SOAKING & SPROUTING GUIDE

excerpted from The Blender Girl cookbook

BY TESS MASTERS

the decadent detox

#thedecadentdetox

Soaking:

We soak foods for two reasons:

To activate their full nutrient potential and make them digestible
To soften them for smooth textures

Nuts, seeds, and grains are brilliant products of nature that contain inhibitors (like armor) to prevent germination until the conditions are right. These foods also contain phytates and other anti-nutrients. These agents act as enzyme inhibitors in our digestive system compromising the absorption of nutrients such as iron, calcium, copper, zinc, and magnesium.

Soaking nuts, seeds, and grains neutralizes enzyme inhibitors, activates the full nutrient potential of the food, and makes them more easily pulverized in your blender.

Soaking is quick and easy, and you can do it two ways:

Slow-Soaking (for nutritional benefit): Takes a little advance planning, but just a few minutes of hands-on time.

Quick-Soaking: easy, but just to soften foods for culinary purposes as it kills live enzymes.

Foods require different soaking times for full germination. As a general rule with nuts: the harder the nut, the longer the soak.

Long-Soak (8 HRS): almonds, pistachios, hazelnuts
Medium-Soak (4 to 6 HRS): pecans, walnuts, Brazil nuts
Short-Soak (2 to 4 HRS): cashews, macadamias, pine nuts

Note: Over soaking the creamier nuts breaks down their precious and flavorful oils.

For directions on soaking, see the How To Soak Foods Chart excerpted from The Perfect Blend cookbook. For specific soak times for nuts, seeds, and grains, see the Soaking and Sprouting Chart excerpted from The Blender Girl cookbook.

Dates, Goji Berries, Sun-Dried Tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables don't contain anti-nutrients like nuts, seeds, and grains, so there is no nutritional benefit to soaking, and there is also no need to rinse after soaking or discard the soaking liquid. You can use the water or milk you've soaked the food in your recipe for fuller flavor. For example, almond milk that's been used to soak dates in can be added to a smoothie for more sweetness.

HOW TO SOAK FOODS

excerpted from The Perfect Blend cookbook

SOAKING nuts, seeds, and grains:

Always soak in filtered water at room temperature in a glass, ceramic, or non-reactive metal vessel. Discard the soaking liquid (it contains anti-nutrients) and rinse the food before using.

THE QUICK WAY:

(To improve texture only. No nutritional benefit as heat destroys enzymes.)

- Cover food with boiling water
- Let stand 10 minutes
- Drain, discard soaking liquid
- Use food in recipe immediately

THE BETTER, BUT SLOWER WAY:

Soak food in filtered water with 1 tsp lemon juice or apple cider vinegar + 1/2 tsp of salt per quart (or liter) of water.
Wait the recommended time.
(See TheBlenderGirl.com for soak times)

SOAKING dried fruits and vegetables:

*NOTE: Dates, Goj Berries, Sun-Dried Tomatoes and others don't contain anti-nutrients like nuts, seeds & grains, so there is no need to rinse. You can also use the soaking liquid for fuller flavor.

THE QUICK WAY:

- Chop
- Cover with boiling water for 10 minutes
- Drain and use immediately

THE BETTER, BUT SLOWER WAY:

Cover with filtered water or your recipe's base liquid, and let stand until the food is soft. (Typically, 15 to 30 minutes)

5 REASONS TO SOAK:

- Improves digestion by neutralizing enzyme inhibitors
- Activates full nutrient potential
- Reduces cooking time for grains
- Softens food for blending to get smoother textures
- Prevents blender wear and tear

Sprouting:

Including sprouted activated foods in your diet not only maximizes nutrient availability and expands culinary pleasure, but also encourages the proliferation of friendly bacteria in the digestive system, which boosts immunity. Consuming these foods in conjunction with cultured foods is a winning strategy for gut health.

