

# SWAP YOUR SNACKS!

We've got a hunch you'll always munch. So start the new decade right with these 7 ideas for healthier between-meal eating. *By Gianna Barone*

Do you snack? If so, join a very large club! Most of us do, and we know that both our waistlines and our health can be affected not just by what we eat at meals, but also by what we nibble on between them. You could vow to go snackless in 2020 – but hey, let's get real!

The five nutritionists (all registered dietitians) whom BERGEN consulted about snacking don't suggest going cold turkey (which sounds like a snack anyway!), but making smart substitutions. The seven healthy swaps they offer for your usual munchables are perfect for upping your healthy eating game. Take one to work for a small nibble at your desk, prepare one to graze on guilt-free while you watch your favorite Netflix show on the couch or keep one handy for whenever else a craving strikes.

## OUR NUTRITIONISTS

**Laura Cipullo**  
L'ifestyle Lounge,  
Closter

**Angela Criscuoli**  
Ripple Effect Nutrition,  
Ho-Ho-Kus

**Kathy Fulgione**  
Mind Body Spirit  
Nutrition,  
Northvale

**Galina Goldstein**  
Force of Nature  
Nutrition,  
Leonia

**Carrie Kipnis**  
Riverfront Nutrition  
Associates,  
Edgewater

## THE SNACK: POTATO CHIPS THE SWAP: VEGETABLE CHIPS/EDAMAME

To get your crunchy fix, ditch the greasy potato chips and carb-filled pretzels for some vegetable-based bites. Angela Criscuoli, owner of Ripple Effect Nutrition in Ho-Ho-Kus, suggests slicing up hearty veggies such as carrots, beets and turnips and drizzling them with a touch of olive oil before baking them in a 350-degree oven until they're crispy (not burnt) to make a tasty, healthy alternative to your favorite chip. Don't have time to prep your pickings for the day? Raw or quick steamed edamame—soybeans still in their green bean-like pods, often found in Asian cuisine—sprinkled with a pinch of sea salt is another nutrient-rich alternative when you're looking for something salty on the fly. "Edamame provides extra protein, as well as the powerful antioxidant genistein and phenolic acids that help protect our cells from damage by free radicals," says Kathy Fulgione, who owns Mind Body Spirit Nutrition in Northvale. We bet you can't eat just one!



Kathy Fulgione





**THE SNACK:**  
MICROWAVE POPCORN  
**THE SWAP:**  
AIR-POPPED "CHEESY" POPCORN

Is there any snack more fitting to munch on while watching your favorite flick than a bowl of popcorn? Well, most microwave popcorns are packed with hydrogenated oils and loads of sodium, so our experts agree that air-popped kernels are always the healthier way to go. Cipullo suggests spritzing some olive oil onto the otherwise bland popcorn—or you can test your culinary savvy and make some nutritionist-approved "cheesy" popcorn. Both Cipullo and Criscuoli swear by sprinkling two tablespoons of nutritional yeast onto air-popped popcorn, as it gives the kernels a cheese-like, nutty flavor that is the perfect healthy stand-in for a gourmet blend of popcorn. "You're instantly adding protein, B12 and other B vitamins," says Criscuoli.



Laura Cipullo



**THE SNACK:** ICE CREAM  
**THE SWAP:** "NICE" CREAM

You may have a favorite ice cream to curl up with after dinner, but that mint chocolate chip or even plain vanilla is loaded with sugars and fats. Instead, switch that ice cream to "nice" cream! Yes, "nice" cream—a low-calorie, vegan dessert of pulverized frozen fruits that becomes velvety and tastes sweet like regular ice cream when blended. Laura Cipullo, owner of L'ifestyle Lounge in Closter, suggests throwing in a ripe avocado ("It's creamy and anti-inflammatory!" she adds) or a handful of dates into the blender with your mixture to bulk up your light dessert with some carbs, healthy fats and much-needed thickness without introducing the bad stuff. But if you're a fan of packing on the wild and wacky toppings at the make-your-own bar, you may want to hold off on those extra fixings. "You'll add extra sweetness and fats with additional fruits and candies, so go easy on the toppings!" warns Goldstein.

{ SNACK SWAPS }

**THE SNACK:** PEANUT BUTTER  
**THE SWAP:** ALL-NATURAL NUT BUTTERS

Peanut butter isn't the world's most unwholesome snack, but choosing a kind that's heavily processed with lots of added sugars can be nuts from a health perspective. According to Cipullo, any nut butter should have two ingredients: the nut and salt. "Avoid brands with palm oil or added sugars, as they take away from the nutritional value," she adds. Kipnis suggests powdered, low-calorie peanut butter brands that only require a splash of water to turn into the smooth stuff. For example, PB2, available at Wegman's in Montvale and ShopRite in Hillsdale. "It's got 90 percent fewer calories," says Kipnis. "Try it with a banana for a sweet treat or keep it in its powder form swirled into oatmeal or yogurt."



