

THE NUTE (NUTRITION) GURU IMPARTS WISDOM ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL, WHOLE-FOODS NUTRITION FOR MIND/BODY WELLNESS.



Nute Guru, I'm looking for a simple source of antioxidants this summer. Do you have any ideas?



Antioxidants? Summer? You must be talking about blueberries! These little superfoods are packed with both antioxidants and flavor. Because of the high antioxidant content, blueberries have so many health benefits, just a few of them can be seen below!

1. Fight off disease

Researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center looked at more than 100 common foods and found that, among fruits, wild and cultivated blueberries had the highest total antioxidant capacity. (Small red beans topped the list.) Antioxidants fight disease-inducing free radicals in our body.

2. Reduce belly fat

A University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center study showed that rats fed powdered freeze-dried blueberries as part of either a low- or a high-fat diet had less abdominal fat, and lower triglycerides (blood fats) and cholesterol than rats not fed blueberry powder. (The benefits were even greater when combined with the low-fat diet.) Researchers found blueberry intake affected genes linked to fat burning and storage.

3. Prevent hypertension

A study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed that anthocyanins—blue-red pigments found in blueberries—offer protection against hypertension. Over a 14-year period, the study looked at about 134,000 women and 23,000 men. Those eating more than one 1/2cup (125-mL) serving of blueberries a week reduced their risk of developing this condition by 10 percent compared to those who didn't eat any blueberries.

4. Maintain your brain

Anthocyanins have also been linked to an increase in neuronal signalling in brain centres. A small study done at the University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center looked at the effect of daily consumption of wild blueberry juice on older adults with memory changes. After 12 weeks, participants showed improved memory function.

5. Reduce your risk of colon cancer

The results of a study published in 2010 in Carcinogenesis showed that pterostilbene, a compound in blueberries, may help protect against colon cancer—the second leading cause of cancer death in Canadians (lung cancer is first). The researchers, from Rutgers university in New Jersey, showed pterostilbene's ability to suppress colon tumour growth, as well as key inflammatory markers.