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“Complement your health every day with smart food choices.”

Title: Complement Your Health with Lunch Prep and Power Balls
Everyone likes a complement, right? So let's think positively and look at how we can complement our diet with smart food choices.

Today we are making: **Crunchy Nutty Chocolate Oat Power Balls**

Servings: 30

Ingredients:

1 and 1/2 cups Old-Fashioned oats

1 and 1/2 cups crispy rice cereal

1/2 cup shredded unsweetened coconut - **FIBER AND MCT fats - medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) are absorbed intact in your small intestine and used by your body to produce energy**

1/4 cup chia seeds - **FIBER AND Omega3**

1/4 cup ground flax seeds - **FIBER AND Omega3**

1/2 cup sunflower butter - **allergy friendly for public setting**

1/4 cup coconut oil - **MCT, easier to digest; HEALTHY SATURATED FATS: These fats can boost fat burning and providing body and brain with quick energy. They also raise the good HDL cholesterol in your blood, which is linked to reduced heart disease risk**

1/4 cup raw honey - **antioxidant from the phytonutrients**

1/4 cup mini chocolate chips

Directions:

Stir together sunflower butter, coconut oil and honey in a small bowl.

Combine all dry ingredients in a large bowl.

Pour wet mixture over dry ingredients and mix until combined.

Chill mixture for 30 minutes, then press 2 T mixture into small balls, or spread into 9X13 pan and cut into bars.

Chill and store in covered container.

Store in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Discussion:

TODAY WE ARE GOING TO MAKE POWERBALLS, A SATISFYING AND HEALTHY 'TREAT' THAT WILL FEED THE MIND AND BODY FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE SCHOOL DAY.

But first let's discuss how meal prep complements our health! Planning lunch is very important for our children, as well as ourselves and there are a few things to keep in mind when preparing lunch.

Public schools provide a nutritionally balanced meal at quite a reasonable price. And the Dietary Manager works with students who require special substitutions to the regular menu. They typically have a rotating menu and children tend to have their favorites! That being said, some desire to pack their favorite foods, or want to change up the routine. And one big reason to pack lunch in school is the amount of time to eat. Typically only having 20 minutes, by skipping the line, they get to have more time to eat by heading straight in and starting right away.

DISPLAY: You may have heard of the 'Bento Box' style of packing meals. A bento box is named after the reusable Japanese-style lunch box that typically holds a single portion meal consisting of a main dish (or protein) and some sides including fruits and veggies and possibly

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a treat. I reached out to some experts, MY NIECES, and asked what their favorite lunches are that they pack.

Here is an example of a Bento Box, really a top of the line type container complete with ice pack. You do not need this type, but something that will separate the fresh veggies and fruits from the dry ingredients and a place to keep the dip and/or dressing separate for use a the time lunch is consumed. MY NEICE in Indiana appreciates these type of boxes as they are reusable and environmentally friendly, with less plastic waste.

In this example we have the 'main' dish or the protein with is a chicken wrap. There are many types of wraps you can make, including spinach or flax tortillas and the fillings are endless. What I like about the bento box style is that portion control is maximized. Children like finger foods that are simple and easy to consume. Here we included fruit. Notice I peeled the clementine which saves time. The veggies are cleaned and ready to be dipped. My niece in Charlotte who is 11 packs her own lunches and shared her favorite dip/dressing with me which is a sweet bbq sauce mixed with a ranch type dressing that she loves with her salads she prepares! This is perfect today for both the wrap and the veggies.

Now lets focus on the POWERBALL.

START MIXING

MIX WET INGREDIENTS IN GLASS MEASURING CUP

MIX DRY INGREDIENTS IN MIXING BOWL

POUR WET OVER DRY

Instead of buying prepackaged granola bars or snack pack cookies, in just a few minutes you can make a Powerball full of protein, healthy Omega3 fats, fiber and healthy carbohydrates with minimal sugar. Now the ingredients may seem like a lot, but they are typical ingredients used for smoothies and baking and are easy to find. In contrast to our 9 ingredients, a packaged snack bar you buy at the store has 36 ingredients with some that challenge digestion and nutrient absorption:

Soybean oil

Sodium bicarbonate

Soy lecithin

Corn syrup solids

Invert sugar

Glycerin

Palm kernel oil

Artificial flavor

Caramel color

BHT, tocopherols as preservatives

With just a quick mix of our 9 ingredients, we have our own Powerball snack free from preservatives and sugars which will spike blood glucose and leave the body prime for a post snack crash leaving students at risk for learning in class. Prepackaged bars have 13 grams of sugar and 2 grams of fiber. Our homemade snack has 3.8 grams of sugar and 2 grams of fiber. A much better choice to poise our young learners for energy and steady blood sugar.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Take the time to *complement* yourself because you deserve it!