Holiday Superfoods Feast

Cooking with these high-powered ingredients can literally save your life

November 28, 2006 By Sara Lomax-Reese

Thousands of years ago, Hippocrates coined an adage that remains true: “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” This concept seems foreign in today’s world of Big Macs, Biggie fries and Big Gulps. But imagine if you could achieve optimal health through one of the most pleasurable pastimes on the planet—eating?

That’s where superfoods come in. These ingredients (see list) are incredibly dense in vitamins, minerals and nutrients, so they have intense healing properties. Some scavenge disease-producing free radicals—chemicals that damage cells and can cause chronic and age-related diseases. Others help fight certain cancers; most strengthen your immune system and lengthen your life.

But you can’t just add superfoods to your diet; you also have to subtract certain mainstays of the standard American diet that are toxic to our bodies. Eating white flour, white rice, white sugar and highly processed foods for decades leads to the obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer epidemic in our community. We can prevent—even reverse—these illnesses by cutting out unhealthy ingredients and adding superfoods.

Here’s a road map to the treasures hidden in this superfood feast:

Blueberries
Blueberries top the list in antioxidant activity. Studies show that they slow age-related mental decline; help reduce “bad” cholesterol, which contributes to cardiovascular disease and stroke; and reduce the risk of urinary tract infections.

Brown rice
This chewy, nutty rice has more than 70 antioxidants, many vitamins and minerals and lots of fiber. White rice is stripped of these healing properties.

Garlic
This ancient medicinal plant has been proved to prevent and fight colds and flu, lower blood pressure and cholesterol and protect against strokes and heart disease.

Ginger
The National Cancer Institute recently identified this spicy root as a top-ten cancer-fighting food. Ginger also aids digestion, relieves nausea, helps heal ulcers, supports cardiovascular health, reduces
pain and inflammation and speeds recovery from colds and flu.

Greens
Dark, leafy greens, like collards, kale, cabbage, watercress, mustard greens, broccoli rabe and red or green lettuce (to name a few), are among the most important, yet absent, superfoods in the average American diet. Greens are very high in calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, phosphorous, zinc and vitamins A, C, E and K. They are crammed with fiber, folic acid, chlorophyll and many other micronutrients and phytochemicals.

Green tea
While green and black tea come from the same plant, green tea contains more polyphenols, the chemicals researchers believe inhibit cancer development. Studies suggest that drinking green tea can help prevent cardiovascular disease and dental cavities, lower cholesterol and blood pressure, fight bacteria and viruses and reduce blood sugar.

Turmeric
This golden Indian spice, used in both ayurvedic (the ancient healing tradition of India) and Chinese medicine, fights inflammation; treats digestive disorders, liver problems and skin diseases; assists wound healing; and protects the liver from toxins.

Yams/sweet potatoes
These root vegetables are an excellent source of vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene) and a very good source of vitamin C. Beta-carotene and vitamin C help eliminate free radicals that catalyze conditions like atherosclerosis, heart disease and colon cancer. The nutrients in yams also reduce inflammation, helping with conditions like asthma, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

The Top 20 Superfoods

Beans
Blueberries
Broccoli
Brown rice
Garlic
Ginger
Miso
Oats
Oranges
Pumpkins
Soy

Spinach
Tea
Tomatoes
Turkey (skinless breast)
Turmeric
Walnuts
Wild salmon
Yams
Yogurt

Power Dinner
As Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year's Day approach, give your loved ones the gift of good health by preparing the superfoods feast below:

Ginger and Garlic–Marinated Turkey Breast With BBQ Glaze
Serves 8

2 lbs of turkey London broil (boneless turkey breast)
¼ cup Bragg liquid aminos or low sodium soy sauce
1 tbsp brown-rice vinegar (or white vinegar)
1 tbsp fresh ginger, grated
3 cloves garlic (1 sliced, 2 minced for marinade)
1 tsp toasted sesame oil
3 tbsps orange juice
2 tbsps honey

1. With a knife, cut small slits in the turkey London broil. Slice 1 clove of garlic and insert into the slits.
2. Mix all remaining ingredients to make marinade. Place the turkey in a large plastic resealable bag, and pour marinade over turkey. Let marinate 6 to 24 hours (the longer, the better).
3. Preheat oven to 375°. Bake turkey, with marinade, for about 35 minutes, or until meat thermometer reads 165°. Pour off the drippings, and save for the barbecue sauce. Brush about 1 cup of the sauce (see recipe below) onto the turkey; then broil for about 5 minutes until crispy on the outside.

