



Did You Know: Peanut Butter 101

First things first: Did you know that peanuts are not nuts? They are legumes (counting peas, lentils and chickpeas among their close relatives), and grow underground, not on trees. Secondly, though peanuts are high in fat, it's the “good” kind of fat. Unlike butter from dairy, peanut butter is extremely rich in monounsaturated fats, the healthy variety that can prevent heart disease and is less likely to be stored as body fat. It's also cholesterol-free.



Though peanut butter contains neither nuts nor butter, it does contain protein—lots of it. In fact, it has more protein (7–8 g per ounce) than any nut! Protein is a powerful nutrient essential for muscle growth and maintenance, and *all* of the cells in your body need protein to function. Protein keeps your body and brain running in top form. It also keeps you from feeling hungry! Peanut butter packs a winning combination of fiber (2 g per serving) and protein (7–8 g per serving). This one-two punch fills you up and keeps you feeling full longer. Peanut butter contains over 30 essential nutrients and phytonutrients, including the B vitamins—which help prevent “brain fatigue.”

Peanut butter can play a starring or supporting role in a vegetarian diet. Two tablespoons contain 7–8 grams of protein, which is about 16 percent of the amount of protein you need daily. Like most plant foods, peanut butter is not a complete protein because it lacks some of the essential amino acids. But spread it on whole wheat bread and bam—you've made a complete protein sandwich. To boost the protein value even more, add a glass of low-fat milk.

When it comes to peanut butter recipes, think outside the sandwich! Smear peanut butter on celery or apples; add it to your favorite cookie recipes. Want kids to try more fruits and veggies? Set up a dipping station with peanut butter and let them experiment. From peanut butter smoothies to Asian peanut noodles, the protein-packed possibilities are endless.