

Eating apples may lower cholesterol & promote heart health

Eating an apple a day may keep the heart doctor away according to findings from a recent study at Florida State University in Tallahassee, FL. Researchers pitted dried apples against prunes to see if either food had an effect on the overall health of the heart. The year-long study found that eating apples daily may help lower bad (LDL) cholesterol levels, as well as two markers associated with plaque and inflammation in artery walls.

There were 160 women who participated in the study. The women were randomly split into one of two groups and assigned to eat daily servings of either dried apples or prunes. The participants received blood tests after 3, 6, and 12 months to determine what effect, if any, the fruits were having on heart health.

The results were especially favorable for apples. Women who ate dried apples every day for a year saw their total cholesterol drop by an average of 14 percent, and LDL levels drop by 23 percent. Researchers noticed that levels of lipids that are involved in the formation of plaque, and C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation, were by reduced by an average of one-third in the apple group. Additionally, the women in the apple group lost an average of 3 pounds during the year-long study.

According to the researchers, the group of women who ate prunes also saw positive marks related to heart health, though not as significant as the apple group. Researchers attribute high levels of pectin in apples as to why the fruit performed better than prunes. Pectin is a soluble fiber that works to block cholesterol absorption in the gut, telling the body to use the waxy substance rather than holding onto it.

WebMD's Top Foods for Heart Health
Apples
Almonds
Barley
Black Beans
Blueberries
Carrots
Cayenne Chili Pepper
Cherries
Coffee
Edamame
Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Flaxseed
Foods Fortified with Sterol
Fresh Herbs
Kosher Salt
Low-fat Yogurt
Oatmeal
Oranges
Red Wine
Salmon
Sweet Potatoes
Swiss Chard
Tofu
Tuna
Walnuts

Source: "Apples Good for Your Heart." B. Goodman. WebMD Health News. April 12, 2011. <http://women.webmd.com/news/20110412/apple-good-for-your-heart>

All About Organics

Are you going organic in celebration of Earth Day on April 22nd? Many people buy organic during this annual celebration in order to take advantage of in-store sales and in an effort to be "greener." Organic farming goes hand-in-hand with sustainable agriculture, and has been part of Stemilt's culture since 1989. In this issue of *Nutrition Roundup*, we thought we would take time to answer common questions about what it means for fruit to be organic, as well as what to look for when selecting organic fruit at the store.

How does an orchard achieve organic certification?

As you can imagine, organic farming is a big commitment for a farmers. In order to achieve organic certification, an orchard must be farmed organically for three consecutive seasons. This is known as the "transitional" phase. The farmer only uses natural fertilizers (such as manure, compost, and rock minerals) to maintain soil fertility, while beneficial insects like ladybugs help keep pest populations at bay. Only natural materials can be used on trees and all of these have to be on the National Organic Standards Board's list of approved materials. Weeds are controlled by cover crops, mulching, and mechanical methods rather than herbicides.

Once the three-year period is over, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or its state agency inspect the orchard in order to issue an organic certificate. The fruit can then be packed and marketed as organic for that year. A farmer must renew his/her organic certificate annually.

How is organic integrity maintained while packing the fruit?

Just like the farming side, packing organic fruit is a little different than the process for packing conventionally-grown fruit. The USDA or like state agency issues organic certificates annually for each facility that will pack organic fruit in order to ensure organic standards are met. The type of equipment used in organic fruit packing is the same as conventional, however all equipment (brushes, belts, etc.) must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before any organic packing can begin. Organic fruit is packed in master cartons clearly labeled as organic in order to prevent any co-mingling during transportation to the store.

What should I look for when buying organic fruit?

Always look on the PLU (Price Look Up) sticker on the fruit and make sure the number starts with a leading 9, followed by four digits. Most organic fruit will be clearly labeled as organic too! When selecting organic apples and pears, look for fruit that is firm to the touch with minimal blemishes on the skin. "Blush" and "freckles" on the exterior are common in some varieties and should not be looked at as defects. For organic cherries, look for shiny fruit with green stems that are still attached. A green stem denotes freshness. Finally, organic peaches, nectarines, and apricots should be full colored with moderate firmness and no bruises.

