10/10 Food Combos

Simple pairings that turn an average food into a great one, and why they work

Many foods are fine alone, but **what you eat them with matters**. Fruit juice on its own is about a 5/10, while whole fruit with some curd is a 10/10, because fibre and protein slow absorption and keep you full. This guide lists everyday combos, including South Indian favourites, with a rating for the plain version, the upgraded 10/10 pairing and the reason it works. The ratings are a simple guide for general health and fat loss, not a clinical score.

1. What Makes a Combo 10/10

The scoring idea

Why this works: A high-scoring combo usually has protein, fibre and smart fat, in whole-food form.

INGREDIENT	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHY IT MATTERS
Protein	A palm-sized portion: eggs, curd, dal, paneer, fish, chicken or sprouts.	Keeps you full and protects muscle.
Fibre	Whole fruit, vegetables, whole grains, millets or pulses.	Slows digestion and steadies blood sugar.
Colour and variety	At least 2 or 3 colours on the plate.	Different vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
Smart fat	A little nuts, seeds, ghee or oil, measured.	Helps absorb some vitamins and adds satisfaction.
Whole food form	Whole fruit instead of juice, whole grains instead of refined.	Fibre and chewing slow things down.
Minimal added sugar and deep-fried food	Cook simply, season well.	Cuts empty calories.

2. Fruit and Dairy Combos

Upgrade your fruit

Why this works: Pairing fruit with protein or fat slows the sugar rise and keeps you full.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Fruit juice alone (5/10)	Whole fruit + plain curd or yogurt (10/10)	Fibre slows sugar absorption, and the curd adds protein and probiotics, so you feel full for longer.
Banana alone (6/10)	Banana + peanut butter or a few nuts (10/10)	Fat and protein slow the carbs and keep energy steady. A good pre-workout or snack.
Apple or guava alone (7/10)	Apple or guava + a small handful of almonds or walnuts (10/10)	Fibre plus healthy fat and protein stretches fullness.
Fruit chaat with sugar or honey (4/10)	Mixed fruit + curd + chia or flax seeds (10/10)	Natural sweetness with fibre, protein and omega-3, with no added sugar.
Fruit smoothie with sugar (4/10)	Whole berries or banana blended with plain curd and seeds (10/10)	Keeps fibre from the whole fruit and adds protein without the sugar spike.
Papaya or watermelon alone (6/10)	Papaya or watermelon + a boiled egg or paneer cubes (9 to 10/10)	The fruit hydrates and is light, and the protein makes it a balanced snack.

3. South Indian Combos

Familiar foods, better balance

Why this works: South Indian meals are rich in carbs, so adding protein, vegetables and curd upgrades them easily.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Idli alone (5/10)	Idli + sambar + boiled egg or curd (10/10)	Sambar brings dal protein and vegetables, and the egg or curd completes the protein.
Plain dosa with chutney (5/10)	Pesarattu or egg dosa + sambar (10/10)	More protein, fibre from dal, and less empty carb.
Upma or poha alone (4/10)	Upma or poha + boiled egg or sprouts + curd (10/10)	Adds the protein and fibre these dishes lack.
Rice alone or with just sambar (5/10)	Rice (smaller) + dal + vegetable palya + curd + salad (10/10)	Balanced thali: protein, fibre, probiotics and variety.
Ragi mudde with only saaru (6/10)	Ragi mudde + saaru or sambar + sprouts, egg curry or greens (10/10)	Ragi brings fibre and calcium, and the protein and greens round it out.
Curd rice alone (5/10)	Curd rice (small) + vegetable palya + boiled egg or sprouts (10/10)	Soothing and probiotic, with added fibre and protein.
Lemon rice alone (4/10)	Lemon rice + cucumber raita + egg or dal (10/10)	Vitamin C and cooling raita, with protein to balance the carbs.
Pongal with extra ghee (5/10)	Ven pongal (1 cup) + sambar + boiled eggs (10/10)	Sambar and eggs add protein and fibre that pongal lacks.
Akki roti with coconut chutney only (5/10)	Akki roti or jowar roti + dal or palya + curd (10/10)	Gluten-free grains with protein and fibre.
Rasam and rice only (5/10)	Rasam rice + dal + vegetable + curd (10/10)	Rasam aids hydration and flavour, and the dal and curd add protein.

4. Absorption Boosting Combos

Get more from the same food

Why this works: Some foods help your body absorb nutrients better when eaten together.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Palak (spinach) alone (7/10)	Palak dal or palak + lemon squeeze (10/10)	Vitamin C from lemon helps absorb plant (non-haem) iron.
Ragi or iron-rich foods without vitamin C (7/10)	Ragi dosa or roti + a squeeze of lemon or an amla or guava (10/10)	Vitamin C improves iron absorption.
Carrot or spinach with no fat (7/10)	Carrot or palak + a little ghee or oil (10/10)	Vitamin A and K are fat-soluble, so a little fat helps absorption.
Tomatoes raw only (7/10)	Cooked tomato with a little oil, as in rasam or curry (10/10)	Cooking and fat increase absorption of the antioxidant lycopene.
Turmeric milk alone (7/10)	Turmeric + a pinch of black pepper in food (9 to 10/10)	Pepper may increase absorption of curcumin, though benefits in normal food amounts are modest.
Plain dal or rice (6/10)	Dal + rice together (10/10)	Together they provide a more complete range of amino acids.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Tea with an iron-rich meal (4/10)	Tea or coffee an hour away from meals (8 to 9/10)	Tannins can reduce iron absorption, so spacing helps.

