

WELLNESSWORKS NEWSLETTER

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QUICK TAKES

A Very Berry Snack



From Himalayan goji berries to Amazonian açai berries, new “superfruits” are widely promoted as potent disease fighters and possibly the next fountain of youth. While these exotic imports may be rich in health-protective plant chemicals, there are plenty of local fruits that deserve our attention.

Eating fruit, whether it’s an exotic superfruit or a common, everyday variety, helps keep you healthy in countless ways. Whole fruits are packed with vitamins C and A, potassium, fiber and health-protective antioxidants. Yet they’re low in calories, fat and sodium.

Farmers markets and supermarkets are filled with homegrown “superfruits” at this time of year.

HOMEGROWN SUPERFRUITS

BLUEBERRIES

Drive anywhere in the state of Maine in the month of August and you’re likely to find a blueberry festival in progress or at least a roadside stand selling boxes of just-picked wild blueberries. Locals enjoy the little berries by the handful or in pies, muffins, jams, pancakes and even wine. Here’s the latest on blueberry nutrition:



- One cup of blueberries has 80 fat-free calories.
- Blueberries are high in vitamin C, dietary fiber, folate, potassium and manganese.
- The fruit’s dark blue-purple hue comes from anthocyanins, a powerful antioxidant. The USDA ranks blueberries near the top in antioxidant activity.

Selection: Choose plump, firm, bright blue/purple berries that are free of moisture and packed in dry, unstained baskets or boxes.

Storage: If dry and packed in a moisture-proof container, blueberries will stay fresh in the refrigerator for five or six days. They freeze well, too.

Serving Tip: For a cool summer treat, top just-picked blueberries with a spoonful of cold lemon yogurt.

PLUMS – FRESH AND DRIED

There are 200 or more plum varieties cultivated across the U.S., and many of them are ripening right now. Their color can be yellow, green, red, blue, purple or almost anything in between. The vibrant colors are a good indicator that the fruits are high in health-protective antioxidants. In fact, their overall nutrient profile is impressive:



- Two medium plums provide a mere 70 calories.
- Fresh plums are a good source of vitamins A and C.
- All plums, fresh or dried, provide the minerals potassium, fluoride and iron.
- The fruit also contains lutein, an antioxidant that is believed to protect against macular degeneration.

Selection: Look for soft fruits that yield to slight pressure. Avoid shriveled fruits.

Storage: Store unripe plums at room temperature. Refrigerate and store in plastic when ripe: eat within a few days.

Serving Tip: Sweet, juicy plums are an ideal snack or after-dinner treat.

MORE SUPERFRUITS

PEARS

Like its cousin the apple, the pear doesn't flaunt its superfruit status despite its many healthful qualities:

- A good-sized pear provides 100 nearly fat-free calories and about a quarter of your daily fiber needs.
- Pears are a good source of vitamins C and K, as well as the minerals copper and phosphorus.
- About half of the fiber and a third of the antioxidants are found in a pear's skin, so think twice before peeling it.



Selection: Unlike most fruit, the texture and flavor of pears improves after picking. Choose pears that are firm but not rock hard. A few scuff marks are okay, but don't buy pears with bruises. To check for ripeness, apply gentle thumb pressure near the stem end; if the fruit gives slightly, it is ready to eat.

Storage: Ripen pears in a cool room. As they ripen, their skin changes from shiny to matte. When ripe, store in the refrigerator for two or three days.

Serving Tip: Sweet and juicy Comice pears are the perfect dessert on their own or with a thin slice of blue cheese.

APPLES

While the apple may not be the queen of antioxidants, it has other qualities that push it into superfruit territory:

- An apple has just 80 calories.
- Apples are packed with fiber, and more than half of that is cholesterol-reducing soluble fiber.
- Apple skin is rich in compounds called flavonoids, which may reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Studies have found that apple eaters had better lung function and a lower risk for lung disease compared with those who don't eat apples.
- Apples contain boron, a trace mineral that is good for bones.



Selection: Choose apples with smooth skin without soft spots. At farmers markets, feel free to ask to taste different apple varieties before buying in quantity.

Storage: Left at room temperature, apples begin to turn mealy after a few days. They keep in the refrigerator for two weeks or longer. Apples give off ethylene gas, which speeds up the ripening of other fruits.

Serving Tip: Core Golden Delicious or Honeycrisp apples, leaving the bottom intact; pour a little maple syrup into the cavity and bake 30 minutes or until tender.

BLUEBERRY-MANGO CRUMBLE Makes 8 servings

Lime juice and ginger add an unexpected zing to this easy crumble. If you can't find mangos, substitute nectarines.

INGREDIENTS

16 ounces fresh or frozen blueberries
16 ounces fresh or frozen mango chunks
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon grated lime zest
4 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a large bowl, toss together blueberries, mango pieces, lime juice and lime zest. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the cornstarch and toss gently to mix.
3. In a separate bowl, combine cracker crumbs, cinnamon, ginger and the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. Stir in oil.
4. Pour the fruit into the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with the graham cracker crumb mixture. Bake for 30 minutes, until bubbling and browned. Serve warm or cold.



NUTRITIONAL INFO

PER SERVING
189 Calories
3.5 g Fat
0.4 g Saturated Fat
2 g Protein
29 g Carbohydrate
4 g Fiber
76 mg Sodium

Source: *Healthy Living Kitchens*