

# so nutritious

PEEL AWAY: DELICIOUS SUMMER PRODUCE **packs a nutritional wallop, too.**

## WATERMELONS

**A hearty helper**

**One big benefit:** Watermelons may be 92 percent water, but a lot of lycopene is packed into that remaining 8 percent. The antioxidant, which gives watermelon flesh its pink color, staves off chemical damage to cells in the body and has been associated with a reduced risk of heart attack and some cancers.

**Another plus:** Watermelon is also a good source of vitamins A and C and the mineral potassium.

## APRICOTS

**Strong bones, softer skin**

**One big benefit:** One cup of raw apricot halves contains 60 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin A, which keeps the body healthy inside and out. That's nearly *six times* the vitamin A in one cup of peach slices.

**Another plus:** Apricots, which were first recorded as a California harvest in the 18th century, are also good sources of vitamin C, fiber and potassium.

## CHERRIES

**Healthy arteries**

**One big benefit:** Plant-based compounds known as flavonoids are also antioxidants, and cherries are high in the strongest one. Quercetin may help prevent plaque buildup in the arteries (a common cause of heart attack or stroke) and guard against heart disease caused by LDL, or "bad," cholesterol.

**Another plus:** Studies indicate that anthocyanins in cherries have anti-inflammatory compounds, which may help with arthritis pain.

## FIGS

**Keep things moving**

**One big benefit:** A cup of dried figs contains 58 percent of the daily value of fiber—both the insoluble kind, which aids in digestion and regularity, and the soluble kind, which has been linked to lower cholesterol and steadier blood-sugar levels.

**Another plus:** Once dried, figs become mineral powerhouses. One cup offers more than 20 percent of the recommended daily value of calcium, magnesium, potassium, copper and manganese.

## STRAWBERRIES

**Inflammation tamers**

**One big benefit:** The ancient Romans believed that strawberries alleviated inflammation, and it appears they were on to something. Like cherries, strawberries are high in anthocyanins, and a study released in January suggests that regular consumption of strawberries may reduce inflammation brought on by high-carbohydrate, high-fat meals.

**Another plus:** Strawberries pack more vitamin C than citrus fruit, ounce for ounce.

## TOMATOES

**Reduced risk of cancer**

**One big benefit:** Cooking tomatoes allows the body to absorb more readily the fruit's plentiful lycopene, which has been linked to a reduction in risk for several types of cancer, including lung, stomach and prostate. A study released in February found higher levels of lycopene in tangerine tomatoes than traditional red, so try something new!

**Another plus:** Tomatoes are good sources of vitamins A, C and K.

## CANTALOUPE

**Keen eyesight**

**One big benefit:** The beta carotene that turns carrots orange is also found in cantaloupe—the melon has four times the amount of the powerful antioxidant than any other fresh fruit, which is good to know since health groups recommend that we get beta carotene from foods, not supplements.

**Another plus:** One cup of cantaloupe offers more than 100 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin C.

## APPLES

**Fight free radicals**

**One big benefit:** Red Delicious, Granny Smith and Gala apples rank high on the USDA list of antioxidant foods (12th, 13th and 20th, respectively). No matter which variety of apple you choose, it will be a good source of vitamin C.

**Another plus:** Apples are high in fiber. Comparatively speaking, they outrank even celery.

## CUT FRUIT, NOT NUTRIENTS

Trying to save time for the week ahead? Cut up fruit ahead of time and keep it in the fridge—you won't lose much nutritional value. A study in Spain found that most fruits usually spoil visually before significant nutrient loss occurs.

Researchers tested the vitamin and antioxidant content of several types of cut fruit as the fruit sat more than a week in a refrigerator. After six days, mango, strawberry and watermelon pieces had lost 5 percent or less of their vitamin C; pineapple and kiwifruit had lost 10 to 12 percent; and cubes of cantaloupe, at the high end of the spectrum, had lost 25 percent.

Light-colored fruits like apples, pears and peaches, however, are prone to oxidative browning. To temporarily halt browning and the resultant nutrient loss, store in water that has been cut with lemon juice (about a half-cup juice per half-gallon of water). Health food and drugstores also sell ascorbic acid powders that work the same way, without changing flavor. Now there's no need to wait until the last minute to prepare the fruit for salads, pies, parfaits or your morning smoothie.

## Farmers Markets Are Open!

Local, organic and sustainable products are available now through the fall. Petaluma Valley Hospital's market is in the café, Tuesday–Friday, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital's market is in the main entrance lobby, Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## BENEATH THE SKINS

Which sounds healthier—apple slices or celery sticks? Sure, you might choose celery, with its high water and fiber content. But fruits, though they have more natural sugars than most vegetables, are also bursting with nutritional benefits that make them wise, and delicious, food choices.

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