

Introduction

What can you do to replace flour in your soups for thickening, adding some absorbency to your baking, or making sure those mashed, pureed vegetables zip your bop – all without the glutes or higher-carb staples used to use back in the old days?

Here are a few tips for easy substitutions based on your personal needs.

Source: <https://yourlighterside.com/2013/01/low-carb-thickeners/>

Dry Starches

Ingredient	Amount	Calories	Carbohydrates	Fiber	Net Carbs	Protein
Almond Flour	1 Tbsp	40	1	1	0	6
Arrowroot Flour	1 tsp	19	4.7	0	4.7	0.01
Chia Seed	1 Tbsp	50	4	4	0	2
Coconut Flour	1 Tbsp	30	2	1	1	1
Cornstarch	5 Tbsp	15	3.9	0.03	3.9	0.01
Flax Seed Meal	1 Tbsp	30	0	2	0	2
Tapioca Pearls	1 Tbsp	14	4	0	4	0
Wheat Flour	1 Tbsp	31	6.2	0.2	6	1.03

Dry Substitutes

While wheat flour is the standard in baking, what's pretty remarkable, however, is that regular wheat flour requires 2-3 times the amount to thicken as either cornstarch or the arrowroot. In short, a little arrowroot goes a long way, and cornstarch, while not perfect, is inexpensive, is double the potency of flour for thickening, and is easy to find.

Chia seeds and flax seed meal are also useful, but since both tend to absorb and expand, the results depend on the recipe. I will, as an example, use chia and flax in brownies or cakes where I need added absorbency from a solid (links below to those recipes), but I tend to avoid chia and flax seed in gravies, soups, or sauces, where the seeds are visual (and sometimes a little unappetizing). I save these primarily for baking.

Almond and coconut flours are also valid possibilities for thickening, providing your guests like the taste of coconut (coconut flour), or aren't harboring nut allergies (nut flours). I am not typically thrilled with either in soups, roues or sauces, and typically relegate these to baking status as well.

Moist Thickeners

Ingredient	Amount	Calories	Carbohydrates	Fiber	Net Carbs	Protein
Cream Cheese	2 Tbsp	99	1.2	0	1.2	5.04
Greek Yogurt	2 Tbsp	22	2	0	2	3
Sour Cream	2 Tbsp	46	0.69	0	0.69	0.5

Moist Substitutes

Making a soup, thickening a puree, or pumping up a sauce? Consider giving these options a whirl:

Cream Cheese. While you're going to add more calories in the form of fat to your soups, sauces, and mashed, pureed vegetables with cream cheese than you would with the dry, single ingredients, look at what you're not adding to your dish: carbohydrates. In fact, the gums in cream cheese helps thicken not only the cream cheese, but the dish to which you add it. Protein is off the charts in this ingredient, too, for even greater staying power.

Sour Cream. Lower in calories, sour cream works wizardly wonders as an ingredient for thickening your moist sides, soups and sauces. It adds a bit of pep, too, so consider adding this wherever sour cream would be welcome, from your mashed cauliflower to your meatball soup.

Greek Yogurt. A thick, Greek yogurt is a terrific thickening agent, particularly in place of sour cream or where you need to add some zip to the dip.

Heavy Cream. In many soups and sauces, the heft of the cream, when cooked gently and reduced, thickens. I didn't add this one to the spreadsheet, since typically you're using more of it than a wee bit to thicken—you're basing the entire base on the cream.

Egg yolks. Perfect for adding heft to egg drop soup, be careful to not cook the eggs if added to a hot soup or sauce, or they will curdle and harden. Each large egg yolk nets only about .75 carbohydrates and about 99 calories.

Commerical Thickeners

Ingredient	Amount	Calories	Carbohydrates	Fiber	Net Carbs	Protein
LC-Thick'n Saucy	1 tsp	8	2	2	0	0

<http://www.holdthecarbs.com/low-carb-thick-n-saucy>

I have reviewed this product and can attest to its efficacy in dishes, soups and sauces. A proprietary mix of tree, vegetable and other gums, a tsp will perform as well as a tablespoon of other flours. And while the price tag is a little spendier than you might be used to, each 3 ounce bag contains 36 servings.