

The 200 SuperFoods That Will Save Your Life

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Introduction

Two out of every three Americans want to live to be 100 years old, and they expect science to help them achieve that goal, according to a 2001 survey on attitudes toward aging and longevity conducted for the Alliance for Aging Research. Survey respondents believed that personal actions—such as keeping a positive outlook, exercising regularly, eating nutritious foods, and keeping stress to a minimum—were important to remaining healthy as they aged.

“[The survey] results indicate that Americans believe staying healthy in old age is not just a matter of fate, but something they themselves can affect,” said Daniel Perry, executive director of the Alliance, according to an article about the survey on SeniorJournal.com. “Most Americans want to hit the century mark, but don’t view living longer as an end in itself. They want to live with health and vitality and benefit from the many scientific breakthroughs now on the horizon.”

Those expectations aren’t unfounded. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes in its report, *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007*, that the three lifestyle factors of poor nutrition, inactivity, and smoking were the root causes of more than a third of all deaths in the United States, and that these factors underlie the development of some of the nation’s most prevalent chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. The CDC also found that people who were 65 years of age or older were more likely than any other group to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

The 200 SuperFoods That Will Save Your Life is designed to be a one-stop nutritional wellness resource, providing expert, professional guidance on choosing—and enjoying—nutritious foods as part of a proactive approach that can add years to your life. The plan is realistic, emphasizing—and encouraging you to make—small incremental changes that are effective and contribute to long-term health. None of the foods I’ve included are esoteric—they’re all easy to find and easy to include in your meals or snacks.

This book is a Livit—instead of a diet—that will allow you to improve your health without feeling deprived. How does a Livit differ from a diet? A diet includes a long list of what not to eat (often excluding whole categories of foods, as in the no-fat and no-carbohydrate fads of the past 20 years) and restricts your daily caloric intake to below your resting metabolic rate. When you eat less than your body needs for survival, your metabolism goes into a hibernation mode that increases fat storage, causes water loss, and breaks down muscle and organ tissue. This is not a good long-term strategy for health—or even for achieving or maintaining a healthy weight!

A Livit is a way of life that you can follow *for* life. You do not need to deprive yourself calorically, or be self-denying in your food choices to begin eating more life-sustaining foods.

The foods in this book are organized into categories to emphasize balanced eating and what that really means—balancing carbohydrates, proteins, and fat sources. Balancing these three vital classes of nutrients sustains your energy throughout the day and helps stabilize glucose (sugar) levels, which contributes to preventing and controlling heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. The specific amounts of carbohydrate, protein, and fat per serving are stated for each food, based on the seventeenth edition of *Bowes & Church’s Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* (1998).

We begin with the carbohydrate food sources (fruit, starchy vegetables, “true” vegetables, grains, and most dairy) because they provide our bodies’ primary *fuel*—glucose. Our brain, muscles, and organs all require glucose to function, and carbohydrates are the best place to get it.

Although many popular weight-loss diets are based on cutting carbohydrates, this macronutrient is essential for optimal metabolism and health. When the body does not get enough carbohydrates from food, it has to convert protein into glucose, which is a very inefficient process. This requires a lot of water, which can lead to dehydration if you don't drink extra to compensate. It also releases excess nitrogen, which the liver and kidneys must work overtime to process and excrete. A diet that's too low in carbohydrates can contribute to fatigue and put stress on the liver and kidneys.

The bottom line is this: *Eliminating food groups is not a healthy choice.* Carbohydrates are essential. Choose high-fiber carbohydrates, which are more nutrient-dense and more slowly absorbed than the more refined, "white," low-fiber versions. Whole grains and other high-fiber carbs tend to include some protein too.

Vegetables are listed under carbohydrates, but their essential role in healthy eating is to provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They are not a very efficient source of carbohydrate fuel and need to be balanced with fruits or starches that will provide more energy.

The next chapter focuses on protein foods, which are the *sustainers*—they provide the materials to rebuild muscles and organs, sustaining us in the long run. Because they are absorbed more slowly than carbohydrate foods, they help provide sustained energy throughout the day. For example, fruit takes about an hour to digest, whereas cheese or nuts, with their higher fat and protein content, take three to four hours to digest. For sustained energy, have cheese or nuts along with your fruit or other carbs. The fruit will keep you from being hungry again in an hour, while the protein foods will stretch your energy out over the next three to four hours—definitely a more efficient use of your eating time.