Carrie Kipnis





**THE SNACK:  
MILK CHOCOLATE**

**THE SWAP:  
DARK CHOCOLATE**

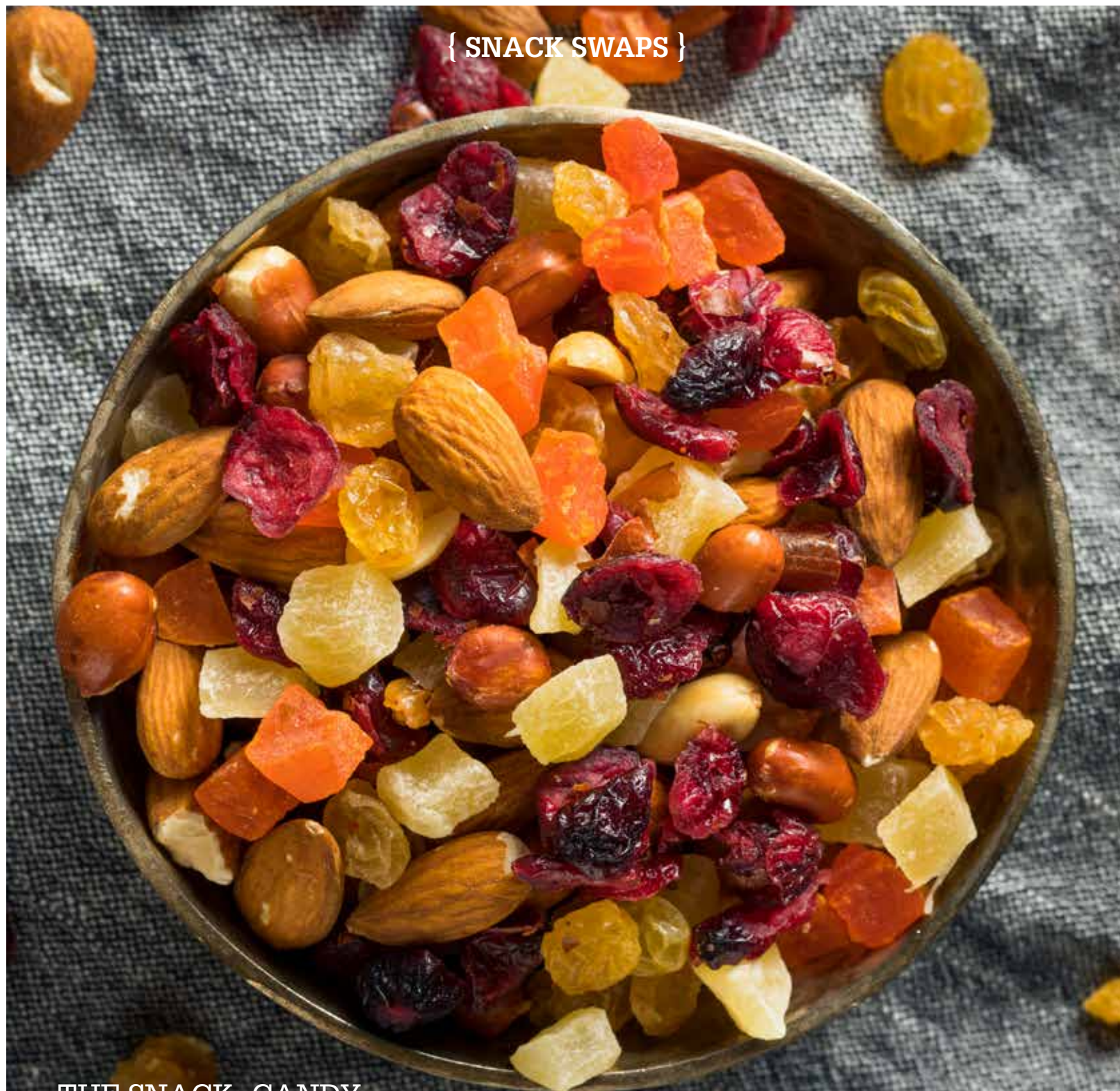
Sometimes there's nothing more satisfying than a chunk of sweet, silky chocolate. But milk chocolate is often loaded with added sugars—a no-go for our nutritionists. Galina Goldstein, owner of Force of Nature Nutrition in Leonia as well as a self-proclaimed “big chocolate fan,” advises that fellow chocolate lovers go for dark chocolate to satisfy a sweet craving and soak up the benefits of the food's main ingredient: cacao. “Dark chocolate is richer in all of the good things we hear about, such as good bacteria, antioxidants and flavonoids,” Goldstein says. So, what's the magic number when it comes to how much cacao is in your candy bar? Carrie Kipnis at Riverfront Nutrition Associates in Edgewater suggests indulging in a dark chocolate that's made with at least 65 percent cacao to get the full benefits of your snack.



**THE SNACK: PACKAGED SNACK BAR  
THE SWAP: HIGH-PROTEIN BARS**

While homemade options are usually best, most of us are guilty of quickly grabbing a snack bar “to go” before heading out for the day. Being mindful of what ingredients are in that convenient little bar, like added sugars and overly-processed fruits, makes all the difference in your healthy snacking regime, our nutritionists say. The solution? Grab a snack bar with high levels of protein and fiber, not sugar. Kipnis suggests Raw Rev Glo bars, available at Acme in Edgewater and A&A Health Food Center in Midland Park, which are high in fiber and extra filling for those days when you don't have time to prep a healthy snack. And if that doesn't sound appealing enough to toss aside your favorite snack bar, hear this: They come in seriously drool-worthy, dessert-inspired flavors such as birthday cake and chocolate-chip cookie dough.

{ SNACK SWAPS }



**THE SNACK: CANDY  
THE SWAP: DRIED FRUITS**

The holidays are gone, but the sugary, candy-coated remnants of them are probably still lurking in your desk drawers and candy bowl at home. Instead of giving in to those leftover treats, invest in a package of dried fruits such as cherries, figs, pineapples and apricots that will deliver all of that same fruity flavor and then some. “While dried fruit has natural sugar, it also has an abundance of fiber and other nutrients that candy doesn't provide,” says Criscuoli. Fulgione agrees, citing dried fruit as an excellent source of the minerals potassium, magnesium and iron and of phytonutrients, but warns that portion size should be monitored because of the concentrated amount of sugar in each piece.



Angela Criscuoli