



SMARTER CHOICES FOR A BETTER WORLD

Consumer Reports™

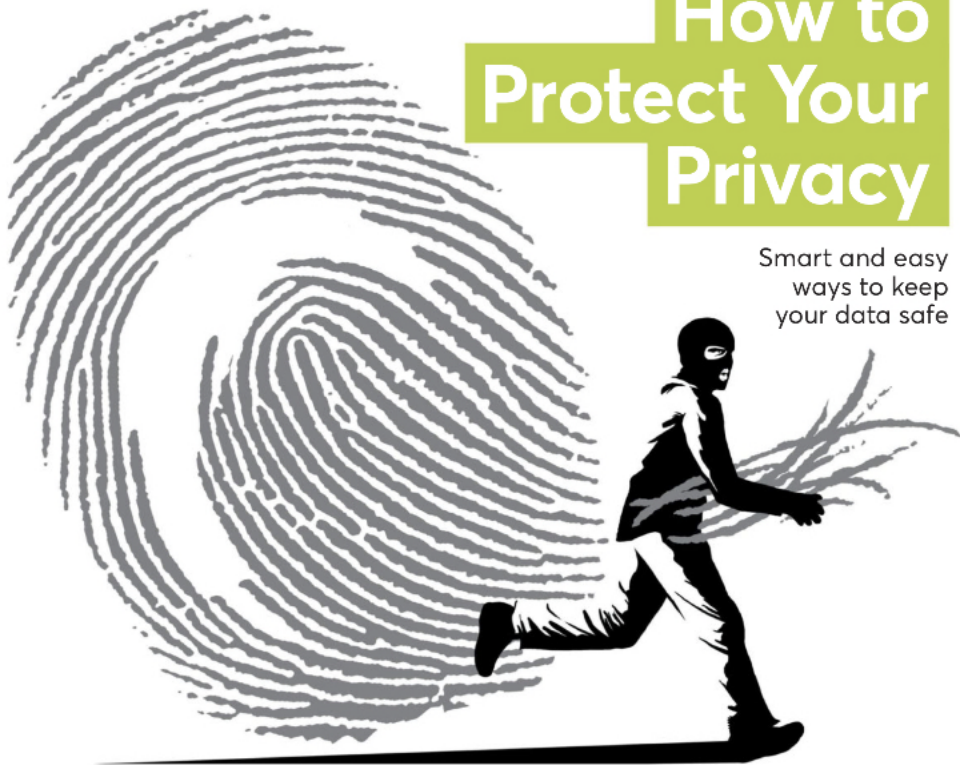
RATINGS



- Gas & Electric Ranges
- Family Sedans
- SUVs
- Coffee Makers & Coffee
- Nut Butters

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The End of Cash?

The good,
the bad, and
the risks

YOUR CHOICES in nut butters are a lot more interesting these days; no longer are “creamy” and “crunchy” peanut butter your only options. In the past six months, 28 percent of consumers said they had purchased spreads made from almonds, cashews, or other nuts or seeds, according to Mintel, a market research firm.

One reason for the interest is that people tend to assume that the other butters are a better source of filling protein than pedestrian peanut varieties. But they're not. Two tablespoons of peanut butter have 7 grams of protein; the same size serving of cashew or almond butter is 4 grams and 7 grams, respectively.

Are there other nutritional reasons to step out of your culinary comfort zone when it comes to nut butters? Absolutely. All nuts (and peanuts, which are legumes) have similar amounts of calories and fat, but each one has a different health benefit.

Cashews, for instance, have more copper—which supports the immune system—than other nuts. One-fourth cup of whole cashews provides about 38 percent of the mineral you should get per day. Almonds are rich in vitamin E, a potent antioxidant that helps protect the body from the type of cell damage that may lead to cancer and heart disease. They're also a decent source of bone-strengthening calcium. Just 2 tablespoons of almond butter provide 8 percent of your daily need.

