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6 Superfoods for a Healthy Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving is an excellent time to add seasonal super foods to your holiday plate to help offset some of the damage caused by high-glycemic indulgences, prevent inflammation, support cellular repair and keep skin glowing during the holiday season. Here are some of my favorite super foods that I include on my Thanksgiving table:

1. Cranberries

These tart little berries are not only delicious and should be enjoyed year round, but are also ranked among the fruits and vegetables richest in antioxidants. They are packed with health-promoting properties and beauty benefits that prevent fine lines and wrinkle damage.

Benefits:

Research shows that water-soluble polyphenol antioxidants in cranberries provide substantial protection against free radical damage to cell membranes (the outer boundaries of the cells). This is key, because a reduction in the number of free radicals in the cell membrane will result in a reduction in the number of free radicals available to damage the cell membrane. Translation? Less damage to skin and other organ systems, and a younger and healthier you.

Thanksgiving Tip:

Instead of buying canned cranberry sauce make your own. Here is one of my favorite quick and easy recipes.

Cranberry Sauce

12 oz. package of fresh cranberries
1 cup freshly squeezed orange juice
¼ cup raw honey
Zest of one organic orange

Preparation

Place berries and juice in saucepan and cook over high heat until berries begin to pop. Stir continuously to prevent sticking. Add desired amount of raw honey to sweeten as berries gel. When cooking is complete, remove from heat. Stir in dissolved honey. Add orange zest. Refrigerate to chill.

READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

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[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

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Yields: 1¼ cup

2. Winter Squash and Pumpkins

As a dermatologist, I am particularly delighted with the fact that carotenoids neutralize free radicals in the skin, preventing the resulting inflammatory cascade that damages cells and accelerates the internal aging process - which manifest externally as wrinkles.

Benefits:

Carotenoid-rich foods have powerful benefits that help reverse UV damage, block sunlight-induced inflammation, improve skin texture and promote skin renewal.

Thanksgiving Tip:

I like to steam or bake pumpkins and save the seeds to roast and serve as a healthy appetizer. The seeds are rich in antioxidants, act as natural anti-inflammatories and protect against the free radical-initiated inflammation that causes cellular damage.

3. Ginger

To many of us, our sole relationship with ginger was our childhood fondness for ginger bread. Little did we realize that ginger is actually a powerful anti-aging remedy; with many health benefits and a long medicinal tradition throughout the East.

Benefits:

Ginger reduces excess stomach acid and minimizes upset stomachs. It greatly aids in digestion of protein, it is clinically proven as an anti-nausea remedy effective in treating both motion and morning sickness and is an effective non-steroidal anti-inflammatory.

Thanksgiving Tip:

Fresh ginger root is a wonderful addition to vegetables, soups, squash or pumpkin dishes—it is a versatile ingredient that can enhance just about every meal.

4. Turmeric

Turmeric is an Indian curry spice with an ancient history of medicinal use against inflammation. This delicious spice is a close cousin to ginger, and has been used for millennia to flavor, color, and preserve foods.

Benefits:

Like alpha lipoic acid, curcumin, the active constituent of Turmeric, enhances the liver's ability to eliminate dangerous, carcinogenic toxins and inhibits the pro-inflammatory actions that lead to inflammation-related micro scarring of collagen, which in turn produces wrinkles. Turmeric sensitizes the body's cortisol receptor sites, and its anti-inflammatory properties are considered comparable to those of the body's own cortisone-type hormones. We must keep our cortisol levels low to prevent accelerated aging of all organ systems—including the skin.

Thanksgiving Tip:

Add curry powder to deviled eggs or make a curry with leftover turkey and vegetables. The curry powder contains turmeric. Curcumin is one of the active constituents in turmeric and has both anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

5. Cinnamon

This aromatic tree bark has been prized for centuries in Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicines for its myriad of health benefits.

Benefits:

The mere scent of cinnamon enhances the brain's cognitive processing, including attention, memory, and visual-motor speed. Cinnamon also stimulates insulin receptors and inhibits an enzyme that inactivates them, thereby increasing cells' ability to use glucose. Thus, cinnamon may significantly help people with adult onset diabetes normalize their blood sugar levels. Less than half a teaspoon per day of cinnamon reduces blood sugar levels in persons with adult onset diabetes.

Thanksgiving Tip:

Add a cinnamon stick to your tea or sprinkle it on baked winter squash, sweet potatoes or pumpkin pie to provide blood sugar lowering benefits and provide superior antioxidant protection.

6. The Allium Family

Garlic is a superstar member of the allium family, which also contains onions, leeks, chives, leeks, shallots, and scallions. Garlic contains a special compound known as allicin, which must be crushed to be activated. Cooking pretty much destroys allicin; so use raw, crushed garlic to maximize health benefits.

Benefits:

Garlic has the ability to lower total cholesterol while raising the HDL (good) cholesterol, provides antifungal and anti-bacterial protection, reduces the risk of blood clots- the leading cause of stroke and heart attack, lowers blood pressure and lessens the risk of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

Thanksgiving Tip:

Add garlic or any member of the allium family to your savory Thanksgiving dishes to enhance flavor and increase antioxidant health benefits.

I wish you and your families a safe and healthy Thanksgiving.

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