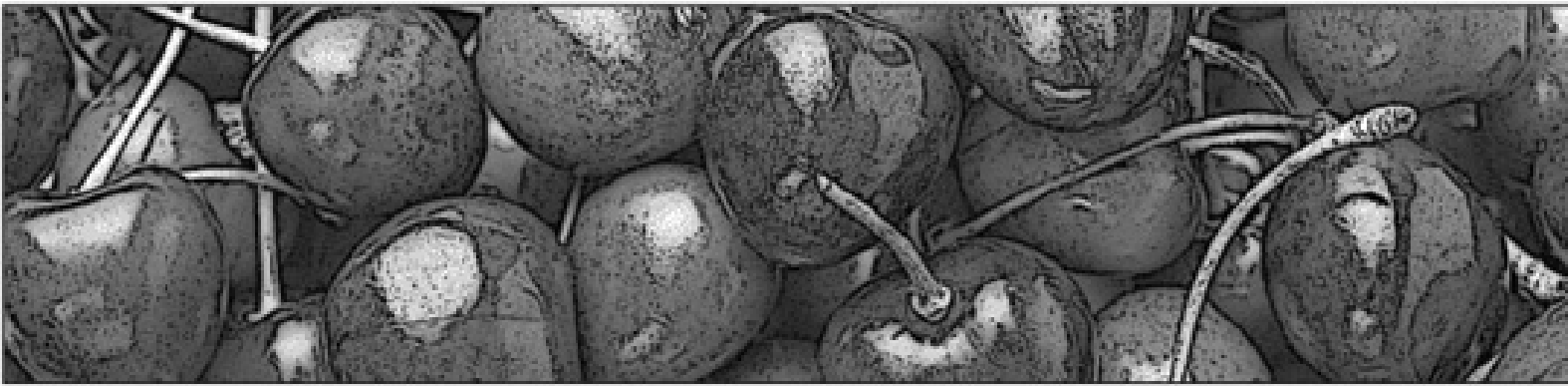
A good rule of thumb regarding protein foods is to choose predominantly vegetarian protein sources. A number of studies have shown a strong correlation between vegetarian and semi-vegetarian diets and a reduced risk of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, dementia, age-related ocular macular degeneration, colonic diverticula, and gallstones. Aim to limit meat consumption so that animal protein plays a central role in, at most, one meal a day. If you eat a turkey sandwich at lunch, try to have a vegetable protein source at dinner. (Although fish is an animal protein, many types of fish are low in saturated fat and are such a great source of omega-3 fatty acids that I do not count them against the meat total for the day.)

Fats are our *satisfier*. The third macronutrient in our balancing act, fat is the most slowly digested, keeping us satisfied longer and slowing the absorption of the glucose in carbohydrate foods. Dietary fat is essential for hormonal balance, insulation of our skin and nerves, and healthy skin and hair. These dietary fats must include essential fatty acids, which help lower cholesterol, increase high-density lipoproteins (HDL) or "good" cholesterol, and lower triglycerides.

This book provides not only the nutritional content and special health benefits of each food, but also ways to incorporate the foods into a healthier approach to eating—from grocery lists to meal plans. Learn easy ways to increase your overall health through food choices—increase metabolism and immunity, understand the benefits of fiber, discover what to watch for on food labels, learn alternatives for coping with food intolerance and food allergies, and find out which foods have anti-inflammatory properties that may be the key to preventing disease.

The 200 SuperFoods That Will Save Your Life demonstrates the power you have to be proactive and to make specific food choices that will help you live younger, longer. Read on to unlock the secrets to increasing your energy, helping prevent disease, and attaining optimal health—one bite at a time!

The 200 SuperFoods That Will Save Your Life



Carbohydrates: Fruits

Eating more fruit is an easy strategy for increasing your antioxidant intake and decreasing oxidative stress, which could reduce your risk of cancer. Although fruits are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water, their reputation has suffered lately because most fruits contain a fair proportion of carbohydrate—and that carbohydrate is mostly sugar. Not long ago at a health fair at the Beverly Hills farmer’s market, I overheard the promoters of a popular “cookie diet” cautioning customers not to eat any fruit! Here’s a diet where you lose weight by eating *cookies* for breakfast and lunch, along with a healthful dinner, and the warning is “Make sure you do not eat any fruit. It has too much sugar.”