Per 4-oz serving: 189 calories, 35 grams protein, 1 gram fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 94 milligrams cholesterol, 659 milligrams sodium

Barbecue Sauce

¼ cup ketchup
1 small can of tomato paste
2 tbsps Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp maple syrup

1 tbsp molasses
2 tbsps white vinegar
1 tbsp ginger, grated and squeezed for juice
½ cup water
½ cup apple juice
1 small onion chopped
1 tsp salt
¼ tsp hot-pepper flakes
Drippings from turkey

1. Mix all ingredients in a saucepan, and cook over low heat for about 8 minutes.
2. Brush about 1 cup of sauce onto turkey before broiling. Any remaining sauce will keep for 7 days in the refrigerator.

Per ¼ cup serving: 97 calories, 3.5 grams protein, < 1 gram fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 0 milligrams cholesterol, 980 milligrams sodium.To reduce sodium content, substitute appropriate ingredients with low-sodium ketchup, low-sodium tomato paste and low-sodium Worcestershire sauce.

Jasmine Green Tea–Infused Wild Rice
Serves 4–6

3½ cups water
2 cups wild brown rice
4 jasmine green tea bags
1 tsp butter or olive oil
½ tsp salt

1. Rinse rice with cold water.
2. Place water and tea bags in saucepan, and bring to boil slowly. Remove tea bags. Pour rice in pan. Add salt and butter. Cover, and turn heat down to low.
3. Cook for about 30 minutes or until all water is absorbed.

Optional: Add ¼ cup golden raisins, ¼ cup chopped almonds, 1 tbsp chopped fresh tarragon.

Per ¼ cup serving: 60 calories, 1.2 grams protein, 1 gram fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 0 milligrams cholesterol, 14 milligrams sodium

Pineapple/Orange Candied Yams With Turmeric
Serves 4–6

3 lbs yams (about 4 large yams)
1½ cups orange juice

1 whole pineapple, crushed or 2 cups canned crushed pineapple
1 tbsp apple juice concentrate
1 tsp turmeric
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp nutmeg

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Peel yams, and cut into 1-inch chunks.
2. Mix orange juice, pineapple, apple juice concentrate and spices together. Pour orange juice/pineapple mixture over yams.
3. Bake uncovered for about 1 hour or until yams are soft.

Optional: Garnish with toasted unsweetened coconut.

Per ½ cup serving: 252 calories, 3.4 grams protein, 7 grams fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 0 milligrams cholesterol, 47 milligrams sodium

Garlic and Lime Collard Greens
Serves 4–6

6 cups of collard greens, chopped coarsely
½ cup water
3 cloves garlic, minced
Juice of 1 lime
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
¼ tsp salt

1. Place water in large sauté pan on high heat. Place minced garlic in pan. Cook on high for about 2 minutes.
2. Add chopped collard greens. Stir constantly until greens wilt (about 3 minutes). Turn off heat.
3. Add lime juice and olive oil. Toss and add salt.

Per ½ cup serving: 42 calories, 1.1 grams protein, 2.2 grams fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 0 milligrams cholesterol, 10.1 milligrams sodium

Blueberry Apple Cobbler
Serves 8

Fruit mixture:
4 cups sliced apples, peeled
1 10-oz bag frozen organic blueberries
2 tbsps apple juice concentrate
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ cup whole wheat pastry flour
Topping:

½ cup whole wheat pastry flour
1¼ cups whole oats
1½ tsp cinnamon
¼ cup agave nectar (or honey)
1 tbsp unsalted organic butter
Optional: Add 1 tbsp mixture of ground goji berries and raw chocolate.

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Mix cinnamon and flour. Combine apples and blueberries in a large mixing bowl. Add flour mixture. Stir to combine fruit and dry ingredients.
3. Stir in apple juice concentrate. Pour into an ungreased 9-inch round pie pan.
4. Cover fruit mixture with topping.
5. Bake for about 30 minutes or until brown on top.

Per serving of cobbler: 239 calories, 11 grams protein, 3.9 grams fat, < 1 gram saturated fat, 1.6 milligrams cholesterol, 13.3 milligrams sodium

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