

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Smoothie Starter Pack

A companion to The Smoothie Recipe Bible · by Mara Quinn

Thanks for picking up the book. This is the companion you stick on the fridge next to the blender: the master ratio so you can build a thick, creamy smoothie without a recipe, a build-by-goal table for the mornings you want it to do a specific job, the freezer-pack system that turns your smoothie into a ninety-second habit, a thickness fix-it card for when something comes out wrong, five starter recipes with real amounts, and a shopping and batch-prep checklist. Print it, get a little smoothie on it.

The thing that separates a thick, creamy smoothie from sad green juice is not a fancy blender or some exotic powder. It is three parts you can count on one hand: frozen fruit, something creamy, a little protein. Get those right and you can build breakfast with your eyes closed. — Mara

1. The Master Smoothie Formula

Memorize this one line and you never have to follow a recipe again. Open the fridge, see what you have, and build:

1/2 to 3/4 cup liquid + 1 to 1 1/2 cups frozen fruit + 1 creamy element + (optional protein) + (optional handful of greens) + (optional booster), blended until smooth.

The single most important word in that line is frozen. Frozen fruit is what makes a smoothie thick and cold and almost ice-cream-like, instead of thin and watery. Fresh fruit plus ice is the backup, not the star. Ice chills but it waters down as it melts and never gives you that creamy body. So: frozen first, ice only to top up.

Part	How much (1 serving)	Pick from	What it does
Liquid	1/2 to 3/4 cup (120-180 ml)	Water, plant milk, dairy milk, coconut water, a splash of juice	Lets the blades work; sets light vs rich
Frozen fruit	1 to 1 1/2 cups (150-220 g)	Frozen banana, berries, mango, pineapple, peaches	Thickness, cold, creamy body (the secret)
Creamy base	1 element	1/2 frozen banana, 1/4-1/2 cup yogurt, 2-3 Tbsp oats, 1 Tbsp nut butter, or 1/4 avocado	Richness, that smooth mouthfeel
Protein (optional)	1 source	Greek yogurt, milk, 1 scoop powder, 1/4 cup silken tofu, 1 Tbsp nut butter	Keeps you full to the next meal
Greens (optional)	1 cup (30 g)	Big handful spinach (kale start small)	Veg you cannot taste, if you let fruit lead
Booster (optional)	small	1 Tbsp chia/flax, 1 Tbsp cocoa, pinch cinnamon, 1/4 tsp vanilla, tiny pinch salt	The finishing touch

The build order that prevents a stuck blender

1. Liquid in first. Always. The blades need something to grab.
2. Soft and powdered next - yogurt, oats, nut butter, protein powder, seeds.
3. Greens on top of that.
4. Frozen fruit and ice last, riding up high where the vortex pulls them down.
5. Blend 30 to 60 seconds until you stop hearing chunks. Too thick? Splash of liquid. Too thin? More frozen fruit.

Start with less liquid than you think you need. You can always blend in a splash more to loosen a too-thick smoothie, but you cannot un-thin a watery one without more frozen fruit. Under-pour and adjust up.

2. Build-by-Goal Quick Reference

Same formula, dialed for the job you want it to do that morning. These are starting points, not prescriptions - I am a home cook, not a clinician, so think of this as how I steer the ratio, and adjust to taste. Each row is one serving.

Goal	Liquid	Frozen fruit	Creamy / protein	Greens & boost	The idea
Weight-friendly	3/4 cup water or unsweetened almond milk	1 cup mixed berries	1/4 cup Greek yogurt	Big handful spinach + 1 Tbsp chia	Lower sugar, high fiber and protein so it actually keeps you full
High-protein	3/4 cup milk or soy milk	1 cup frozen banana + berries	1/2 cup Greek yogurt + 1 scoop protein powder	1 Tbsp peanut butter	Stacks two or three protein sources for recovery
Energy / breakfast	3/4 cup oat milk	1 frozen banana	3 Tbsp rolled oats + 1 Tbsp nut butter	Pinch cinnamon	Slow oats and banana for steady morning fuel
Immunity / gut	1/2 cup orange juice + 1/4 cup water	1 cup mango + pineapple	1/2 cup plain yogurt or kefir	Thumb of fresh ginger	Vitamin C fruit plus live-culture yogurt
Kid-friendly	3/4 cup milk	1 cup strawberries + 1/2 frozen banana	2 Tbsp yogurt	Small handful spinach (hidden) + 1 tsp honey	Sweet fruit leads so the spinach disappears

Spinach is your friend across every one of these. A single handful vanishes into berry, mango, or banana with no taste at all. Start with spinach, start with one handful, and pair it with sweet fruit. Skip the grapefruit - I learned that one in my swamp-water phase so you do not have to.

