

3 Steps to Making Mocktails

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist
Katherine Perrier, Dietetic Intern (former)

Nonalcoholic beverages are gaining popularity as awareness grows about the health risks linked to alcohol. Whether you're hosting a gathering or simply trying something new, offering alcohol-free options can create a more inclusive and health-conscious environment.



Alcohol, Nutrition and Changing Guidelines

Alcohol provides calories but no essential nutritional value — no vitamins, minerals or other nutrients the body needs to function. As research evolves, recommendations in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* increasingly emphasize limiting alcohol intake due to its links to chronic health conditions, including certain cancers, liver disease and cardiovascular issues. In fact, the risks associated with alcohol use are now considered to outweigh any potential benefits.

Alcohol is a contributing factor to several serious conditions, including cancers, neuropsychiatric disorders and gastrointestinal and cardiovascular diseases. According to the National Cancer Institute, alcohol use is associated with increased risk of multiple cancers, including those of the mouth and throat, larynx, esophagus, liver, breast, colon and rectum. Importantly, risk increases along a continuum — from light to heavy drinking.

Because of this growing body of evidence, some public health experts are questioning whether any level of alcohol consumption can be considered truly “safe.” This shift is contributing to a broader movement toward reducing, or even eliminating, alcohol intake.

What Is a Mocktail?

A mocktail is a nonalcoholic beverage designed to mimic the flavor and presentation of a traditional cocktail — minus the alcohol. These drinks often combine fruit or vegetable juices, herbs, sparkling water and flavored syrups to create refreshing and complex profiles. Mocktails allow people to enjoy the social and sensory experience of a cocktail while avoiding alcohol-related health risks.

These five options make use of fresh herbs, fruits and vegetables from your garden, grocery store or farmers market. We also provide some sample cheese and meat pairings. (See [Pinchin' Pennie\\$ in the Kitchen: 7 Steps to Creating a Charcuterie Board.](#))

Save money by making your own homemade simple syrup: Combine 1 part granulated sugar to 1 part water in a saucepan. Combine over medium heat, but do not boil. Let the syrup cool, then refrigerate in an airtight container such as a canning jar. This lasts about a month in the refrigerator.

Although bottled citrus juice can be used, use freshly squeezed lemon or lime juice for the freshest flavor.

References

- Alcohol and cancer risk fact sheet.* Fact Sheet - NCI. (2025, May 2). <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet#does-alcohol-drinking-cause-cancer>
- Bowdring, M. A., McCarthy, D. M., Fairbairn, C. E., & Prochaska, J. J. (2024). Non-alcoholic beverage consumption among US adults who consume alcohol. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 119(6), 1080–1089. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16452>
- Shield, K. D., Parry, C., & Rehm, J. (2014). Chronic Diseases and Conditions Related to Alcohol Use. *Alcohol Research: Current Reviews*, 35(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.35946/arcr.v35.2.06>

Mocktail Recipes (NA = nonalcoholic)

Sidecar (NA)

1 cup citrus tea
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
¼ cup orange juice
Ice as desired
¼ cup honey



1. Add citrus tea, lemon juice and orange juice to a shaker (or other covered container) with ice.
2. Slightly warm the honey in a microwave oven (10 seconds) so it blends more easily, then add the honey to the same container.
3. Shake for 30 seconds and strain into a champagne or white wine glass.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 87 calories, 0.1 g fat, 0.2 g protein, 23 g carbohydrate, 0.1 g fiber and 8 mg sodium.

Cheese/meat pairing: Pair with fresh cheeses, such as brie, goat cheese (chèvre) and crème fraîche, or with prosciutto or jamón serrano.

Sangria (NA)

1 cup pomegranate juice
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
Ice as desired
24 grapes
1 green apple, chopped
1 orange, chopped
¾ cup nonalcoholic sparkling wine or sparkling grape juice



1. Add pomegranate juice and lemon juice to the shaker (or other covered container) with ice and shake for 30 seconds.
2. In a tall glass, add ice and chopped fruit. Strain and pour the shaker contents into the glass.
3. Leave room to top with sparkling white grape juice.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 115 calories, 0.4 g fat, 0.7 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 10 mg sodium.

Cheese/meat pairing: Pair with robust cheeses, such as Manchego, Gruyère and aged cheddar, or with bold meats, such as chorizo, salami and soppressata.

Aloe Spritz (NA)

1 cup aloe juice (with pulp, if desired, for texture)
¼ cup simple syrup
¼ cup lime juice
Ice as desired
1 cup nonalcoholic dry bubbly wine or sparkling white grape juice
Cucumber ribbons or slices to garnish



1. Add aloe juice, simple syrup and lime juice into a shaker (or other covered container) with ice. Shake for 30 seconds.
2. Strain and pour into a glass (ice recommended but not necessary).
3. Top off with your choice of sparkling beverage, such as sparkling grape juice.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 68 calories, 0 g fat, 0.1 g protein, 18 g carbohydrate, 0.1 g fiber and 10 mg sodium.

Cheese/meat pairing: Pair with delicate or light flavors, such as mozzarella or sheep's milk cheeses and prosciutto or jamón serrano.

Bloody Mary (NA)

1 cup low-sodium V8 juice
¼ cup cocktail sauce
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
Ice as desired
4 celery sticks



Optional: olives, cheese or garnish of choice

1. Add V8 juice, cocktail sauce and lemon juice into a shaker (or other covered container) without ice. Shake for 30 seconds, then add ice and shake again for another 30 seconds.
2. Strain and pour into a glass (ice not recommended).
3. Garnish with preferred toppings. Recommended garnishes include celery, olives, pickle spears, pepperoncini and cubed cheese.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 42 calories, 0.3 g fat, 0.9 g protein, 9 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber and 215 mg sodium.

Cheese/meat pairing: Pair with full-flavor, creamy cheeses such as aged Gouda or blue cheese or with peppery meats such as salami and summer sausage.

Peach-Mint Julep (NA)

2 limes, rinsed, halved and cut in wedges
1 cup fresh or canned peaches (in water), muddled
24 mint leaves
4 teaspoons granulated sugar
Ice as desired
1 ½ cups unflavored or flavored sparkling water



1. In a bowl, add the lime, and muddle using a muddler or the back of the spoon. Muddle (stir) until the pulp and juice are extracted from the lime.
2. Remove the lime wedges and add peaches, mint and granulated sugar to the bowl. Muddle again until a puree consistency. The mint leaves won't break down completely.
3. Pour the contents into a shaker (or other covered container) with ice and shake for 30 seconds. Pour contents into glasses and top with sparkling water.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 41 calories, 0.1 g fat, 0.5 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 22 mg sodium.

Cheese/meat pairing: Pair with mozzarella, brie, feta and crème fraîche or with pastrami and capicola.

Made possible with funding from the North Dakota Department of Agriculture through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program.

NDSU Extension does not endorse commercial products or companies even though reference may be made to tradenames, trademarks or service names.

For more information on this and other topics, see
www.ndsu.edu/extension

North Dakota State University is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Requests for accommodations related to disability may be made at 701-231-1865. web-6-26