

## Funky Monkey Snacks Freeze-Dried Fruit (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Nut-Free, Soy-Free)

By Veggiegirl - As cool, crisp temperatures begin to fill the air, the selection of fresh produce (particularly, the fruits) begins to dwindle &ndash; and the fruits that are available during the autumn and winter months only last for a short time. For this reason, I like to incorporate a variety of fresh and dried fruits in my daily diet, in order to get the nutrients that I need, and to eat &ldquo;in season.&rdquo; But now, there is another way to consume my daily fruits: freeze-dried. Once thought to be just for astronauts, freeze-dried fruits have made their way onto many store-shelves &ndash; everywhere from health food stores to supermarkets to convenient stores! Since I have never consumed freeze-dried fruit before, I was quite intrigued by the sample products that I received, in the mail, from a company called Funky Monkey Snacks.

As I looked over each of the three individual-serving bags of freeze-dried fruits, I was impressed and &ldquo;drawn to&rdquo; the colorful (almost iridescent-looking) packaging, which boasts the clever names for the flavor of the product, the company&rsquo;s mascot (a cute, purple monkey, wearing a top-hat and a vest), and their slogan, &ldquo;Fruit That Crunches!&rdquo; I was also impressed with the statement written near the top of the bags, which reads, &ldquo;100% Real Fruit, All Natural, 100% Fat Free, No Sugar Added.&rdquo; In addition, it says on the back of the package that the contents of these bags contain &ldquo;no preservatives, coloring, or flavoring.&rdquo; Sounds too good to be true &ndash; with the promise of so much wholesome-goodness in these individual servings of freeze-dried fruit, I was anxious to find out if these products were too-good-to-be-true.

The first flavor I tried is called Purple Funk, which simply consists of freeze-dried bananas and a ai (which is known as a &ldquo;super-food,&rdquo; for its high level of antioxidants). Since I regularly consume smoothies made with bananas and a ai berries, I had high expectations for this product, since that&rsquo;s all it contains (the aforementioned bananas and a ai). However, after just one bite, I am sorry to report that I was disappointed; not just with the flavor (which resembled neither bananas nor a ai), but with the texture as well. While I know that freeze-dried fruit is supposed to be, well, dry, the Purple Funk freeze-dried fruit had a texture similar to Styrofoam (except firmer). Although I was not too keen on the Purple Funk flavor of the Funky Monkey Snacks, I was willing to give the remaining two flavors a fair chance.

The next flavor of freeze-dried fruit that I tried is called Bananamon, which is comprised of freeze-dried banana slices dusted with cinnamon. While the flavor was in fact reminiscent of bananas and cinnamon, I felt that, once again, the texture was just too dry and crumbly &ndash; none of the banana-slices were any larger than my pinky-fingernail (since larger pieces kept disintegrating). While better-tasting than the Purple Funk variety, I cannot say that I swooned over the Bananamon flavor, either; but there was still one more flavor to try &ndash; could this one be the package that outdoes the others, in terms of flavor and texture? It was time to find out.

Lastly, I opened up the package of the Jive-A-Lime freeze-dried fruit, which is just freeze-dried pineapple with lime juice. At this point in the taste-test, my expectations were quite low; but thankfully the Jive-A-Lime variety surprised me! The taste was sweet, but not overly tart; the pieces were generously sized (i.e. did not disintegrate between my fingertips), and the texture was not too dry (it was somewhat moist, and not reminiscent of Styrofoam at all). I must say that, with the Jive-A-Lime variety of the Funky Monkey Snacks, I certainly did save the best flavor for last.

The nutrition information for each flavor of the Funky Monkey Snacks is, as follows:

- One package of Jive-A-Lime (ingredients: freeze-dried pineapple with lime juice) is 29 grams and has 110 calories, 0 grams of fat (0 grams of saturated fat), 1 gram of protein, 27 grams of carbohydrates, 20 grams of sugar, 2 grams of fiber, 284 milligrams of potassium, 1 milligram of sodium, 4% of the Recommended Daily Value for calcium, 18% for Vitamin C, and 5% for Iron. This product is also gluten-free.
- One package of Purple Funk (ingredients: freeze-dried banana and a ai) is 29 grams and has 120 calories, 1 gram of fat (0 grams of saturated fat &ndash; the 1 gram of fat comes naturally, from the a ai), 1 gram of protein, 26 grams of carbohydrates, 19 grams of sugar, 3 grams of fiber, 347 milligrams of potassium, 1 milligram of sodium, 1% RDA for calcium, 5% for Vitamin C, and 3% for Iron. This product is also gluten-free.
- One package of Bananamon (ingredients: freeze-dried banana and cinnamon) is 29 grams and has 110 calories, 0 grams of fat (0 grams of saturated fat), 1 gram of protein, 27 grams of carbohydrates, 21 grams of sugar, 3 grams of fiber, 347 milligrams of potassium, 2 milligrams of sodium, 1% RDA for calcium, 2% for Vitamin C, and 2% for Iron. This product is also gluten-free.

Overall, the Funky Monkey Snacks freeze-dried fruit would be a good option for people who are either &ldquo;on-the-go,&rdquo; looking for healthy portion-controlled snacks (these are far superior to those infamous 100-calorie packs), or just want to try a different way of eating fruit (&ldquo;astronaut-style,&rdquo; haha). Out of the three flavors that I sampled, I would say that the Jive-A-Lime flavor is the most palatable; however, I think I will be sticking to my beloved organic dried fruits, and fresh fruit (while they are still in season, of course!), instead of the freeze-dried variety.

Note: According to their website, Funky Monkey has one more flavor - Carnival Mix - but we haven't trialed this one yet!

Where to Purchase: Funky Monkey Snacks are new on the shelves, but you should see them popping up around the U.S. soon. Check the Funky Monkey website for a "where to find" indicator, and of course to check out their super-cool site. It is quite fun. Select Funky Monkey Snacks can be purchased on Amazon at a discount.