

# Austin Post-Bulletin

## Healthy Bites: There's a type cheese for everyone

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### Mozzarella Pepper Salsa

**Serves 12**

**All you need:**

1 (8 ounce) block mozzarella cheese, diced into ¼-inch cubes

1 cup diced roasted red peppers

2 green onions, cut diagonally into thin slices

3 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh basil

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 head Belgian endive, separated into leaves.

**All you do:**

1. Combine mozzarella cheese, red peppers, green onion, fresh basil and olive oil in medium bowl; mix well. Season with pepper. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour or overnight. Serve on endive leaves with whole grain crackers. **Yield:** 3 cups

May also serve on toasted baguette whole-grain bread.

**Nutrition facts per serving:** 61 calories, 4 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 150 mg sodium, 2 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein. 15 percent Daily Value calcium.

**Source: Midwest Dairy Association**

Whether it is eaten as string, shredded, sliced or cubed, Americans love cheese. Cheese can be consumed for any mealtime or snack occasion, even dessert. And good news for cheese lovers: Cheese delivers a nice "block" of nutrients important for good health.

According to the Dairy Research Institute, cheese is a valuable source of nutrients for the calories it contains. Cheese only contributes about 5 percent of calories to the U.S. diet and makes significant nutrient contributions for good health. It's the No. 2 source of calcium in Americans'

diets and also is a good source of protein (9 percent ) and phosphorus (11 percent ); these three nutrients are important for bone health in youth and adults.

Cheese can help meet the need for calcium in those people who don't get the daily recommendation for calcium and are at risk for poor bone health. Other health benefits from milk and milk products possibly include reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes, and lower blood pressure in adults.

On average, Americans currently consume about two dairy servings per day. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend at least three servings of dairy each day for people nine years and older. A serving size of cheese is 1½ ounces of natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese. A good visual reference to estimate 1½ ounces cheese is four dice-sized cubes of cheese. For shredded cheese, a quarter of a cup equals 1 serving.

A little-known fact about cheese: People who are lactose intolerant can also enjoy eating cheese. During the process of making cheese, most of the lactose is removed with the whey. This means some cheeses — such as cheddar and Swiss — contain 95 percent less lactose than whole milk. Aged cheese, Parmesan and sharp cheddar contain almost no lactose.

### **What's your type?**

- **Lowering sodium?** Try Swiss, Monterey Jack, ricotta, Parmesan or lower sodium varieties of Colby Jack, provolone, Muenster, mozzarella or cheddar. A tip: Choose a cheese based on firmness and age. In general, softer, less-aged cheeses require less salt than harder, aged varieties.
- **Watching fat?** Try Parmesan, Romano (grated) or part-skim mozzarella. There are also lower fat options of many cheeses available.
- **Need more calcium in your diet?** Try Swiss, cheddar, ricotta, mozzarella, Monterey Jack, gouda, queso blanco, Mexican blend or Colby.
- **Watching lactose?** Try cheddar, Swiss, Monterey Jack or mozzarella.

**Jen Haugen is a registered dietitian at the Austin Hy-Vee store.**

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