



Kristin Cardillo, RDN



## Why Acai Bowls Might Cause Weight Gain

So I have to be honest here.

Whenever I see people who claim to be a “nutritionist” because they lost weight post on social media to thousands of followers about eating Acai Bowls / other smoothie bowls to lose weight – **I shake my head with sorrow.**

As a dietitian I am here to tell you there is a strong chance Acai Bowls will not by **ANY MEANS** help you lose weight especially if you are eating them right from the shops.

Here is why #AcaiBowls might not be causing you to gain and not lose weight.

1. **The portion is more than 8 ounces** – Standard bowl portions are 12-16 ounces. 1 pounds of fruit. Proper serving size? 4 ounces. Do the math.
2. **The toppings make this bowl a desert not breakfast.** *Ask yourself, do you eat (in 1 sitting) a banana, 1 cup of berries, 1 apple, nuts and peanut butter?* No I promise you don't. You don't simply because you will get full. Acai bowls (liquid smoothies) are what we give to those to **GAIN** weight for a lot of reasons. But that is for another post.
3. **They are being used as breakfast, but they are NOT balanced meals.** To lose weight you need to balance your carbs and proteins at each MEAL and SNACK. Acai bowls alone without protein or healthy fats can make you hungry within an hour. This is due to rapid digestion of simple carbohydrates thus, causing you to eat more after you've already ate 400- 700 calories. Likely leading to carb and caloric overload for the day.
4. **Fruits are carbohydrates.** 1 serving of fruit per meal and per snack is ½ cup for berries, 1 small banana etc. They are by no means **IF YOU ARE TRYING TO ACTIVELY LOSE WEIGHT** unlimited. There is a difference between eating healthy & eating to lose weight. Yes you do have to eat to lose weight (not the opposite). However, you need a balance and these bowls are over portioned and not macro balanced.



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5. **There is not enough protein.** As a result, your blood sugar can spike and then plummet, leaving you feeling hungry not long after you have a bowl.

### **What are they?**

*They are from Brazil and South America. We eat the flesh and skin of the berry and not the actual berry itself.*

### **Why they are healthy and in the media?**

Berries of all kind have antioxidants. Antioxidants can prevent cancer. We need antioxidants to reverse free radical damage to our body cause by sunlight, toxins in smoke, air pollution, trans fat, preservatives in our food, alcohol, and more to PREVENT cancer. These carcinogens (yes are in your food supply) cause "free radicals,"(molecules with an unpaired electron) which is very unstable and bad for our bodies. Antioxidants are nice and lend an electron to those free radicals causing them to be safe again. Antioxidants are honestly only found in our fruits and vegetables.

The acai puree packets that are used to make the bowls at home are not an issue a 100 gram packet of Sambazon puree contains just 70 calories, 5 grams of fat, and no sugar. It is when we add toppings such as nuts, milk, berries, bananas, coconut & nut butters that we develop too many calories. There is too much sugar (yes natural) in these bowls way more than what we recommend in a day.



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## **4 WAYS TO MAKE IT SKINNER**

- 1. Make it at home and mix with spinach or other greens (these have no carbs) with the puree**
  - 2. Watch the bowl size (1 cup is all that is recommended)**
  - 3. Add a protein source to help you stay full but don't over ADD them.**
  - 4. Only pick 2 toppings and limit them to ¼ cup of fruit, 4-5 fruit slices, 10 nuts, 1 tb of nut butter and 1 teaspoon of toasted coconut chips, chia seeds, sliced fruits etc.**
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### **Try making the skinny & delicious version at home!**

Base:

1 100g packet of frozen unsweetened acai berry puree, 1 scoop vanilla or unflavored protein powder OR 1 oikos triple zero flavored yogurt, ½ banana, ½ cup unsweetened almond milk, ½ cup frozen or fresh blackberries, raspberries OR blueberries

Toppings:

¼ cup sliced strawberries + ¼ cup BEAR naked or KIND granola, 1 tbsp all natural nut butter (peanut, almond etc.), 1 tbsp chia seeds

Put all your base ingredients in the blender and mix until smooth then top and make it beautiful!