5. Snack Combos

Smarter between meals

Why this works: A snack with protein and fibre prevents the energy dips and cravings that come with refined snacks.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Biscuits and sweet tea (3/10)	Tea with less sugar + roasted chana or a boiled egg (10/10)	Protein and fibre in place of refined flour and sugar.
Chips or namkeen (3/10)	Air-popped popcorn or makhana + a few peanuts (9 to 10/10)	Crunch with fewer calories and some protein.
Fried bajji or samosa (3/10)	Sprouts chaat with onion, tomato and lemon (10/10)	Protein, fibre and vitamin C with very little oil.
Sweets or chocolates (3/10)	Dates or dark chocolate + a few nuts (9/10)	A small portion of sweetness with fat and protein.
Mayo dip with veggies (5/10)	Cucumber and carrot sticks + hung curd dip (10/10)	Crunchy, fresh and protein-rich.
Protein bar with sugar (5/10)	Boiled egg + fruit, or curd + nuts (10/10)	Whole food protein, fibre and no hidden sugar.
Fruit only (7/10)	Fruit + roasted chana or nuts (10/10)	Pairing with protein and fat keeps you full.

6. Drink Combos

Sip smarter

Why this works: Liquid sugar is easy to overlook. Better pairings keep you hydrated without the extras.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Soft drink or sweet juice (2/10)	Water with lemon + a pinch of salt (9 to 10/10)	Hydration with no sugar, and a little salt helps after sweating.
Sweet lassi (4/10)	Plain buttermilk (chaas) with roasted cumin (10/10)	Light, probiotic and hydrating.
Sweet coffee with cream (4/10)	Black coffee + a protein-rich breakfast (9 to 10/10)	Caffeine with food avoids an empty stomach and sugar load.
Energy drink (3/10)	Banana + black coffee before a workout (10/10)	Quick carbs plus caffeine, with natural potassium.
Plain milk with sugar (6/10)	Warm milk + turmeric, with no sugar (9/10)	Calcium and protein, without added sugar.
Sports drink for a casual workout (5/10)	Coconut water + a pinch of salt (9/10)	Natural electrolytes, and fewer additives.

7. Gym and Workout Combos

Before and after training

Why this works: Training meals work best with carbs for fuel and protein for recovery.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Eating nothing before training (5/10)	Banana + black coffee, or oats + curd, 30 to 60 minutes before (10/10)	Quick carbs and caffeine fuel the session without a heavy stomach.
Protein shake alone (7/10)	Whey or eggs + a banana or idli after training (10/10)	Protein repairs muscle, and carbs refill energy stores.
Only rice after training (5/10)	Chicken, fish, paneer or dal + rice + vegetables (10/10)	A complete recovery meal.
Chicken alone (7/10)	Chicken + rice or roti + sabzi + curd (10/10)	Protein plus carbs, fibre and probiotics.
Fruit only post workout (6/10)	Curd + fruit + a handful of nuts (10/10)	Protein, carbs and fat in a quick snack.
Paneer or tofu alone (7/10)	Paneer or tofu + roti + salad (10/10)	Good protein with the carbs and fibre it needs.

8. Dinner Combos

Light but complete

Why this works: A balanced dinner keeps you full without a heavy late-night load.

INSTEAD OF	10/10 COMBO	WHY IT WORKS
Heavy fried dinner (3/10)	Clear soup + salad + dal or grilled protein + 1 roti (10/10)	Light, high in protein and easy to digest.
Only rice and curry (5/10)	Roti or small rice + dal + two vegetables + curd (10/10)	Balanced and filling, with fibre and probiotics.
Skipping dinner or only snacks (4/10)	Egg bhurji + roti + salad (10/10)	Quick protein-forward meal.
Plain khichdi (6/10)	Khichdi + vegetables + curd + a boiled egg (10/10)	Comfort food with added protein and fibre.
Noodles or fried rice (3/10)	Stir-fried vegetables and chicken or tofu with a small portion of rice (9 to 10/10)	Less oil and more protein and vegetables.

9. Pairings to Separate or Avoid

Not every combo is good

Keep in mind: A few foods are better kept apart.

PAIRING	WHY	WHAT TO DO
Tea or coffee right after iron-rich meals	Can reduce iron absorption.	Wait about an hour.
Juice with a heavy breakfast	Adds sugar and little fibre.	Choose whole fruit or water.
Dessert after a big fried meal	Stacks calories on a full stomach.	Have a small fruit or skip.
Calcium and iron supplements together	They can compete for absorption.	Ask a doctor or pharmacist about timing.

Note: Ratings are a simple guide written from general knowledge, not a scientific score, and individual needs vary. This is general nutrition information, not medical advice. People with diabetes, kidney disease, allergies or other medical conditions should check food choices with a doctor or dietitian.