Things have really gotten out of hand when fruit is a forbidden food! Fruit is one of the two main dietary sources (along with vegetables) of antioxidants that boost your immune system and help prevent disease. It’s also a significant source of fiber, which is key to losing fat, helps us feel fuller longer, and slows the rate at which sugar is absorbed. The sugar and other carbohydrates in fruit make it a great fuel source, keeping us energized throughout the day.

All fruits are healthy for us, but the best ones are those with the most fiber. A good rule of thumb is to stick with the “S or S” fruits, the ones with edible skins or seeds, such as apples, peaches, pears, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, and grapes. Eating the skin and seeds amps up your fiber intake, and the skin and the seeds contain most of the antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. That’s why it’s much better to eat whole fruit, rather than relying on juices.

1 Açai Berry

Benefits

The açai (ah-sigh-EE) palm tree grows in Central and South America, with a range that extends from Belize south to Brazil and Peru. The palm produces a small, deep-purple fruit that is one of the primary foodstuffs for native people living in the Amazon region of Brazil where it is harvested. Açai “berry”—actually a drupe—tastes like a mixture of berries and chocolate, and is packed full of antioxidants, amino acids, and essential fatty acids. It has ten times the anthocyanins of red wine. It also has a protein profile similar to egg whites.

At least one study has shown that chemical compounds extracted from the açai berry slow the proliferation of leukemia cells in laboratory cultures, and others have shown that it has a powerful effect against common oxygen free radicals. The açai fruit not only shows potential in cancer

prevention, but also reduces inflammation, which has been implicated in heart and lung disease, allergies, and auto-immune disorders.

For a fruit, açai contains a relatively high proportion of fatty acids, including oleic, palmitic, and linoleic (an unsaturated omega-6 fatty acid), as well as aspartic and glutamic amino acids, which contribute to building proteins.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One ounce of freeze-dried pulp provides 152 calories, 14 g carbohydrate, 2.5 g protein, 9 g fat, 13 g dietary fiber, 286 IU vitamin A, 74 mg calcium, 17 mg phosphorus, and 1.3 mg iron.

Bringing It Home

Like other drupes, açai berries contain a large seed surrounded by the edible pulp, juice, and skin. Açai is available whole or in juices, smoothies, and frozen puree. However, it is most commonly found as a reconstituted freeze-dried pulp, both at health food stores and online from several vendors. In any processed form, make sure açai is the primary ingredient.

Livit Recipe

Açai Boost

This recipe is an Americanized version of a popular Brazilian snack, açai na tigela (“açai in the bowl”), a mix of fruit puree served over granola.

8 ounces frozen açai puree

8 whole frozen strawberries

¼ cup yogurt

¼ cup unsweetened soy milk

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup low-fat granola

½ cup fresh berries or seasonal fruit

- Put the açai, strawberries, yogurt, soy milk, and vanilla into a blender jar, and puree for 1 minute until smooth. Pour the mixture into a bowl and chill. Sprinkle granola and fresh fruit over the top before serving.

YIELD 2 servings

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 229 calories, 36.1 g carbohydrate, 7.4 g protein, 8.5 g fat, 6.2 g dietary fiber

ABOUT THE LIVIT RECIPES

For all the Livit Recipes, use organic produce whenever possible. A 2001 study showed a genuine difference in the nutrient content of organic and conventional crops. The foods grown organically had more vitamin C, iron, magnesium, and phosphorus and significantly fewer nitrates than produce grown conventionally. The study also found some evidence that the organic foods contained more nutritionally significant minerals and lower amounts of some heavy metals, but these results were too small to be conclusive. So where it's possible, go organic.

However, if the price or availability of organic produce is a problem, don't stress. Conventionally grown fruits and vegetables provide many, if not most, of the benefits of their organic counterparts. The road to health is paved with vegetation—what's important is eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, not holding out for organic-only. One way to save money while getting fresh, high-quality produce is to shop at your local farmer's market. Even if the produce isn't organic, it will be straight from the farm and won't have lost nutrients or flavor in transit.

