

WARMING FOODS by Natasha Zamburro ND

Super foods are marketed to improve a plethora of symptoms and conditions from cancer to increased energy, from increasing short term memory to anti aging and longevity tonics. Are these claims feasible and is the exotic superior to common 'super' foods that we may have pushed to the side amidst the hype?

In search for the exotic, have we missed the fact that we have been eating super foods all along which are inexpensive, widely available and are eaten by a broad populous? To aid your decision here are some common and more exotic super foods to provide some food for thought:

Blueberries with their rich blue/purple pigment, which indicates high phenols content, are indeed a Super food. Contained in this small berry is an array of wonder phyto-nutrients worthy of acclaim. High in antioxidants, Vitamin C, bioflavanoids, and polyphenols, blueberries pack a healthful punch. This super food is available all year round due to the frozen varieties available at your supermarket. Obviously fresh is best, so enjoy them while in season!

Goji berries are considered the food from the Himalayan mountains although the majority of the harvest is currently from China. The claims remain vastly unsupported due to lack of clinical evidence and gratefully more research is currently being conducted in the USA, EU, China and Australia on the benefits of this wonder berry. Goji berries are high in amino acids, Vitamin C, bioflavanoids, beta carotene, zeaxanthin, B1, B2, B6, E, essential fatty acids, antioxidants and trace minerals. Whether coated in dark chocolate, in a trail mix, cereal or enjoyed on their own as a juice or dried berry they do provide a jam packed nutritional profile considering their small size.

Bananas are high in potassium, B6, Magnesium, protein and fibre. They are eaten all over the world and are regarded as a high energy, nutrient dense fruit with cardiovascular benefits due to the potassium and glutathione content. The balance of the fructose, fibre and protein enables bananas to be classified as a low GI food with blood sugar stabilising benefits as well as fibre for gastrointestinal and colon health. The humble banana may be forgotten in all of this super food hype however at some stage these too were considered an exotic fruit.

Pomegranate juice is a new inclusion that you will have seen gracing the shelves and pages of your health magazines. Pomegranate, the fruit considered to have been the sinful fruit that Eve used to tempt Adam, is a potent antioxidant and trace mineral laden fruit with many benefits to both genders. Researchers from the University of Los Angeles, USA, have found that the benefits of Pomegranate juice aid patients suffering with erectile dysfunction. The study asked patients to consume 226 millilitres of Pomegranate juice daily for one month. The results showed that over half of the participants reported stronger, harder and longer lasting erections. The component attributed to increasing peripheral circulation to benefit erectile dysfunction is said to be the potent antioxidant content which is credited to eliminate plaque build up in penile blood vessels as well as general arteries. Pomegranate juice has high antioxidant potency due to the high content of polyphenols. According to tests conducted at the Centre for Human Nutrition at UCLA Pomegranate juice had a 20% greater antioxidant content against other berry and fruit juices. The polyphenol rich juice has the ability to inhibit LDL oxidation, reduce free radical damage and exhibits general antioxidant benefits.

Pineapple is fantastic for digestion and contains powerful anti-inflammatory benefits due to the presence of bromelain. Bromelain is used as a supplement to reduce inflammation throughout the body but specifically for use in arthritis, rheumatism, mucous membrane irritations and as a digestive enzyme. Pineapple is also high in Vitamin C, fibre, flavonoids and enzymes for health. In the Mediterranean region, a meal is often finished with pineapple to aid digestion and cleanse the palate. Pineapple also contains nutrients to aid fat metabolism and is enjoyed in summer for this reason by the fashionable and healthy Med Jet set.

Acai berry is an exotic berry that tastes like a combination of blueberries and chocolate. It is known as the vitality and longevity berry and is regarded as a super food amongst the Brazilian Amazon people. Newer to the remainder of the world, Acai fruit is the size of a blueberry and the nutrients present include linoleic acid, anthocyanins, fibre, antioxidants, amino acids, vitamins A, E, C and B1, B2, B3, phosphorus, potassium, iron, calcium as well as beta-sitosterol (a phytosterol that inhibits cholesterol absorption). With more than 44% of its weight as fibre, there is also up to 30 times more anthocyanin content than is present in red wine. Omega 6 and 9 are also present while the anthocyanin content is regarded as the antioxidant component of acai berry.

Green tea is consumed by billions of people around the world and they all know one thing – green tea is fantastic for your health, complexion, is detoxifying and is a mild stimulant while you remain clear of thought due to the low caffeine and theanine content. Found in many thermogenic weight loss supplements Green tea is great to stimulate fat metabolism and according to Dr. Perricone if you replace some daily water with green tea you may achieve a 4kg weight loss over a period of a month.

Red wine and dark chocolate. Ok all of you lovers of fine dining, wine and deserts – here is your justification for surrendering to your desires and indulgences; Red wine and dark chocolate are good for you! Red wine is a potent antioxidant due to the anthocyanin and resveratrol content. Resveratrol has been clinically found to have beneficial qualities on the cardiovascular system, vascular integrity and cellular strength. Anthocyanins are water soluble pigments which belong to the flavanoid group. According to several studies, anthocyanins display biological activities including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and in addition exhibit a variety of effects on blood vessels, platelets and lipoproteins able to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. Resveratrol is a plant phenolic compound which is known to prevent CV disorders and more recently, discovered in vitro, the promotion of longevity. More clinical research is being conducted as dietary resveratrol may also promote nitric oxide production, inhibit platelet aggregation, increase HDL's and thereby serve as a cardioprotective agent. Given that resveratrol is produced in dark red grapes white wine contains very small amounts of resveratrol. Health claims and benefits are now being presented to the FDA for possible changes to marketing and wine label considerations. This is currently being considered in the EU and USA.

Cocoa and Dark chocolate has a high flavonoid content and contributes to the CV health benefits attributed to the consumption of cocoa. Due to tremendous variables associated with cocoa processing, flavonoid content and measurement, the dosage per day of these beneficial flavonoids requires further investigation. The current studies report that 1.9g of dark chocolate, rich in flavonoids is adequate. Dark

chocolate, the indulgence of kings, is high in antioxidants and flavonoids and in small quantities is also perceived by some as an aphrodisiac, so... eat up!

Quick Super food facts

- Eating a wide variety of nutrient dense foods is always recommended by health professionals and is preferred over totally relying on supplements for your nutrient intake.
- Foods are designed by nature to contain a perfectly balanced nutrient profile and contain all the synergistic nutrients and co-factors required to be absorbed and assimilated unlike some single supplements.
- Foods indigenous to a particular region contain a specific nutrient balance in relation to the inhabitants, climate, environment and lifestyle factors. Be aware of this as you adopt these super foods into your diet as some of the foods designed for hunter-gatherers may be too high in calories for a city, leisurely or sedentary lifestyle. Therefore, be sure to adjust your daily diet accordingly to incorporate the super food into your dietary plan.
- Do not rely on one super food only – Just like you don't eat soup every day to prevent your digestive system from becoming complacent, alternate super food sources to vary nutrient profiles and gain optimal benefit.
- Do not rely on the super food as the sole source of extra or supplemental nutrition.
- If you have a specific condition or deficiency state you will be better advised to address the deficiency state with therapeutic supplementation and then follow with a maintenance dose while utilising the benefits of super foods.
- If you have a deficient state or suffer from a chronic to degenerative condition please contact your trusted medical or natural medicine practitioner for advice for your particular circumstance.