to develop a lasting relationship with walking. Double the love and invite a special someone to go walking with you.

Source:

1. Jones, L.W., Sinclair, R.C. and Courneya, K.S. (2003), "The effects of source credibility and message framing on exercise intentions, behaviors, and attitudes: an integration of the elaboration likelihood model and prospect theory", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 179-97.
2. Robertson, R, Robertson, A., Jepson, R. and Maxwell, M. (2012), "Walking for depression or depressive symptoms: A systematic review and meta-analysis", *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, Volume 5, Issue 1, pp. 66-75.
3. [Walking](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Cancer Prevention

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States (US), but many kinds of cancer can be prevented or caught early. Leading risk factors for preventable cancers are smoking, getting too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or artificial sources, being overweight or having obesity, and drinking too much alcohol. Now is a good time to start reducing your risk by making healthier choices that will lead to a longer, healthier life.

Tips for Making Healthier Choices

- **Protect your skin.** In the US, skin cancer is the most common kind of cancer. To lower your risk, you can protect your skin from UV rays from the sun and avoid artificial sources of UV exposure such as tanning beds and sunlamps.
- **Toss tobacco.** Reduce cancer risk by quitting tobacco or not starting. Smoking and secondhand smoke cause about 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths in the US. Non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke are at risk for lung cancer and other respiratory problems. Strive to break the addiction and visit [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) to learn how you can quit smoking.
- **Keep a healthy weight.** Being overweight or having obesity are linked with a higher risk of getting 13 types of cancer. These cancers make up 40% of all cancers diagnosed in the US each year.
- **Improve eating habits.** Most people cannot overhaul their food habits quickly. Add a few servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Try mixing dark, leafy greens like spinach in a salad and eat a piece of fruit for a snack. On a regular basis, make your diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, and whole grains. Choose lean cuts of meat and eat smaller portions.
- **Be active.** Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule and write it on an activity calendar. Keep track of your progress with an exercise chart or on-line tool. Organize school activities around physical activity, walk the dog, or exercise while you watch TV. Ask friends and family to exercise with you and plan social activities involving exercise.
- **Drink less or not at all.** The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk for cancer. Drinking alcohol raises your risk of getting the following types of cancer: mouth and throat, voice box (larynx), esophagus, colon and rectum, liver, and breast cancer (in women). All alcoholic drinks, including red and white wine, beer, and liquor, are linked with cancer. The more you drink, the higher your cancer risk.
- **Get screened.** You have the power to take control of your health and catch many cancers before they start, or at their earliest, most treatable stages. Be familiar with warning signs and symptoms, get regular check-ups and perform self-exams. Check out the Cancer Screening Guidelines by Age from the American Cancer Society.

Sources:

1. [American Cancer Society Guidelines for the Early Detection of Cancer](#), American Cancer Society
2. [Cancer Facts & Figures 2023](#), American Cancer Society
3. [Cancer Causes and Prevention: Diet](#), National Cancer Institute
4. [Cancer Risk, Prevention, and Screening](#), American Cancer Society
5. [Healthy Choices](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
6. [How to Prevent Cancer or Find It Early](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
7. [Obesity and Cancer](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
8. [What Can I Do to Reduce My Risk of Skin Cancer?](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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