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Superfoods

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superfoods

do they really have super powers?

by Katie Diederichs

The same fast food joints that introduced America to the Big Mac and super-sized portions of greasy food are now adding more nutritious options to their menus. Fresh fruit and low-cal sandwiches reflect the healthier lifestyle that many Americans are trying to adopt. For some, this means adhering to a strict diet, while others incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables in their daily lives. These so-called “safe foods” for dieters are often referred to as power foods—rich in nutrients and low in calories. Sheena Chihak, registered dietician and staff writer for Meredith Corporation’s health group, analyzes some of these power foods and identifies which may have more hype than health benefits.



blueberries

Don't underestimate the blueberry because of its size. This small fruit truly does have super powers.

Chihak trusts the research that praises this small fruit for its abundance of antioxidants and additional health benefits.

“Blueberries are low in calories and high in fiber, which makes them satiating,” Chihak says, adding that there is new research claiming that the fruit also aids in memory function and healthful aging.

“This fruit is also really sweet and tasty,” Chihak says. “We are supposed to eat foods that are the color of the rainbow, and blueberries are the only true blue food.” So eat up.

what is it These small berries are blue in color and sweet in taste.

how to eat it Sprinkle a handful of these berries onto your cereal to add flavor and give your breakfast a nutritional boost.

sweet potatoes

White potatoes have recently received a bad rep. They are off-limits on many diets, and are known for being high in starch. Potatoes are also often found in unhealthy forms including chips, French fries, or baked and loaded with cheese and sour cream. However, their orange brother, the sweet potato, has several health benefits. Chihak says sweet potatoes are also high in starch and calories, but, if eaten in moderation, can be an addition to a healthy diet. Chihak supports sweet potatoes as a power food.

“They are a great source of vitamin A, something that people often don't get enough of from other foods,” Chihak says. “They are also high in fiber and are really tasty.”

what is it Sweet potatoes are usually about the same size as an average white potato, but are thinner, longer and have a darker skin.

how to eat it Enjoy sweet potato fries as a complement to burgers or chicken. To make two servings of fries, peel one large sweet potato and cut it lengthwise into medium-sized strips. Put them in a bowl and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with a pinch of kosher salt, ground black pepper and dried basil. Toss until all strips are coated, then arrange on an ungreased baking sheet. Set the oven at 425°F and bake for 20 minutes, flipping halfway through. They are done when they are golden brown around the edges. For a zesty dipping sauce, mix equal parts of barbecue sauce and sour cream.

pomegranate

Pomegranates have received a lot of buzz lately, but are they really as good for you as everyone's saying? According to Chihak, pomegranates are a healthy snack, but shouldn't replace other fruits.

"They are low-cal and have vitamins and minerals, but many other fruits have these benefits too."

Chihak explains that there is little science behind the health claims that seem to be associated with pomegranates, but still encourages people to try this fruit for a snacking alternative.

what is it: Pomegranates have a thick reddish skin and is about the size of a small grapefruit. The juicy seeds found inside are deep red in color, and tart and sweet in taste.

So how do you get to the juicy seeds? The easiest way is to peel this fruit underwater. (No, you will not need

a swimsuit for this procedure.) You will,

however, need a knife and a large pot filled with water. Once the pomegranate is immersed in the pot, slice it open and start scraping out the seeds. They will fall to the bottom of the pot while the white flesh of the fruit will begin to float. Once all of the seeds have been removed from the flesh, strain and enjoy.

how to eat it: Put a small handful of the seeds into a bowl of vanilla yogurt for a morning treat, drizzle five or six seeds with melted dark chocolate chips for a decadent snack or sprinkle the seeds on top of a salad for an extra zing.



salmon

Celebrities and nutritionists alike have been raving about the nutritional benefits of salmon for years. It is known for being high in omega-3 fatty acids, as well as high in taste. Salmon is famed for being the "fish that even fish-haters enjoy".

While Chihak agrees that salmon can be a great addition to a healthy diet, she warns people to watch how much they are eating.

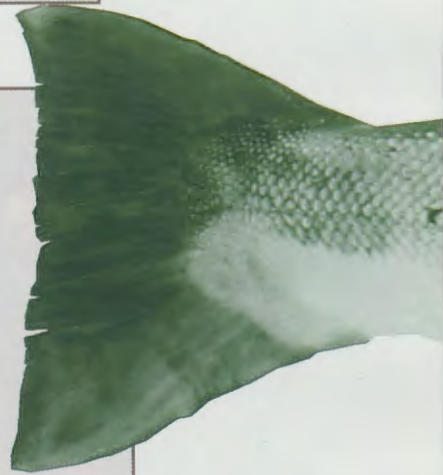
"Salmon is a fatty fish," Chihak says. "People should really only eat two, 3-ounce servings of salmon each week."

Chihak goes on to say that tilapia and other white fish are good alternatives to their pink-fleshed counterpart. Though white fish are lower in fat and

calories, there isn't as much omega-3 fatty acid packed into each bite. For people trying to increase their intake of this healthy fat, fish is not the only answer. According to Chihak, walnuts are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids as well as protein.

what is it: Salmon is a pink-fleshed fish, known for not tasting "fishy."

how to eat it: The ways to prepare salmon are endless. Smoking, baking, grilling and frying are all ways to enjoy this tasty fish.



green tea

Green tea has been a popular beverage for centuries in Asian countries. Recently, green tea has been getting a lot of attention due to its supposed benefits. It is said to reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease as well as aid in weight loss.

Chihak encourages people to try tea, and not just the green variety.

"Green tea is a good alternative to sweetened teas and soda," Chihak says, but it is not the only one with benefits. According to her, all types of tea contain theanine, an amino acid that has been proven to help memory function.

As for the claims that green tea can be used as a weight loss tool? Chihak is not completely convinced.

"Sipping on a calorie-free beverage keeps your mouth busy and fills you up," Chihak explains, but further than that, she is unsure. "There's not enough science to back up the claims."

what is it: Green tea is made from the same plant as black tea, but undergoes less processing, giving it a lighter flavor.

how to drink it: Trade in your daily cup of coffee for green tea, or enjoy it over ice for a refreshing afternoon drink. Add lemon or cinnamon for flavor, but stay away from sugar and cream, as they will add unnecessary calories.