A LONG AND NUTTY LIFE

Research supports making your type of nut a regular part of your diet. In a study of almost 120,000 men and women, those who ate about an ounce of nuts every day were 20 percent less likely to die of any cause during the 30-year study period—and 29 percent and 11 percent less likely to die from heart disease and cancer, respectively—compared with people who didn't eat nuts. Other research has linked nut consumption with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity.



Beyond Sandwiches

There's a simple, sublime pleasure in spreading nut butter on a piece of bread—and let us suggest fig jam on toasted seven-grain—but there are many other culinary uses:

- Spoon 1 to 2 tablespoons into a smoothie to add protein and help thicken it.
- Whisk almond butter with warm water and fiery Sriracha sauce for a zesty dip for veggies.
- Blend unsalted, unroasted cashew butter with lemon juice, fresh garlic, water, salt, and pepper to make a rich and completely plant-based Alfredo sauce.
- Whisk it into soups and stews as a thickener. Try a traditional African peanut stew recipe or almond butter in your favorite chicken or pumpkin soup.
- Swirl it into cooked oatmeal to add creaminess and make your cereal an even more stick-to-your-ribs, protein-powered breakfast.
- Make a Chinese takeout favorite, sesame noodles, at home using peanut butter. Combine it with soy sauce, sesame oil, a sprinkle of sugar, a little hot water, and a pinch of red-pepper flakes. Toss with whole-grain spaghetti, chopped vegetables, and chopped chicken or tofu, and then garnish with sesame seeds and chopped scallion.

What's more, the fat in nuts is mostly the healthy kind. “The unsaturated fatty acids in nuts lower inflammation and reduce LDL [bad] cholesterol, which is beneficial in preventing heart disease,” says Ying Bao, M.D., an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard's medical school. They supply antioxidants that may help reduce cancer risk. And they provide nutrients that boost heart health, such as cholesterol-lowering fiber; potassium, which helps control blood pressure; and arginine, an amino acid that helps your body make nitric oxide, a compound that relaxes blood vessels. “The nutrients work together, enhancing the benefits of each.”

Some research has concluded that nuts and nut butters offer similar benefits. But a study from Maastricht University in the Netherlands that looked at peanuts and nuts separately from peanut butter found that nut intake was linked with lower mortality but that eating peanut butter wasn't. The study said that may have been because of the sodium and artery-clogging trans fat content of the Dutch peanut butter.

A high calorie count—about 160 to 200 calories per ounce—is the one drawback of nuts. And in butter form, it's all too easy to spread or spoon on more than you should. But nuts help you feel full, and if you stick with the recommended $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of nuts or 2 to 3 tablespoons of nut butter per day, you'll get the benefits without going overboard on calories.

Alternative nut butters can often replace the “P” in a PB&J sandwich for people allergic to peanuts. You should check with your doctor, but “not everyone with a peanut allergy is allergic to tree nuts, and they often can be safely brought into a peanut-free school,” says Todd D. Green, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. Of the one-third of U.S. schools that restrict the type of food that can be brought in, 97 percent prohibit peanuts, according to the School

Product Updates

Nutrition Association. But 60 percent allow other nuts.

Read nut-butter labels carefully. If a product contains peanuts, the Food and Drug Administration requires the manufacturer to note it on the label. You may also see such warnings as "may contain peanuts" or "produced in a facility that processes peanuts."

WE CRUNCHED THE NUT NUMBERS

With the growing number of nut butters available, you have a lot of tasty options. To see whether there were considerable differences among brands, Consumer Reports evaluated a dozen almond and cashew spreads for nutrition, taste, and price. Both were similar in calories and fat, but sodium and protein varied. And the best ones had the fewest ingredients and tasted just like the nuts themselves. Some had a consistency that was somewhat runny and thin, which might make for a messy sandwich.

Some nut butters separate; the oil from the nuts rises to the top of the jar, so you have to stir before you spread. To prevent that separation and give nut butters a creamy texture, some manufacturers add hydrogenated vegetable oil or palm or palm fruit oil. Those are mostly saturated fats that keep the butter together because they're solid at room temperature. Five of the almond butters and one of the cashew butters we tested have one of those oils. The amount was small, but too much saturated fat can be bad for your heart.

