

Better-for-you dips and chips

Looking for a quick, healthy dip for an early summer barbecue? We've got you covered with some options whipped up in the CONSUMER REPORTS' test kitchen by one of our recipe developers. They're easy to make, full of protein and vitamins, and have fewer calories and less fat than traditional appetizers such as spinach and artichoke dip. And they can help you sneak some extra vegetables into your diet. The dips can also be used in sandwiches and wraps. Each recipe makes 2 cups.

ROASTED GARLIC AND RED-PEPPER DIP

2 heads garlic
2 teaspoons plus 2 tablespoons
olive oil
1 8-ounce package Neufchatel cheese, softened
1/3 cup chopped, roasted red pepper
1/3 cup parsley leaves
1 cup reduced-fat sour cream
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons hot sauce

Directions:

Heat oven to 400° F. Slice 1/2 inch from the top of each garlic head. Place garlic cut side up on a large sheet of aluminum foil. Drizzle with 2 teaspoons of olive oil. Wrap tightly. Roast about an hour, then let cool. Squeeze garlic cloves from the bottom of each head *into* a small bowl, then put *in* a food processor. Add remaining oil and other ingredients. Process until smooth. Chill and serve with chips or cut-up veggies.

EDAMAME DIP

1 8-ounce package shelled, ready to eat edamame (about 1 1/2 cups)
1/2 cup cilantro leaves
1 avocado, peeled, chopped 1/3 cup reduced-fat sour cream 1/3 cup water
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice 1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon toasted sesame oil 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
(optional)

Directions:

Put the edamame in a food processor and pulse several times. Add cilantro and pulse again. Add remaining ingredients and process the mixture until smooth. Serve with chips or cut-up vegetables.

Nutrition information: 50 calories and about
3 grams of fat per 2-tablespoon serving.

Smarter Choices:

Veggie chips are marketed as a healthier alternative to standard chips. Some actually deliver on that promise, with real vegetable ingredients and even healthful nutrients such as fiber and protein. But they're no diet food; even the healthier ones have about the same amount of fat and calories as traditional potato chips.

In CONSUMER REPORTS' recent tests of 14 veggie chips, those made from root vegetables, such as Terra Exotic Vegetable Chips and Trader Joe's Vegetable Root Chips, were among the best tasting, as were some bean-based chips, such as Boulder Canyon Natural Foods Hummus Chips. Those are a better choice than potato-based veggie chips, crisps, and sticks, which tasted mediocre and tended to have more sodium.

Here are two of the better options from our tests, plus a potato-based veggie stick and standard potato chip for comparison.

Root-vegetable chips

Terra Exotic Vegetable Chips (Original) (pair nicely with roasted garlic and red-pepper dip) Sodium: 50 milligrams Calories: 150 Fat: 9 grams Fiber: 3 grams

Bean-based chips

Trader Joe's Falafel Chips (pair nicely with edamame dip) Sodium: 85 milligrams Calories: 140 Fat: 7 grams Fiber: 3 grams

Potato-based veggie snacks

Trader Joe's Veggie Sticks Sodium: 300 milligrams Calories: 140 Fat: 7 grams Fiber: 1 gram

Potato chips

Lay's Classic Sodium: 170 milligrams Calories: 160 Fat: 10 grams Fiber 1 gram Nutrition information per 1-ounce serving.

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