2 Apples

Benefits

The old adage holds true: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Doctors in ancient Greece praised the healing properties of apples. Galen, the famous second-century Greek physician, wrote that apples “restore countless invalids to health” and described the healing properties of different types of apples for several illnesses.

What the ancients didn't know is what substance in apples makes them so good at protecting health. We now know that it's a flavonoid called quercetin and that apples are one of the best dietary sources for it. In laboratory studies, quercetin reduces allergic reactions and inflammation, and it has demonstrated some potential to limit the growth of tumors. It may also reduce symptoms in chronic prostatitis and interstitial cystitis. A study in 2007 found that cyclists given quercetin during a regimen involving three hours of bicycling per day developed fewer respiratory tract infections than a control group that did not get the supplement.

Apples have long been appreciated for their keeping qualities—stored in a cool and dry cellar or barn, they provided crisp, fresh flavor throughout the winter even in the days before refrigeration. Today, properly refrigerated, they will keep for months. Apples are also a good source of pectin, a soluble dietary fiber that helps lower cholesterol and is useful for relieving both constipation and diarrhea. Apples' high fiber content means that they slow the absorption of glucose—good for controlling blood sugar. And they contain alpha hydroxy acids, so you can even use apples as an exfoliating masque for your skin.

Unsweetened organic applesauce makes a great snack by itself and can replace oil and fats in baked goods. I use applesauce in place of the oil in my oat bran muffins, making them much more moist and tasty—and lower in fat and calories—than muffins made with oil. The trick also works for baking brownies, producing a chocolate treat that's fluffy, moist, and cake-like.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One medium size (about 4-inch diameter) apple with the skin provides 81 calories, 21 g carbohydrate, 0.3 g protein, 0.5 g fat, 3.7 g dietary fiber, 73 IU vitamin A, 8 mg vitamin C, 10 mg calcium, and 159 mg potassium.

Bringing It Home

The best place to get apples in season is your local farmer's market. If you're in the western half of the United States, you can find great, locally grown organic apples. It's harder to get truly organic local apples in the eastern United States, because the climate that supports the apple trees also encourages insect pests and diseases that are hard to control with entirely organic methods. You may need to choose semi-organic apples to encourage local growers.

Soothing Applesauce

6 large apples, peeled, cored, and sliced thick (quarters or eighths)

1 cup water

1 teaspoon cinnamon

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon nutmeg

- Combine the apples, water, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a heavy pot. Cover, and cook over low to medium heat until the apples are tender. Remove from heat.
- Mash the mixture using a potato masher or fork, or blend it, using short bursts, until you are satisfied with the texture. Be careful when blending; applesauce holds heat. Serve warm.
- NOTE Try a mixture of sweet and tart apples, or one of the varieties that combine both tastes, such as Ida Red, Cortland, or Macintosh.
- VARIATION For a balanced snack, serve with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of ricotta cheese.

YIELD 5 cups

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 73 calories, 19 g carbohydrate, 0.4 g protein, 0.3 g fat, 3.5 g dietary fiber

Scrumptious Fudge Brownies

$\frac{3}{8}$ cup unsweetened organic applesauce (prepared, or use the recipe above)

1 cup sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

12 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 whole egg

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup + 1 tablespoon egg whites OR liquid egg substitute

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda Safflower oil

- Preheat oven to 325°F.
- Combine applesauce, sugar, and water in a small saucepan. Heat until the mixture just begins to boil, then remove from heat. Add the chocolate chips and vanilla, and stir until the chocolate has melted. Pour the mixture into a large bowl.
- In a small bowl, stir the egg and egg whites together slightly, then slowly beat them into the chocolate mixture.
- In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt, and baking soda. Gradually stir the dry ingredients into the chocolate batter.
- Lightly grease a 13" × 9" × 2" baking pan with safflower oil. Spread the batter into the pan. Bake for 50 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

- **VARIATION** Use half all-purpose flour and half whole wheat pastry flour for more fiber and nutrients.
-

YIELD 24 brownies

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 139 calories, 23.8 g carbohydrate, 2.8 g protein, 4.6 g fat, 1.5 g dietary fiber

