Which nut butter is healthiest: Peanut, almond or cashew?

Once a pantry staple, peanut butter is now joined by almond, cashew, and other nut butters. But which spread offers the most nutritional bang for your buck? We break down the key nutrients to help you make the healthiest choice.

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Once, the only nut butter on the supermarket shelf was peanut butter. Now, you can also buy almond, cashew, hazelnut, and macadamia nut butters or blends. So, which is the healthiest nut butter to spread on your toast?

As we will see, the healthiest choice is not just about the type of nut. It is also about what else goes in the jar.

What do they all have in common?

All nut butters are made from ground nuts that provide healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, plant-based protein, and fibre. They also supply essential minerals such as magnesium, potassium, zinc, and iron.

Across decades of research, regularly eating nuts is associated with a lower risk of heart disease and premature death. That benefit appears whether the nut is peanut, almond, cashew, or any other type.

However, many commercial products contain vegetable oils, palm oil, salt, sugar, or stabilisers to improve texture and shelf life. These added ingredients dilute the nutritional quality and increase salt or kilojoules without providing health benefits. Choosing a nut butter made only from nuts (or nuts with minimal salt) means you get the full nutritional value.

How do I choose a nut butter?

Check the ingredients list. The healthiest options contain just one ingredient: nuts. Some added salt is fine if minimal, but avoid products with seed oils (such as canola oil), palm oil, fillers, or added sugars.

Looking at the nutrients in each nut butter per serving (a tablespoon, about 16 grams) highlights how they differ. Numbers vary slightly by brand, but when the product contains 100 percent nuts, the numbers do not generally change dramatically between nuts. To keep things simple, let us focus on peanut, almond, and cashew butters.

Protein

Peanut butter wins slightly for protein content, at 3.84g per tablespoon, making it a solid choice for post-workout snacks or adding extra protein to your day. Almond (3.36g) and cashew butters (2.82g) are not far behind, so they still contribute meaningful protein to your diet.

Fat

Almond butter takes the top spot for healthy fats, with 8.88g per tablespoon, followed closely by peanut (7.98g) and cashew butter (7.9g). The fats in nuts are mainly heart-healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which have been associated with improved cholesterol levels and reduced inflammation.

Carbohydrates

Cashew butter contains the most carbohydrates (4.42g per tablespoon), which might be important if you are looking for quick energy before a workout or if you have type 1 diabetes and are adjusting medication based on carbohydrate intake. Peanut butter comes next (3.49g), followed by almond butter (3.01g).

Fibre

Almond butter leads for fibre (1.65g per tablespoon), followed by peanut butter (1.06g). Cashew butter lags significantly behind (0.32g), about one-fifth of almond butter's content, making it the weakest option if you are relying on nut butter to contribute to daily fibre intake.

Calcium

Almond butter dramatically outperforms the others for calcium, with 55.5 milligrams per tablespoon, about eight times more than peanut (6.56mg) or cashew butter (6.88mg). This makes almond butter an excellent choice for bone health, especially if you avoid dairy.

Potassium

Both peanut and almond butter tie for potassium content (120mg per tablespoon), supporting healthy blood pressure and muscle function. Cashew butter contains 87.4mg.

Iron

Cashew butter leads for iron (0.805mg per tablespoon), followed by almond (0.558mg) and peanut butter (0.304mg). This is particularly relevant for people with higher iron needs, such as those menstruating, pregnant, breastfeeding, or following plant-based diets. However, nut butters overall are not a meaningful source of iron.

Zinc

Cashew butter (0.826mg per tablespoon) offers nearly twice the zinc of peanut butter (0.445mg). Almond butter sits in the middle (0.526mg), making cashew butter valuable for immune function and wound healing.

Selenium

Cashew butter provides the most selenium (1.84 micrograms per tablespoon), an important antioxidant mineral that supports thyroid function. Peanut butter comes in second (1.2µg), while almond butter contains notably less (0.384µg).

Magnesium

Almond butter leads for magnesium (44.6mg per tablespoon), followed closely by cashew butter (41.3mg) and peanut butter (25.4mg). Magnesium is crucial for muscle relaxation, sleep quality, and energy production.

In a nutshell

Each nut butter has distinct nutritional advantages. Peanut butter leads in protein and ties with almond butter for potassium, making it ideal for muscle support and satiety. Almond butter stands out for calcium, fibre, magnesium, and heart-healthy fats, supporting bone health, digestion, and cardiovascular function. Cashew butter is naturally sweet and the strongest source of minerals such as iron, zinc, and selenium, essential for immune function, energy production, and thyroid health. However, it is the lowest in protein and fibre, making it better suited as an occasional option rather than a primary protein source.

Any concerns?

Almond and cashew butters are often processed on equipment used for peanuts or other nuts, so traces may appear in another nut butter. If you have a specific nut allergy, check labels carefully. Cost also varies: almond and cashew butters are usually slightly more expensive compared to peanut butter.

Verdict

No single nut butter reigns supreme, as each brings different nutritional strengths. The smartest approach is to keep more than one on hand, choose versions made from 100 percent nuts, and let your taste preferences and nu-



Choose nut butters made from 100 percent nuts with minimal salt. Avoid added oils, sugars, and fillers—to get the full nutritional benefits. PHOTO/ PEXELS.COM

NUT BUTTER QUICK FACTS

Serving size matters
A standard tablespoon is about 16 grams. Eating more than two tablespoons at a time can add extra calories quickly, even from healthy fats.

Storage tips
Natural nut butters (100 percent nuts) can separate, with oil rising to the top. Stir well before use and store in a cool, dark place. Refrigeration helps extend shelf life.

Allergy awareness
Even trace amounts of nuts can trigger reactions. If cooking or sharing nut butter, label containers clearly and check for cross-contamination warnings.

DIY nut butter
Making your own nut butter at home is easy: roast nuts lightly, blend until smooth, and add a pinch of salt if desired. No oils, stabilisers, or sugar needed.

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