1. Soak your foods in a mason jar with a flat metal lid and a ring top. Remove the lid from the ring and use it as a guide to cut a piece of breathable mesh or cheesecloth to cover the opening of the jar. Place the food you want to sprout into the jar, only about one-third full, and fill the jar with warm water and a bit of natural salt (1/4 teaspoon per cup of water). Close the jar with the breathable cover and the ring. Let the jar rest on a counter top for the desired time (see the Soaking and Sprouting chart excerpted from The Blender Girl cookbook).
2. To drain, remove the ring and the mesh, pour out the water, and then fill the jar with fresh, warm water. Replace the flat metal lid and secure it with the ring. Rinse the food well by shaking the jar. Drain and repeat. After drain- ing the water for the second time, refit the mesh, close the jar with the ring, and lay the jar down at an angle, so excess water drains out. Leave the jar on its side to sit in natural light on a counter top or windowsill to drain. Repeat the rinsing and draining every few hours, or at least twice a day. Make sure you angle the jar to drain off excess liquid and that you keep it in the sunlight until the food is fully sprouted.
3. Most foods sprout in 1 to 4 days (see the chart). Sprouts vary in length from 1/8 inch to 2 inches (3mm to 5cm), and not all will show signs of green. When the sprouts are ready, do a final rinse, drain thoroughly, and tilt the jar for further drainage until the sprouts are completely dry. (If they're damp, they'll spoil.) When they're dry to the touch, replace the flat metal lid, secure with the ring, and store the jar in the fridge.

We recommend soaking the foods you plan to sprout just before going to bed, so they're ready to go into sprouting jars in the morning. Getting them ready takes just a couple of minutes. Then it's only a matter of checking on them, and making sure they stay hydrated. On a sunny windowsill, they're easy to manage while you do other things.

Note: Most seeds, legumes, and grains will sprout a tail but some won't. Most nuts will not physically sprout. A raw nut or seed may not have been cooked, technically, but still may have been irradiated, pasteurized, or subjected to heat to crack its hard shell. Almonds that aren't truly raw will activate nutritionally with soaking, but won't sprout. (Refer to the chart for specific sprouting characteristics).

Sprouts are susceptible to contamination, which can cause bacterial growth such as E. coli, resulting in food poisoning. When preparing your sprouts, always wash your hands thoroughly, keep sprouting equipment and kitchen surfaces clean to avoid cross contamination, and consume within a couple of days, straight out of the fridge. When purchasing commercial sprouts, always source fresh products from a reputable supplier.

SOAKING AND SPROUTING CHART

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EXCERPTED FROM
THE BLENDER GIRL
COOKBOOK

FOOD	SOAKING TIME (HOURS)	SPROUTING TIME (DAYS)
ADZUKI BEANS	8 TO 12	4
ALMONDS	8 TO 12	NO SPROUTING
AMARANTH	8	1 TO 3
BARLEY	6	2
BLACK BEANS	8 TO 12	3
BRAZIL NUTS	3	NO SPROUTING
BUCKWHEAT	6	2 TO 3
CASHEWS	2 TO 4	NO SPROUTING
CHICKPEAS	8	2 TO 3
FLAXSEEDS	½	NO SPROUTING
HAZELNUTS	8 TO 12	NO SPROUTING
KAMUT	6	2 TO 3
LENTILS	6	2 TO 3
MACADAMIAS	8	NO SPROUTING
MILLET	8	12 HOURS
MUNG BEANS	5	4
OAT GROATS	8 TO 12	2 TO 3
PECANS	6	NO SPROUTING
PISTACHIOS	6	NO SPROUTING
PUMPKIN SEEDS	8	3
QUINOA	5	2 TO 3
RADISH GREENS	8 TO 12	3 TO 4
SESAME SEEDS	8	2 TO 3
SUNFLOWER SEEDS	8	12 TO 24 HOURS
WALNUTS	4	NO SPROUTING
WHEAT BERRIES	7	3 TO 4
WILD RICE	9	3 TO 5