3 Apricots

Benefits

The apricot has been cultivated for at least 5,000 years. Both fresh and dried, this fruit provides plenty of vitamin A, potassium, beta-carotene, and iron. In addition, a fresh apricot provides 17 percent of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C. Dried apricots, high in dietary fiber, provide nearly a gram of fiber in just three halves. Fiber is essential for intestinal health, but most Americans consume less than 10 grams per day. Include apricots in your diet as a delicious way to add to your fiber intake.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION (RAW APRICOTS) Three medium raw apricots provide 51 calories, 11.8 grams carbohydrate, 1.5 g protein, 0.4 g fat, 2.5 g dietary fiber, 2769 IU vitamin A, 11 mg vitamin C, 15 mg calcium, 314 mg potassium, and 20 mg phosphorus.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION (DRIED APRICOTS) Three dried apricot halves provide 24 calories, 6.6 g carbohydrate, 0.4 g protein, 0 g fat, and 0.9 g dietary fiber.

Bringing It Home

Choose organic raw apricots and unsulfured dried apricots. Commercially grown dried apricots may be treated with sulfur dioxide gas during processing to keep their color bright or with sulfites to extend shelf life. An estimated one out of every 100 people (and perhaps as many as five percent of people with asthma) are sensitive to sulfites and may have an adverse reaction to them. As with all produce, buy locally and at farmer's markets whenever possible.

Add sliced apricots—either fresh or dried—to hot or cold cereal, or add chopped apricots to the batter the next time you make whole grain pancakes. Give a Middle Eastern flavor to chicken or vegetable stews with the addition of dried, diced apricots. Add fresh apricots to green salads when they are in season, or add chopped apricots to rice or bean salads. Pack a plastic zipper bag of apricots and almonds in your briefcase or gym bag for a handy snack.

Livit Recipe

Apricot Bock Salad

See Safe Handling of Poultry on page 211.

- 3 whole skinless, boneless organic chicken breasts (6 breast halves), cut into bite-sized cubes
- ½ cup organic orange juice
- 1 stalk organic celery, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped white onion

3 large organic raw apricots, pitted and finely diced

1 tablespoon reduced-fat mayonnaise

Lemon pepper

Sea salt

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Place the chicken in a casserole dish and pour orange juice over the chicken. Bake for 1 hour.
- When the chicken is cooked thoroughly (white, with no pink) remove it from the oven and let it cool slightly.
- In a large serving bowl, toss the cooked chicken with the celery, onion, and apricots, then add in just enough mayonnaise to bind the ingredients. Season to taste with lemon pepper and a dash of sea salt. Serve immediately.

YIELD 4 servings

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 230 calories, 7.3 g carbohydrate, 41.6 g protein, 2.9 g fat, 0.9 g dietary fiber

4 Bananas

Benefits

Bananas grow in more than 100 countries and are a major food crop throughout the tropical world, where they are cultivated in many sizes and colors, including red, yellow, purple, and green. Only 10 to 15 percent of the bananas grown are for export. In the United States, the vast majority of supermarket bananas are the Cavendish variety, a sweet, seedless, yellow “dessert” banana—one eaten without cooking. Plantains, which have become more readily available in recent years, are banana varieties intended for cooking, and they tend to be less sweet and more starchy.

Because our fruit-stand bananas are so sweet, they’ve gotten a bad reputation among the low-carb crowd. But they are an incredibly rich source of potassium, vital for regulating blood pressure and a factor in preventing heart disease, stroke, and muscle cramps. One medium banana provides more potassium by weight than practically any other fruit.

Most of us can afford the 15 grams of carbohydrate found in half a banana in exchange for its nutrient benefits, given that Americans typically get only about half the recommended daily intake of potassium.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One medium raw banana provides 105 calories, 26.7 g carbohydrate, 1.2 g protein, 0.5 g fat, 2.7 g dietary fiber, 92 IU vitamin A, 10 mg vitamin C, 22 mcg folic acid, 451 mg potassium, 7 mg calcium, 23 mg phosphorus, and 33 mg magnesium.

