

Chai-Time, The Healthy Way

15 Snacks to Swap In for Samosas, Pakodas, Biscuits & Buns

Chai time is a daily ritual in most Indian households — but it's usually paired with deep-fried or refined-flour snacks that add unnecessary oil, sugar, and empty calories, day after day. The good news: you don't have to give up your evening snack, just swap what's on the plate. This guide lists 15 snacks that are just as satisfying, colour-coded by why they're healthy, along with simple ways to fit them into your daily chai routine.

Colour Key

High Protein	High Fiber	Low Oil / Baked	Steamed	Balanced Meal	Healthy Fats
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The 15 Snacks

Snack	Type	Why It's Healthy	How to Include It
1. Roasted Chana (Chickpeas)	High Protein	High in protein and fiber, keeps you full far longer than fried snacks and has no added oil.	Keep a jar of roasted chana at your desk; toss with chaat masala and onion for a quick chai-side mix.
2. Masala Roasted Makhana (Fox Nuts)	Low Oil / Baked	Low in calories and fat, roasted (not fried) in a teaspoon of ghee, and rich in magnesium.	Dry roast makhana with a little ghee, turmeric, and black pepper; store in an airtight jar for the week.
3. Sprouts Chaat	High Protein	Sprouting increases protein availability and vitamin C while keeping the dish completely oil-free.	Mix sprouted moong with chopped onion, tomato, lemon juice, and chaat masala for a crunchy side.
4. Roasted Peanuts with Spices	Healthy Fats	Contains healthy monounsaturated fats and protein; dry roasting needs no oil at all.	Dry roast peanuts with curry leaves, garlic, and a pinch of salt for an evening tea companion.
5. Boiled Masala Corn (Corn Chaat)	High Fiber	Corn is high in fiber and keeps digestion steady, unlike deep-fried tea-time snacks.	Boil corn kernels, toss with lemon, chaat masala, and chopped coriander for a light bite.
6. Dhokla	Steamed	Made from fermented batter and steamed, not fried, and fermentation adds gut-friendly probiotics.	Prepare a batch on weekends and steam fresh portions when guests drop by for chai.
7. Mini Idli with Chutney	Steamed	Steamed rice and lentil batter is easy to digest and much lower in fat than fried snacks.	Make bite-sized idlis and pair with coconut or tomato chutney as a filling chai-time snack.
8. Multigrain Khakhra	High Fiber	Baked and roasted rather than fried, multigrain versions add extra fiber compared to plain wheat.	Keep a stack in the pantry; pair with a light vegetable topping or eat plain with chai.
9. Vegetable Poha	Balanced Meal	Flattened rice cooked with vegetables and minimal oil offers carbs, fiber, and micronutrients together.	Make a small batch with peanuts and vegetables as a more filling option than a bun or biscuit.

Snack	Type	Why It's Healthy	How to Include It
10. Fruit Chaat	High Fiber	Natural sugars come with fiber and vitamins, giving steadier energy than refined-sugar biscuits.	Chop seasonal fruits, add a dash of chaat masala and lemon for a refreshing tea-time side.
11. Moong Dal Chilla	High Protein	A lentil-based pancake that's high in protein and fiber, cooked with very little oil on a tawa.	Batch-make batter and cook thin chillas fresh; pair with mint chutney for chai time.
12. Homemade Trail Mix (Nuts + Seeds)	Healthy Fats	A mix of almonds, walnuts, pumpkin and sunflower seeds provides healthy fats, protein, and minerals.	Portion into small pouches so you can grab a handful alongside your tea without overeating.
13. Curd Dip with Veggie Sticks	High Protein	Curd adds protein and probiotics, while raw veggies add fiber and crunch instead of fried carbs.	Whisk curd with roasted cumin powder and salt; serve with carrot and cucumber sticks.
14. Roasted Soya Chunks	High Protein	Soya chunks are one of the richest plant protein sources and crisp up well without deep frying.	Boil, season, and air-fry or shallow roast soya chunks with spices for a crunchy protein snack.
15. Baked or Air-Fried Banana Chips	Low Oil / Baked	Baking or air-frying cuts out the heavy oil absorption of traditional deep-fried banana chips.	Slice raw bananas thin, season lightly, and bake or air-fry instead of buying the fried packet version.

Note: This guide offers general, practical alternatives for everyday tea-time snacking. It is not medical or dietary advice. Portion size and overall daily diet still matter — even healthy snacks add up if eaten in excess. Consult a nutritionist for a plan suited to your specific needs.