Nutrition Roundup from Stemilt Growers



Nutrition Info: 38 calories; 1 g protein; 0 g fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 8 mg sodium; 1 g dietary fiber; 8 g sugar

Summer Fruit Kabobs

Cherries are almost in season again! These summer fruit kabobs featuring fresh cherries make a simple fruit platter a little more special.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 bamboo skewers
- 1 cup of fresh cherries, pitted with stems removed
- 1 cup of fresh pineapple
- 1 cup chopped honeydew melon (bite-sized pieces)
- 1 cup chopped cantaloupe (bite-sized pieces)

PROCEDURE

Prepare the fruit into bite-sized pieces. Assemble the kabob by placing each fruit on the skewers. Alternate fruits to create a colorful pattern. For a fun presentation, serve the kabobs standing upright in a vase or tall container.

Healthy Living Tips from Olympic Athletes



Elsie Windes

As the Official Fresh Fruit Sponsor of the U.S. National Water Polo teams, Stemilt is excited to bring you exclusive healthy living tips from water polo athletes. In this issue of *Nutrition Roundup*, we're sharing 2008 Olympian Elsie Windes' tips for keeping your mind and body in tip-top shape.

1. If you aren't getting your recommended five servings of fruits and veggies a day, try sneaking a serving during your sandwich at lunch. Add cucumber to a yummy turkey sandwich or apples to your peanut butter sandwich.
2. Buy a big bag of raw almonds and keep a bag of them in your purse or car for a small snack throughout the day.
3. Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water throughout the day, but try to avoid it during a big meal.
4. Stretch in the morning when you first wake up, even if it's just for 5 minutes. It will wake you up and get you ready for your day!
5. Walk as much as you can during the day. Try parking farthest from the store to get some extra steps in!

To read more tips from other Olympic athletes, visit the Healthy Living section of our website - www.stemilt.com. Stay tuned for more tips from USA Water Polo in the next issue of *Nutrition Roundup*.



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Bacon & Apple Cheeseburger Sliders

Make this your appetizer of choice for any gathering this spring or summer.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 2/3 cup coarsely shredded, unpeeled Gala or Fuji apple
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 3 thick slices of applewood smoked bacon, cooked and finely chopped
- 1/2 TSP Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 TSP dried thyme
- 1/4 TSP salt
- 1/4 TSP black pepper
- 3 oz Swiss cheese
- 1/3 cup of Apple Aioli
- 12 mini hamburger buns
- 12 leaves of fresh baby spinach

PROCEDURE

Preheat oven broiler. For burgers, mix ground beef, shredded apple, onion, bacon, Worcestershire sauce, thyme, salt, and pepper in large bowl until just combined (do not overwork meat mixture). With damp hands, form mixture into twelve 2 1/2-inch-round patties.

Next, place patties on broiling pan and broil 4 inches from heat for 8 to 12 minutes, turning patties over halfway through broiling. The meat will be cooked when your thermometer reads 160° F. Place a slice of cheese on the top of each patty. Continue broiling for 30 to 60 seconds or until cheese begins to melt.

While the meat is cooking, make the apple aioli. Simply stir together 1/3 cup of mayonnaise and 5 teaspoons of frozen apple juice concentrate until combined.

To serve, spread aioli on bottoms of buns. Top with patties, additional apple slices, and spinach. Place bun tops on top to close sandwiches. Enjoy!



Recipe from US Apple

Yields: 12 mini burgers

Serving Size: 3 mini burgers

Nutrition Info: Each serving contains 720 calories, 48 g carbohydrate (4 g fiber), 34 g protein, 42 g fat (13 g saturated fat), 120 mg cholesterol, and 910 mg sodium.