Bringing It Home

Since virtually all bananas are imported, this is one food you probably won’t find at your local farmer’s market, unless you’re lucky enough to live in Hawaii. The history of banana exports has been fraught with exploitation, so try to choose fair trade bananas, whose growers are more fairly

compensated. Store bananas in a well-ventilated area, but don't refrigerate them. If your bananas are too green when you buy them, put them in a brown paper bag, which traps the ethylene gas that fruits exhale and quickens the ripening process. Peel ripe bananas, break them into four or five pieces, and store them in the freezer. Add one to a smoothie for a little extra potassium and fiber. Use overripe bananas for baking.

Livit Recipe

Banana Bran Muffin Energy Snack

Canola oil spray

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup unbleached organic all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole wheat pastry flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup oat bran

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar

1 teaspoon baking soda

2 egg whites, slightly beaten

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup mashed, very ripe banana

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup organic nonfat milk

1 tablespoon canola oil

- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Spray a 6-cup muffin tin with canola oil spray.
- In a medium mixing bowl, combine flours, oat bran, sugar, and baking soda.
- In a small bowl, combine egg whites, banana, milk, and oil. Add the liquid mixture to the dry ingredients, stirring just enough to blend.
- Spoon the batter into the cups of the muffin tin, filling each about two-thirds full to leave room for expansion as the muffins bake. Bake for 18 minutes. Serve warm.
- NOTE Make your own canola oil spray by putting canola oil in a spray bottle. The store-bought sprays add an unpleasant propellant smell to your cooking, and they cost too much!
- VARIATION Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup blueberries or chopped fresh apricots.

YIELD 6 servings

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 175 calories, 32 g carbohydrate, 5 g protein, 3 g fat, 1.7 g dietary fiber

THE BENEFITS OF BERRIES

A diet rich in berries improves levels of HDL cholesterol, improves blood pressure, and helps reverse age-related cognitive decline. Berries—blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, and others—are rich in polyphenols, including flavonols and anthocyanins, which are powerful antioxidants. It is believed that the berry polyphenols promote proper function in aging neurons.

5 Blackberries

Benefits

Blackberries may extend your life! The pigments that give them their color are strong antioxidants, and they retain that power when eaten. They're also rich in anthocyanins, and there is laboratory evidence that anthocyanins may be effective against cancer, diabetes, inflammation, bacterial infections, and neurological diseases. Every 100 grams of blackberries provides 317 mg of anthocyanins.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One-half cup of raw blackberries provides 37 calories, 9.2 g carbohydrate, 0.5 g protein, 0.3 g fat, 3.8 g dietary fiber, 119 IU vitamin A, 15 mg vitamin C, 24 mcg folic acid, 141 mg potassium, 23 mg calcium, 15 mg phosphorus, and 14 mg magnesium.

Bringing It Home

Since blackberries are made up of lots of tiny seed-bearing drupelets, they have a lot of surface area where pesticides can hide! So for the nubby berries, please buy organic and, if possible, locally grown; blackberries grow all over the United States. Select plump, richly colored fruit. Shop with your nose—if you can't smell them, or if the stem caps (hulls) are still attached, they were picked too early. At the other end of the spectrum, if the containers appear stained with juice, the berries may have been sitting around too long. Mold on berries spreads quickly, so remove any moldy berries as soon as you get them home. Refrigerate your berries immediately (you can store them in a colander, allowing the cold air to circulate around them), but don't wash them until you're ready to use them. Berries are at their fullest flavor at room temperature, so take them out of the refrigerator an hour or two before eating—perfect timing if you want to pack them as your morning snack on your way out of the house!

Livit Recipe

Energizer Shake

This shake is great both for breakfast and as a snack.

6 ounces organic tofu (soft or "silken," packed in water), rinsed and drained OR ¼ cup nonfat dry milk powder OR ¼ cup powdered egg whites

6 ounces organic plain low-fat yogurt

1 small banana

½ cup strawberries

1 cup frozen blackberries

½ cup other fruit of your choice (frozen peaches, mixed berries, cherries)

4 cups organic unsweetened soy milk

- Put the tofu, yogurt, banana, strawberries, blackberries, fruit, and soy milk in a blender jar. (For a thinner shake, replace part of the soy milk with water.) Puree until smooth. Serve.
- NOTE You can make this shake the night before and store it in the refrigerator in your blender jar. The next morning, just blend it again for a quick and easy energizer.
- VARIATION For added fiber and omega-3 essential fatty acids, stir in a tablespoon of ground flaxseed to each serving just before drinking. Don't add the flaxseed if you're going to store your

shake for later; it can develop a rancid taste.