3. The Freezer Prep-Pack System

This is the single thing that turned my smoothie from a sometimes-treat into a daily habit. You do all the measuring, peeling, and portioning once, when you have a few quiet minutes, then on a busy morning you dump a bag in the blender, add liquid, and go. Ninety seconds, done.

Step 1: Pull your bags. Decide how many smoothies you want for the week and grab that many quart-size zip-top freezer bags (or reusable silicone ones, which I prefer). Lay them open on the counter.

Step 2: Fill with everything EXCEPT liquid and dairy. Into each bag goes the frozen fruit, sliced fresh fruit, a handful of greens, and any oats or seeds. A bag might hold a sliced banana, 1 cup (150 g) berries, and a handful of spinach. Chia and flax freeze fine, so they can go in too.

Step 3: Leave OUT the milk, yogurt, and fresh nut butter. Dairy and nut butter are better added fresh at blend time, and liquid just freezes into a useless brick. Add those in the morning.

Step 4: Press out the air, seal, label. Squeeze the air out to prevent freezer burn, seal, and write the contents and date on each bag with a marker. An unlabeled freezer bag becomes a mystery within a week.

Step 5: Freeze flat, in a single layer until solid. They stack neatly and thaw a touch faster. Once solid, stand them up like files in a drawer.

Step 6: On the morning, blend. Empty one pack into the blender, add about 3/4 cup (180 ml) liquid plus your creamy or protein add-in (a scoop of yogurt, splash of milk, spoon of peanut butter). Blend smooth. Everything is already frozen, so you get thick and creamy with no extra ice.

Freezer packs hold their best quality about 1 to 2 months (safe longer, the fruit just slowly dulls). I make a week or two at a time so everything tastes fresh. Spinach frozen right alongside the fruit is the best hide-the-greens trick there is.

4. Thickness & Fix-It Troubleshooting

Almost every smoothie problem is one of these, and every one has a quick fix. Dog-ear this page while you are learning the formula.

Problem	Why it happened	The fix
Too thin / watery	Not enough frozen fruit, too much liquid, or fresh fruit + ice instead of frozen	Add more frozen fruit, a few ice cubes, or a spoon of oats, nut butter, or yogurt. Next time start with less liquid and use frozen, not fresh.
Too thick / blender stuck	Too much frozen fruit, not enough liquid, blades spinning in an empty pocket	Add a splash more liquid, a little at a time. Stop and stir or shake to free the vortex. Remember: liquid goes in first.
Too bitter	Too much greens (especially kale) or unripe fruit	Add banana, mango, or pineapple, or a small drizzle of honey. Use spinach instead of kale and start with a smaller handful.
Too sweet	Too much juice or honey, or very ripe fruit	Add a squeeze of lemon or lime, more plain water or unsweetened milk, or a handful of plain spinach. Skip added sweetener next time.
Gritty / grainy	Seeds, oats, or tough greens not broken down, or blended too short	Blend 30 to 60 seconds longer until no chunks. Soak oats or chia a few minutes first, or blend the greens with the liquid before adding everything else.
Warm / not cold	Used fresh fruit instead of frozen, or all liquid and no frozen anything	Use frozen fruit or add ice. Chill your liquid ahead. Cold is half of what makes a smoothie taste good.

If you take one thing from this card, take this: most thin, warm, joyless smoothies come down to using fresh fruit when you should have used frozen. The fix for half these problems is the same - more frozen fruit.

5. Five Starter Recipes

The blends I come back to most. Short lists, everyday ingredients, thick and creamy every time. Nutrition is per serving and approximate.

Classic Strawberry Banana

The one that hooks everyone. Impossible to mess up.

- 1 cup (140 g) frozen strawberries
- 1 ripe banana, fresh or frozen
- 3/4 cup (180 ml) milk or any plant milk

Pour the milk in first, then banana and frozen strawberries. Blend 45 to 60 seconds until spoonable.

