

## Nutritional Yeast Flakes Rise to the Occasion

By Melanie Peters | June 30, 2017

**N**utritional yeast flakes (or as it's more popularly known, nooch) have become the go-to food item for those wanting the flavor of cheese without the calories or animal fat. Unlike activated yeast used for making bread, nutritional yeast flakes are made from deactivated yeast that has been heated and dried. Nutritional yeast flakes have a strong flavor comparable to Parmesan cheese, which is why it has become a staple among those following [a vegan or low-fat diet](#).



But are nutritional yeast flakes a good source of nutrition?

Cayleih Mackay Nunn, registered dietician with UC San Diego Health Nutrition Services, says “yes! Nutritional yeast tends to be a staple in the vegan diet as many B vitamins are found in highest concentrations in animal products. [The CDC 2012 National Report](#) found B6 was the vitamin people living in the U.S. were most deficient in and

nutritional yeast is a great source of all B vitamins, [particularly B6](#).”

And nutritional yeast flakes are calorically low. “Surprisingly, nutritional yeast is pretty similar to Parmesan cheese in terms of calories: two tablespoons of nutritional yeast equals 40 calories; the same amount of Parmesan cheese is also 40 calories; whereas two tablespoons of cheddar cheese comes in at 56 calories.” If you’re trying to cut down on fat and dairy but miss that sprinkle of cheese on your spaghetti or salad, nutritional yeast is a healthy option, especially as it’s also [low in sodium](#). “When I want a snack, I use nutritional yeast on my stove cooked popcorn with a little olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and red pepper flakes. It’s delicious!”

Having diversity within your diet is important. It keeps you from getting bored of the same old, same old, which can easily lead to self-sabotage. Nunn sees nutritional yeast flakes as a way to

help satisfy your taste for cheese without the additional calories. “I believe in having as much diversity in your diet as possible. Cheese is something I consume a lot of so anytime I want to use Parmesan cheese I try nutritional yeast flakes instead and often feel satisfied with the substitute. I think they are tasty and I really, genuinely enjoy them.”

Although nutritional yeast is low in calories, Nunn advises to pay attention to the serving size suggested on the package. “Toppings and condiments tend to get away from people. I think it’s important to remember that nutritional yeast is not a ‘free food’ and the calories do add up. But used in moderation, it’s a great thing!”

Here are some recipe ideas to help you incorporate nutty, cheesy, nutritional yeast flakes into your diet:



### **Popcorn with Nutritional Yeast and Aleppo Pepper** ([Recipe courtesy of Bon Appetit](#))

Shake up movie night with this tasty take on cheesy popcorn. Popcorn is a whole grain and a good source of fiber but it can quickly become a nutritional minefield with added toppings. This recipe cuts the salt and

skips the butter.

### **Cheesy Kale Chips** ([Recipe courtesy of Pop Sugar](#))

Cooked low and slow, kale leaves — which are high in vitamins A, B, K and calcium — make a healthier alternative to your favorite fried vegetable chips. Flavor with nutritional yeast flakes and you have a healthier version of the nacho cheese chip.

### **Simple Vegan Pesto** ([Recipe courtesy of Food 52](#))

Having some homemade pesto in the fridge is a great way to save yourself time when you need to feed a crowd or if you want to liven up a simple meal, and, knowing this is dairy-free, will come in handy when cooking for guests with special dietary needs. Heading over to a backyard barbeque? Try pesto in your pasta salad instead of mayonnaise. Want to jazz up grilled fish or chicken? Add a dollop of pesto before serving.

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