Smart Foods / Foolish Foods

Quick-reference tables from the Nutrition Toolbox in Longevity Odds. Individualize food choices for your nutritional needs, tolerances, and metabolic health.

Smart Foods

* Potatoes: see "A Simple Strategy: Cook, Cool, and Reheat" in the Nutrition Toolbox. Preparation can affect glucose response; portion size and individual metabolic health still matter.

Category	Smart Foods	How I Recommend Using Them
PROTEIN - FISH & SEAFOOD	Salmon, sardines, herring, trout, anchovies, cod, haddock, whitefish	Excellent protein sources. Favor lower-mercury fish. Salmon, sardines, herring, trout, and anchovies also provide substantial EPA and DHA omega-3 fats.
	Shrimp, crab, lobster, clams, mussels, oysters, scallops	High-quality protein with valuable minerals and other nutrients.
PROTEIN - POULTRY & MEAT	Chicken, turkey, duck	Prefer naturally raised, organic, or pasture-raised sources when practical.
	Beef, bison, lamb	Prefer naturally raised or organic sources and grass-fed-to-finish when available.
PROTEIN - EGGS	Eggs	High-quality protein and an important source of choline and other nutrients. Pasture-raised or organic eggs are preferred when practical.
PROTEIN - DAIRY	Plain Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, plain yogurt, kefir, milk	Useful sources of protein and calcium when dairy is well tolerated. Avoid versions with substantial added sugar.
PROTEIN - PLANT SOURCES	Edamame, tempeh, plain tofu	Favor traditional, minimally processed soy foods rather than products built primarily from soy protein isolates, refined oils, starches, flavorings, and additives.
CARBOHYDRATES - PREFERRED NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES	Spinach, kale, romaine, red and green leaf lettuce, Swiss chard, arugula	Eat generously. These generally have a modest effect on glucose while providing fiber, minerals, and phytonutrients.
	Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, bok choy, collard greens, radishes	Excellent cruciferous vegetables providing fiber and biologically active plant compounds.

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	Asparagus, artichokes, onions, garlic, bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, mushrooms, green beans, zucchini, carrots, beets	Use a wide variety of colors and plant families.
CARBOHYDRATES - FRUIT: INDIVIDUALIZE	Preferred: blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries	Berries are among my preferred fruits because of their fiber, polyphenols, and relatively modest glucose load.
	Apples, citrus fruits, pomegranates and other whole fruits	Nutrient-rich Smart Foods, but glucose response varies substantially among individuals. Portion size and selection become increasingly important with insulin resistance, prediabetes, or diabetes.
CARBOHYDRATES - BEANS & LEGUMES: INDIVIDUALIZE	Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, navy beans, white beans, split peas and other beans	Provide fiber, minerals, plant protein, and fermentable carbohydrates that can benefit the microbiome. Usually produce a lower glycemic response than refined starches, but larger portions can still significantly raise glucose.
CARBOHYDRATES - STARCHY VEGETABLES: INDIVIDUALIZE	Sweet potatoes*, potatoes*, winter squash	Nutrient-dense foods, but they can produce significant glucose elevations, especially in metabolically unhealthy individuals. Portion size and preparation matter.
CARBOHYDRATES - WHOLE/INTACT GRAINS: INDIVIDUALIZE	Buckwheat (my preferred grain), Oats, quinoa, amaranth, millet, brown rice, black rice, wild rice, bulgur, hulled barley	Nutritionally preferable to refined grains, but whole grain does not mean glucose neutral. Use according to metabolic health, activity level, portion size, and individual glucose response. Buckwheat least likely to raise glucose
FATS - WHOLE FOODS	Avocados, olives	Excellent whole-food sources of predominantly monounsaturated fat.
	Walnuts, almonds, pecans, pistachios, macadamia nuts, peanuts	Provide healthy fats, protein, fiber, minerals, and plant compounds. Peanuts are botanically legumes but nutritionally fit well within this group.
	Chia seeds, flaxseeds, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds	Valuable sources of healthy fats, fiber, minerals, and other nutrients.
OILS - RECOMMENDED	Extra-virgin olive oil	My preferred everyday oil for salads, dressings. Can be used for lower heat cooking. It is rich in monounsaturated fat and naturally occurring polyphenols.