Approx: 230 cal, 8 g protein, 44 g carbs, 4 g fat, 5 g fiber. Mara's tip: a frozen banana gives an almost-milkshake texture without ice.

Green Machine (you cannot taste the spinach)

The training-wheels green smoothie. Sweet fruit leads, spinach disappears.

- 3/4 cup (180 ml) unsweetened almond milk
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 cup (165 g) frozen mango
- 1 big handful (30 g) fresh spinach

Liquid first, then banana, then spinach, frozen mango on top. Blend 45 to 60 seconds.

Approx: 215 cal, 4 g protein, 47 g carbs, 3 g fat, 6 g fiber. Mara's tip: start with one handful of spinach; you can always add more once you trust it.

Peanut Butter Protein

My post-workout default. Thick, filling, keeps you full for hours.

- 3/4 cup (180 ml) milk or soy milk
- 1 frozen banana
- 1/2 cup (120 g) plain Greek yogurt
- 1 Tbsp (16 g) peanut butter

Milk first, then yogurt, peanut butter, frozen banana. Blend until smooth, about 45 seconds.

Approx: 350 cal, 22 g protein, 38 g carbs, 13 g fat, 4 g fiber. Mara's tip: no protein powder needed - the yogurt and peanut butter do the work. A scoop of vanilla powder pushes it past 30 g if you want.

Mango Lassi

A cooling, tangy blend for hot afternoons or alongside spicy food.

- 1 cup (165 g) frozen mango chunks

- 1/2 cup (120 g) plain whole-milk yogurt
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) milk or water

Milk and yogurt first, then frozen mango. Blend 45 seconds until silky. Splash more milk if too thick.

Approx: 215 cal, 9 g protein, 38 g carbs, 5 g fat, 3 g fiber. Mara's tip: a tiny pinch of ground cardamom makes it taste like the restaurant version.

Berry Oat Breakfast

Steady morning fuel when you do not want to be hungry by ten.

- 3/4 cup (180 ml) oat milk
- 1 cup (140 g) frozen mixed berries
- 1/2 frozen banana
- 3 Tbsp (25 g) rolled oats

Oat milk first, then oats, banana, frozen berries. Blend 60 seconds so the oats break down fully.

Approx: 290 cal, 7 g protein, 56 g carbs, 5 g fat, 8 g fiber. Mara's tip: blend the oats with just the liquid for 15 seconds first if yours come out grainy.

6. Shopping & Batch-Prep Checklist

Stock the everyday pantry

- [] Frozen fruit: banana (slice and freeze ripe ones), mixed berries, mango, pineapple
- [] Liquid: your milk - dairy, almond, oat, or soy (oat and soy are the creamiest)
- [] Creamy base: plain Greek yogurt, rolled oats, peanut or almond butter
- [] Greens: a bag of fresh spinach (freeze half in handfuls for packs)
- [] Boosters: chia or ground flax, cocoa powder, cinnamon, vanilla, honey
- [] Gear: a working blender (you do not need a \$500 one), a few quart freezer bags, a to-go cup

Sunday batch-prep, in order

- [] Pick how many smoothies you want this week; pull that many bags
- [] Slice and portion fresh banana and fruit
- [] Fill each bag: frozen fruit + sliced fruit + handful spinach + any oats/seeds
- [] Leave OUT milk, yogurt, fresh nut butter (add those in the morning)
- [] Press the air out, seal, label with contents and date
- [] Freeze flat in a single layer; stand them up once solid

Every morning

- [] Empty one pack into the blender
- [] Add 3/4 cup (180 ml) liquid + your creamy/protein add-in
- [] Blend 30 to 60 seconds until no chunks; adjust thick/thin
- [] Pour, drink, go

That's the pack. Start tomorrow with the simplest thing on it: one frozen banana, 1 cup of frozen berries, 3/4 cup of milk, and a handful of spinach if you are feeling brave. That is the whole craft in one glass - frozen fruit, something creamy, a little protein, and the spinach you will not even taste. When you blend your first thick, creamy one and actually look forward to the next morning, I'd love to hear about it, and in a couple of emails I'll tell you how a quick word from you helps this book reach the next person standing in front of a dusty blender.

Blend it thick, blend it creamy,

Mara Quinn