YIELD 4 servings

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 239 calories, 31 g carbohydrate, 16 g protein, 6 g fat, 4.4 g dietary fiber

6 Blueberries

Benefits

The health benefits of blueberries have made them one of the hottest topics in anti-aging research. A potent mix of flavonoids, tannins, and anthocyanins make blueberries one of the top antioxidant foods, ranking first among 40 antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables. A number of studies have shown that blueberries appear to slow down and even reverse age-related neurological degeneration.

Blueberries also have potential as cancer fighters. Lab results show that blueberries appear to slow down the rate of cell mutation and the growth of cancer cells; speed up cell turnover, which gives cancer cells less time to develop; reduce inflammatory agents that have been implicated in the onset of cancer; and slow down the growth of new blood vessels that nourish tumors. Researchers at Ohio State University are in the process of extending this research into human trials. At Rutgers University in New Jersey, researchers have identified a compound in blueberries that promotes urinary tract health and reduces the risk of infection. It appears to work by preventing bacteria from sticking to the cells that line the urinary tract walls.

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One cup of raw blueberries provides 81 calories, 20.5 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 0.6 g fat, 3.9 g dietary fiber, 145 IU vitamin A, 19 mg vitamin C, 9 mcg folic acid, 129 mg potassium, 9 mg calcium, 15 mg phosphorus, and 7 mg magnesium.

Bringing It Home

Smaller “wild” blueberries have more anthocyanin-containing skin for their volume, and more blueberry flavor, but a shorter growing season than the larger domesticated types. Fresh blueberries from the farmer’s market are an unforget-table treat, so find them fresh when you can. This is one fruit that’s so good for you that the frozen version should be a staple in your freezer, too.

Carefully sort through fresh berries before storing, and discard any that are mushy or moldy. (Don’t confuse the fuzzy white of mold with the waxy white “blush” that is natural to some strains of blueberry.) Pick off any stems and leaves, but wait to wash the berries until you are ready to use them.

Livit Recipe

Blueberry Boost Muffins

2¼ cups oat bran cereal OR quick-cooking oats, uncooked

1 tablespoon baking powder

¾ cup skim milk

2 eggs, slightly beaten OR 4 egg whites OR 6 tablespoons pre-packaged liquid egg whites

1/3 cup honey

2 tablespoons unsweetened applesauce

1 cup frozen organic blueberries, thawed and well drained

- Preheat oven to 425°F.
- Line a medium muffin tin with 12 paper baking cups.
- Combine the oat bran cereal and baking powder in a medium mixing bowl, making sure that the powder is well distributed.
- In a small bowl, combine the milk, eggs, honey, and applesauce. Add the blueberries to this mixture.
- Pour the milk mixture into the dry ingredients, stirring just until the oats are moistened and the blueberries distributed. Fill the prepared muffin cups about three-quarters full. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve warm.

YIELD 12 muffins

NUTRITION ANALYSIS PER SERVING 109.3 calories, 20.2 g carbohydrate, 4.2 g protein, 2.1 g fat, 2.5 g dietary fiber

7 Blueberries (Dried)

Benefits

Also see SuperFood 6, Blueberries.

Blueberries rank first among 40 antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, with a potent mix of flavonoids, tannins, and anthocyanins. Dried blueberries provide many of the benefits of fresh ones, with the addition of more fiber. They are a terrific portable snack!

NUTRITIONAL COMPOSITION One-third cup of dried blueberries provides 140 calories, 33 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 0 g fat, 4 g dietary fiber, and 6 mg vitamin C.

Bringing It Home

Choose dried blueberries that have no sugar or oil added and that are unsulfured. This rule of thumb applies to most other dried fruits as well. Add dried blueberries to a fruit salad or to a mixed green salad. Dried blueberries are a great on-the-go snack, especially with some nuts or cheese for more sustained energy.

Livit Recipe

Dried Blueberry and Arugula Salad

Salad

6 cups fresh arugula, trimmed and torn into bite-sized pieces

1 medium red onion, diced

1 medium cucumber, diced

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

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