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	Avocado oil	Predominantly monounsaturated. A useful choice when a neutral flavor or higher-temperature cooking oil is desired.
	Cultured Oil - Zero Acre Farms	A fermentation-derived oil composed predominantly of monounsaturated fat. My preferred oil for higher-temperature cooking.
COOKING FATS - ACCEPTABLE IN REASONABLE AMOUNTS	Butter	Useful for flavor and selected cooking. I consider it acceptable rather than a preferred principal cooking fat because of its high saturated-fat content.
	Ghee	Similar considerations to butter but with the milk solids removed, making it useful for higher-temperature cooking.
	Beef tallow	Can be used selectively for cooking. Predominantly saturated and monounsaturated fat.
POLYUNSATURATED OILS - ACCEPTABLE	Walnut oil	Best used cold or with minimal heat. Provides polyunsaturated fats, including some plant omega-3 ALA.
	Flaxseed oil	Particularly rich in ALA omega-3. Use cold; do not use for high-temperature cooking.
	Sesame oil	Contains both polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats and can be useful for flavor and selected cooking.
	Sunflower oil	Acceptable in reasonable quantities. High-oleic sunflower oil is preferable for higher-temperature cooking because it contains considerably more monounsaturated fat.
	Safflower oil	Similar to sunflower oil. High-oleic varieties are preferable when cooking at higher temperatures.
	Grapeseed oil	Predominantly polyunsaturated. Acceptable but not one of my preferred everyday cooking oils.
	Soybean oil	Acceptable in reasonable amounts, but much of the excessive intake in the modern diet comes from ultra-processed foods and commercial frying rather than thoughtful home use.

Foolish Foods: What to Limit

These are foods Dr. Wall recommends limiting rather than making everyday choices.

Category	Common Examples	Why I Recommend Limiting Them
ADDED SUGAR & SUGARY FOODS	Candy, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, doughnuts, pastries, sweet rolls, pies, sweetened desserts	Deliver concentrated sugar and calories with relatively little nutritional value. Frequent intake can promote excessive glucose and insulin with visceral fat accumulation, fatty liver, and metabolic dysfunction.
SUGAR-SWEETENED DRINKS	Soft drinks, sweet tea, lemonade, sweetened coffee drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks	Particularly problematic because large amounts of sugar can be consumed rapidly without producing the fullness associated with solid food.
FRUIT JUICE & JUICE DRINKS	Orange juice, apple juice, grape juice, commercial juice blends	Whole fruit contains fiber and intact structure. Juicing removes much of that advantage and makes sugar easier to consume quickly.
REFINED BREADS & FLOUR PRODUCTS	White sandwich bread, brioche, challah, French bread, baguettes, ciabatta, English muffins, conventional bagels, flour tortillas, potato bread	Refined flour has lost much of the original grain structure and is often converted to glucose rapidly. These foods can cause substantial rises in glucose and insulin, particularly in insulin-resistant individuals.
REFINED GRAINS & STARCHES	White rice, jasmine rice, conventional basmati rice, many instant rice products, refined pasta	Less fiber and intact structure than whole-grain alternatives. Portion size can produce a substantial glycemic load.
SWEETENED BREAKFAST FOODS	Sugary cereals, granola with substantial added sugar, pancakes and waffles with syrup, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet muffins	Often combine refined flour, added sugar, processed oils, and high calorie density while being marketed as breakfast foods.
ULTRA-PROCESSED SNACKS	Chips, cheese-flavored snacks, crackers made primarily from refined flour, packaged snack mixes, many protein bars and granola bars	Frequently combine refined starch, processed oils, flavor enhancers, salt, and additives that make them easy to overconsume.
ULTRA-PROCESSED DESSERTS	Packaged cookies, snack cakes, commercial brownies, frosted pastries, frozen desserts	Often contain the combination of refined flour, sugar, oils, emulsifiers, colors, and flavorings that characterizes ultra-processed food.
COMMERCIALLY FRIED FOODS	French fries, fried chicken, fried seafood, onion rings, mozzarella sticks, fried appetizers	Usually combine refined starch or breading, high calorie density, and oils exposed to prolonged or repeated high-temperature cooking.

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FAST-FOOD COMBINATIONS	Burgers with refined buns, fries, pizza, fried chicken meals, tacos made with refined shells, combination meals with sugary drinks	The problem is the combination of refined starch, excessive calories, sodium, processed fats, and limited fiber or plant nutrients.
PROCESSED MEATS	Hot dogs, salami, pepperoni, many sausages, heavily processed deli meats, bacon-type processed meat products, meat sticks	Frequently high in sodium and may contain nitrites, preservatives, smoke flavorings, and other harmful additives. These should not be everyday protein sources.
HIGHLY PROCESSED IMITATION FOODS	Many plant-based burgers, imitation chicken products, soy nuggets, heavily formulated meat substitutes	A food does not automatically become healthy because it is plant based. Products built from protein isolates, refined oils, starches, emulsifiers, flavorings, and additives remain ultra-processed.
SWEETENED DAIRY PRODUCTS	Flavored yogurt, sweetened kefir, ice cream, sweetened coffee creamers	Dairy can be nutritious, but large amounts of added sugar can transform a protein-rich food into a dessert.
HIGHLY SWEETENED NUT PRODUCTS	Chocolate-coated nuts, candied nuts, sweetened peanut spreads	Nuts and peanuts are Smart Foods; adding large amounts of sugar and processed fats creates challenges to your biology.
HIGHLY REFINED "HEALTH" FOODS	Many meal-replacement bars, low-fat cookies, sweetened protein snacks, gluten-free cookies and crackers	Marketing terms such as high protein, low fat, keto, vegan, gluten free, or natural do not automatically make a food healthy. Always look at the ingredients and nutritional composition.