The Best Butters

The 12 almond and cashew butters we tested are organized below according to their taste score. Nutritionally, the best nut butters are those that contain only nuts. A little bit of salt is okay, too. But when choosing one, keep the other ingredients, including sugars, to a minimum.

Almond Butter



OVERALL SCORE



365 EVERYDAY VALUE (WHOLE FOODS) ALMOND BUTTER CREAMY 57 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 190 | Fat 17 g | Sat. Fat 1.5 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 2 g | Protein 7 g
Distinct roasted nut flavor; slightly fruity. Very finely ground. Thin and slightly sticky. Needs stirring.



OVERALL SCORE



KIRKLAND SIGNATURE (COSTCO) CREAMY ALMOND BUTTER 50 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 210 | Fat 18 g | Sat. Fat 1.5 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 2 g | Protein 6 g
Almond, with a slight roasted note and natural sweetness. Thin and slightly sticky. Needs stirring.



OVERALL SCORE



TRADER JOE'S RAW ALMOND BUTTER CREAMY 57 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 190 | Fat 16 g | Sat. Fat 1 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 4 g | Sugars 1 g | Protein 7 g
Big raw almond flavor. Very finely ground. Thin consistency; sticky. Needs stirring.



OVERALL SCORE



JUSTIN'S CLASSIC ALMOND BUTTER 79 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 190 | Fat 18 g | Sat. Fat 2 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 2 g | Protein 7 g
Big roasted nut flavor; hint of sweetness and salt. Slightly thick. Coarser than others, with crunchy nut pieces. Some jars need stirring.



OVERALL SCORE



ONCE AGAIN AMERICAN CLASSIC CREAMY ALMOND BUTTER 87 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 190 | Fat 17 g | Sat. Fat 3 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 1 g | Protein 6 g
Moderate roasted nut flavor; slight earthy note. Thick and a bit coarse. No need to stir.



OVERALL SCORE



MARANATHA ALMOND BUTTER CREAMY 73 cents per 2 tbsp. Calories 190 | Fat 15 g | Sat. Fat 2 g | Sodium 60 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 3 g | Protein 6 g
Roasted nut flavor with honeylike note; slightly salty and sweet. Smooth and thick. No need to stir.

Finding That Sweet Spot

WITH THE SURGE in popularity of Nutella, the chocolate-hazelnut spread, Biscoff Cookie Butter, and other sweetened spreads from Europe, it's no wonder many big brands are now getting in on the action.

"Consumers see these products as a permissible indulgence," says Mimi Bonnett, director of food and drink reports at Mintel, a market research firm. In our review of 12 chocolate- and honey-flavored nut spreads, all but four hit that sweet-but-not-too-sweet spot.

On the whole, the honey-flavored spreads struck a nice balance of sweet and salty. **The Bee's Knees** from **Peanut Butter & Co.** had a distinct honey flavor and was among the lowest priced of the six products we tested (36 cents per 2-tablespoon serving). It did have the most sugars, with 2 teaspoons per serving.

Three products had 1 teaspoon of sugars or less per serving. **Justin's Honey Peanut Butter** and **Justin's Honey Peanut Butter Blend** both had good roasted nut flavor with

*Nuts are the only ingredient. †According to the manufacturer, the product doesn't contain peanuts, isn't made in a facility that processes peanuts, or isn't made on equipment that processes peanuts.



RECALLS

Cashew Butter



OVERALL SCORE



BARNEY BUTTER BARE ALMOND SMOOTH

71 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 180 | Fat 16 g | Sat. Fat 1 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 4 g | Sugars 1 g | Protein 7 g

Mild flavor; not very salty or sweet. Thick and smooth. Needs stirring.



