

Mind your munching: Use your head to pick low-calorie snack foods

by Jane Clifford

True to your New Year's promise, you've been a dieting angel, munching fruit and veggies and swigging bottles of cold water.

But, in truth, you'd kill for a Snickers bar right now.

MINDFUL MUNCHING - Trying to eat right this year? Don't let your willpower wimp out just yet. There's more to satisfying, low-calorie foods than just celery and carrots sticks. A handful of almonds, for instance, is an interesting and tasty low-cal snack. CNS Photo by Nadia Borowski Scott. Deprivation is not only painful, it's boring. Your low-cal food is tasteless, there's not enough of it, and you're constantly starving.

Don't let your willpower wimp out just yet. There's more to satisfying, low-calorie foods than just celery and carrots sticks.

"High-fiber foods and plenty of fluids will fill up your stomach without adding a lot of calories," says Joan Rupp, a registered dietitian and instructor at San Diego State University's Department of Exercise and Nutrition Science. "Plus, if you add some (lean) protein, it will keep you full longer, since protein takes longer than carbohydrates to digest."

Remember to eat slowly, because it takes 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your stomach is full.

Dietitians contacted for this story offered some interesting and flavorful low-cal snacks to fill you up, not out:

- Whole-grain cracker topped with some light tuna, yogurt and minced celery or pickle.
- A mini pizza made on a melba toast round with a tomato slice, part-skim mozzarella cheese and some Italian seasonings.
- Veggies dipped in whipped cottage cheese seasoned with dill and chives.

- Fruit sections dipped in nonfat yogurt flavored with sugar-free jam and cinnamon.

- Bagel chips dipped in fat-free black bean dip.

- A homemade fruit smoothie made with nonfat milk, fresh fruit and ice cubes. (Whip it in the blender to get lots of air into it.)

- Air-popped popcorn. Add a little low-fat spray-on margarine or sprinkle on some seasonings.

- Handfuls of whole-grain low-sugar cereals.

- A handful of almonds or walnuts.

- Four dried apricots.

- A variety of flavored herb and green teas.

- Bubbly water flavored with two ounces of fruit juice.

- Whipped iced latte, made by mixing coffee, nonfat milk, sweetener and ice cubes in the blender. Add vanilla or almond extract for more flavor.

Â© Copley News Service

Mind your munching: Use your head to pick low-calorie snack foods by Jane Clifford