

# **Chocolate Peanut Butter Chia Pudding Recipe Here: Dairy Good Practices Build Sense Of Well-Being**

by Maggie Cimarolli  
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ST. LOUIS - During the last three years, many people have experienced increased stress as the pandemic delivered unexpected life changes and economic pressures. With April marking National Stress Awareness Month, now is the time to reset habits and prioritize balanced meals, sleep and exercise to promote a sense of well-being. Consuming dairy products as part of a healthy eating pattern can build energy reserves, promote a sense of calm, boost the immune system and promote gut health. All of these factors can help battle stress.

Meals and snacks containing carbohydrates, protein, fat and fiber keep hunger away, provide lasting energy and stabilize blood sugar. Steady blood sugar levels throughout the day can improve thinking and smooth out moods. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends three servings of dairy per day as part of a healthy approach to

meals and snacks. Milk and yogurt, for example, offer a strong combination of protein, carbohydrates and fat. Dairy foods also pair well with fiber-rich whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes.

“When people eat nutrient-dense foods, such as milk, yogurt and other dairy foods, they have the energy to take on their daily tasks, as well as the stress that might accompany those activities,” said Maggie Cimarolli, registered dietitian with St. Louis District Dairy Council. “Dairy also goes with many other foods and is widely accessible and affordable.”

Dairy foods can promote a sense of calm. A small dairy-based snack in the afternoon or a warm glass of milk in the evening can set a comforting tone.

“When three o’clock hits, a lot of us are feeling that afternoon slump, especially if the day has been hectic,” Cimarolli said. “Take a 10- to 15-minute break and eat a filling, dairy-rich snack, such as cheese with whole-grain crackers or whole-grain cereal with milk. This snack break will improve your mindset and provide energy. Likewise, drinking a warm glass of milk can be part of your evening wind-down routine. Milk is soothing when served as a warm drink.”

Dairy foods also help support the immune system and gut health. More than 70 percent of the immune system’s cells resides in the gut. Milk delivers 13 essential nutrients, including calcium, potassium, vitamin D, vitamin A, selenium, zinc and protein. Protein, vitamin D, vitamin A, selenium and zinc help maintain a healthy immune system. Fermented dairy foods, such as yogurt, kefir and some types of cheese, contain live and active bacterial cultures. These healthy bacteria aid in the proper digestion of food and absorption of nutrients, and support overall gut health.

“Dairy delivers the nutrients and fuel the body needs every day,” Cimarolli said. “Each 8-ounce serving of milk, no matter the flavor or fat content, delivers 13 essential nutrients and 8 grams of protein. Drinking or eating three servings of dairy a day will help round out the nutritional value of meals or snacks.”

For more information on dairy’s benefits, visit [www.stldairycouncil.org](http://www.stldairycouncil.org) or contact Maggie Cimarolli at 314-835-9668 or [MCimarolli@STLDairyCouncil.org](mailto:MCimarolli@STLDairyCouncil.org). Follow the St. Louis District Dairy Council on Facebook and Instagram at STLDairyCouncil.

## **Chocolate Peanut Butter Chia Pudding**

This creamy dairy treat delivers protein and fiber. Serve it for breakfast or as a mid-afternoon snack.

Prep time: 5 minutes Yield: 2 servings

## Ingredients

¾ cup chocolate milk

2 tablespoons peanut butter

¼ cup chia seeds

4 tablespoons whipped cream for garnish

6 raspberries for garnish

## Instructions

1. Measure the peanut butter into a small, microwave-safe bowl. Heat the peanut butter in the microwave for 45 seconds.
2. Remove bowl from microwave. Add the chocolate milk to the bowl and whisk for a minute to combine the peanut butter and milk.
3. Add the chia seeds to the bowl and stir well.
4. Cover and refrigerate the bowl overnight. The chia seeds will absorb the chocolate milk.
5. When ready to serve, divide the chia pudding into two serving dishes, garnish with whipped cream and fresh berries. Serve immediately.

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*The St. Louis District Dairy Council (SLDDC) is a nonprofit nutrition education organization funded by local dairy farmers. Since 1932, SLDDC has served 131 counties in central/southern Illinois and eastern Missouri as the go-to educational resource and advocate for the role of dairy foods as part of a healthful diet. As The Nutrition Education People, we are proud to spread knowledge to local communities, bridging the gap between local dairy farmers and consumers. The staff is comprised of professionals with experience in nutrition, food service management, education and communications, and we take pride in delivering engaging programs throughout the communities we serve.*