OVERALL SCORE



365 EVERYDAY VALUE [WHOLE FOODS] CASHEW BUTTER CREAMY

64 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 190 | Fat 17 g | Sat. Fat 3 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 1 g | Sugars 1 g | Protein 4 g

Roasted nut flavor with little sweetness or saltiness. Needs stirring; thickens with refrigeration.



OVERALL SCORE



JIF CASHEW BUTTER CREAMY

85 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 200 | Fat 17 g | Sat. Fat 3.5 g | Sodium 105 mg | Fiber 0.5 g | Sugars 3 g | Protein 4 g

Smooth and creamy, with a slightly roasted nut flavor; slightly salty. No need to stir.



OVERALL SCORE



JIF ALMOND BUTTER CREAMY

80 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 190 | Fat 16 g | Sat. Fat 2 g | Sodium 110 mg | Fiber 3 g | Sugars 3 g | Protein 7 g

Slightly salty and sweet; moderate roasted and mild nut flavor. Smooth; no need to stir.



OVERALL SCORE



TRADER JOE'S CREAMY SALTED CASHEW BUTTER

57 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 190 | Fat 16 g | Sat. Fat 3 g | Sodium 100 mg | Fiber 1 g | Sugars 1 g | Protein 4 g

Slight to moderate roasted, salted flavor. Needs stirring; thickens with refrigeration.



OVERALL SCORE



ONCE AGAIN ORGANIC CREAMY CASHEW BUTTER

90 cents per 2 tbsp.
Calories 180 | Fat 16 g | Sat. Fat 3 g | Sodium 0 mg | Fiber 1 g | Sugars 0 g | Protein 5 g

Roasted nut flavor; not very salty or sweet. Very finely ground. Slightly thick and sticky. Needs stirring.

a hint of honey. **Barney Butter Almond Butter Honey + Flax** had just a half-teaspoon of sugars, but not much honey flavor.

If you're looking for a chocolate-infused spread with less sugar, we found three that stood out for taste. **Saratoga Peanut Butter Company's Chillin' Chocolate** had 1 teaspoon per serving. It was peanutty and mildly sweet. **Justin's Chocolate Hazelnut Butter Blend** and **Dark Chocolate Dreams from Peanut Butter & Co.** were also good choices.

The nutrition clunkers were chocolate spreads from the big brands: **Hershey's Spreads Chocolate with Almond, Nutella Hazelnut Spread, and Reese's Spreads Peanut Butter Chocolate.** They each had about the same amount of sugars (and more calories and fat) as Duncan Hines chocolate frosting, about 20 grams—that's 5 teaspoons—in a serving of 2 tablespoons. That's too much, our experts say, and those brands aren't tasty enough to be worth the calories.

CLOG REMOVERS

Clorox is recalling about 5.4 million bottles of **Liquid-Plumr** because they're not child-resistant. Kids can remove the tops, creating a risk of chemical burns and irritation to skin and eyes. The three types of Liquid-Plumr are Pro-Strength Foaming Clog Fighter, Industrial Strength Urgent Clear, and Pro-Strength Urgent Clear. They were sold online and at stores nationwide from January 2012 through May 2016. **What to do** Keep the products away from children. Call 855-490-0705 or go to liquidplumr.com and click on "Important Safety Recall Notice" for disposal and refund instructions.

ACTIVITY WRISTBANDS

McDonald's is recalling about 29 million **Step-IT** children's activity wristbands because they can cause skin irritation or burns. They were given out nationwide Jan. 9-17, 2016 with Happy Meals and Wrighty Kid's Meals. **What to do** Take the wristbands away from your children. Return them to any McDonald's restaurant to obtain a free replacement toy and a free food item.

DRINKING STRAWS

About 2.5 million **Cold-to-Go** reusable stainless steel drink straws sold by Starbucks are being recalled because they can poke children in the mouth and injure them. The straws were sold online and at Starbucks stores nationwide from June 2012 through June 2016 in sets of three and paired with cups. **What to do** Don't allow your children to use the straws. For more information about the recall, call Starbucks at 800-782-7282 or go to news.starbucks.com.