

*Cranberry Oatmeal Bars,
courtesy of Kelly Hunt*

BRING FALL TO THE TABLE

FIVE SECRETS FOR TASTIER, HEALTHFUL OATMEAL

BY SHOSHANA DAVIS

As the mornings start to become less steamy and turn a bit chilly, many New Yorkers turn to a healthy bowl of oatmeal to keep their bellies warm. 80% of Americans have oatmeal in their cupboards, and 89% of that is eaten as a cereal versus used as an ingredient in another dish. Some of the biggest proponents of this heart-helping cereal are the healthy living bloggers that are sweeping the internet. From pumpkin to smoothies, they use oatmeal everywhere. For city dwellers it is way too easy to pick up a quick breakfast while on the go; to counteract that, here are a few of these health conscious bloggers' favorite tips to help New Yorkers out.

ONE. Julie Fagan from www.pbfingers.com has a great recipe to get ready for fall. This yummy twist on a healthy breakfast will give you the kick you need to start your day right, and with a hint of autumn. She suggests cooking the oats on top of the stove, adding in half a banana and brown sugar after three minutes, 1/3 cup of pumpkin after four, and then topping the finished dish with banana slices and nutmeg. The dish comes out looking and smelling perfect for a chilly morning. Who needs a pumpkin latte, when you can eat pumpkin oatmeal?

TWO. Katy Widrick, does not just eat oatmeal for breakfast, but has used it

instead of the typical high calorie treats to celebrate her 30th birthday. "I threw myself an oatmeal bar party at work to avoid the typical cake and cupcake celebration that makes me cringe," she said. "I brought in steel cut oats made overnight in the Crock Pot along with dozens of toppings and mix-ins and my co-workers loved the healthy and delicious party." Even if it's not a party with co-workers, using Katy's methods to top oatmeal with exotic garnishes brings out a new level of the warm cereal. Katy blogs about food and fitness at www.katywidrick.com

THREE. Caitlin Boyle, based out of North Carolina and creator of Operation Beautiful and healthy living blog, HealthyTippingPoint.com, suggests her recipe for "One Minute Better than Granola," for the quickest way to get this fall treat. This incredibly easy recipe is sure to work itself into any New Yorker's schedule. She combines raw oats with unsweetened coconut, vanilla extract, as well as sunflower and chia seeds. Boyle then serves the mixture with yogurt and fresh fruit. The oatmeal "granola" can easily be made the night before, and eaten the next morning.

FOUR. Kelly Hunt, a D.C.-based food blogger, suggests preparing her Cranberry-Oatmeal Bars once every few weeks for multiple days of a warm

breakfast. The recipe, located in full on eat-yourself-skinny.com, replaces a lot of the calorie and fat heavy ingredients in a typical breakfast baked good with healthier alternatives such as egg whites and low-fat sour cream. The recipe makes 24 bars at 124 calories and 4 grams of fat a piece.

FIVE. Over at CarrotsnCake.com, Tina Huppert has a warm and healthy recipe for her twist on this healthy treat. For this Boston blogger, a little bit of Almond Joy Oatmeal is the best way to change up the morning routine for fall. She combines 1/2 cup of rolled oats, 3/4 cup of almond milk, two tablespoons of sliced almonds, and one tablespoon of maple syrup, and lets it cook in the microwave for two minutes. After it's done she mixes in 1/4 cup of vanilla yogurt, coconut, and one tablespoon of chocolate chips. The mixture of the sweet chocolate, smooth texture from the yogurt, and crunch from the sliced almonds leaves the eater feeling like they've just had a candy bar.

Even with all these yummy recipes out there, it is possible that oatmeal might not be your first choice at breakfast. But don't worry; the American Dietetic Association recommends exchanging one-third of the flour in recipes with quick or old-fashioned oats to get the heart healthy benefits of the cereal.