

Wise Notes

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Six Ideas for Low-Sugar Drinks

We have been hearing it for years and I believe most consumers would agree, that sugary drink portion sizes have risen dramatically over the past 40 years, and children and adults are drinking more soft drinks than ever. We are starting to understand that sugary drinks increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and gout. And next comes the challenge, actually cutting back on sugary drinks to help us control our weight and improve our overall health.

Plain water is the best calorie-free beverage—and when it comes from the tap, it costs a fraction of a penny per glass. But for some people, plain old water may be just too plain. The Harvard Law for Public Health presented several great ideas for low and no-sugar beverages that you can prepare at home:

You can easily make your own naturally-infused spa water at home. Try adding any of the following to a cold glass or pitcher of water:

- Sliced citrus fruits or zest (lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit)
- Crushed fresh mint or other herbs
- Peeled, sliced fresh ginger or sliced cucumber

Black or green, caffeinated or decaf, leaf or herbal, hot or cold, tea is an excellent choice for a calorie free beverage. Adding a teaspoon of sugar or honey only adds about 15 calories to the cup. Some teas taste sweet to the palate even without adding any sugar: Try fruit-flavored herbal teas (mango, blueberry), or teas that feature cinnamon, vanilla, or other “sweet” spices. Black and green teas are also rich in antioxidants, flavonoids, and other biologically active substances that may be good for health.

Sparkling juices that are sold ready-made are often heavy on the juice, and may have almost as many calories as sugary soda pop. Instead, make your own sparkling juice at home with 12 ounces of sparkling water and just an ounce or two of juice. For a flavor twist, add sliced citrus or fresh herbs.

Store-bought or cafe smoothies are marketed as “health” foods, but they are often loaded with sugar and high in calories. Try making a refreshing fresh fruit cooler instead. There’s no added sugar, and just a small amount of fruit, so this drink is only about 18 calories for each 12-ounce glass.

- 1/2 cup of ice
- 3/4 cup of sugar-free sparkling water
- 1/3 cup of melon or berries
- Chopped mint leaves or citrus slices (optional)

Place ice, sparkling water, and fruit in a blender. Blend until slushy, pour into a glass and garnish with mint or citrus slices. Serves 1.

For additional information on rethinking your drink, contact the Extension office at 940/627-3341.