

# 15 SUPER FOODS

BY BITA HUNT, B.A.

## (1.) SEA VEGETABLES

Most of the American population consumes sea vegetables daily without realizing it. They are present in ice cream, puddings, bottled sauces, and even toothpaste. They are used to thicken products and act as stabilizers.

Unprocessed sea vegetables are a wonderful food and should really be consumed by all. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, and protein, yet low in calories. Sea vegetables are delicious in soups, stews, salads, side dishes, or for making sushi.

Ones to try: agar, wakame, arame, hiziki, kombu, and dulse.

## (2.) BERRIES

Berries are loaded with vitamin C, folate, fiber and phytonutrients. Indeed, fresh berries are some of the most powerful disease fighting foods available.

Berries are easy to prepare; just rinse and lightly pat dry. They are great as a dessert, a snack, or sprinkled on top of your morning porridge.

Ones to try: raspberries, blueberries, cherries, and blackberries.

## (3.) LEAFY GREEN VEGETABLES

Green vegetables such as kale, chard, collard greens, watercress, arugula, bok choy, and dandelion greens are packed with vitamins A and C, iron, folate, beta-carotene, calcium and phytonutrients.

They are very filling, high in fiber and low in calories. They are also alkalizing, and create strong blood and the chlorophyll in them helps the body purify itself.

## (4.) PICKLES

Pickles contribute to the protection of the body against infections, stimulate the immune system, improve the digestion process, and act as anti-oxidants. In addition, they also facilitate the synthesis of certain vitamins, such as vitamin C, and B12. Overall, they are a valuable food for any diet, even for those who suffer from candida.

In fact many naturopaths recommend raw fermented vegetables to people with candida because one of the main functions of lactic bacteria is to prevent the development of yeasts.

Ones to try: rice bran pickles (nuka), sauerkraut, and Kim chi.

## (5.) UMEBOSHI PLUM

A tart salty plum, pickled with red shiso (Japanese basil) leaves. Often called 'the king of alkaline foods', umeboshi plums are an ancient Japanese health food used to balance and strengthen.

Highly valued for its antibacterial properties, a digestive aid, and also for hangovers or whenever the body feels depleted. Ideal for sushi, dips, sauces, and salad dressings.

A more convenient way to consume it is to use umeboshi plum vinegar, which is not true vinegar but a fuchsia hued brine.

## **(6.) DAIKON RADISH**

Native to Asia, these are very large carrot-shaped radishes. Also called Japanese radishes, they have a white flesh that is juicy and a bit hotter than that of red radishes but milder than that of black ones. While radishes are not nutritionally outstanding, they are a good source of vitamin C.

They make a perfect, very low calorie snack food.

## **(7.) FERMENTED SOY (MISO AND TEMPEH)**

Tempeh is a fermented food made from soybeans, most popular in Indonesia. The fermentation process and its retention of the whole bean give it a higher content of vitamins, phytochemicals, all of the essential amino acids, as well as firmer texture and stronger flavor than tofu.

The soy protein in tempeh becomes more digestible as a result of the fermentation process. Because tempeh is made from whole beans, it is also a good source of dietary fiber unlike tofu which contains no fiber.

Miso (fermented bean paste) is a concentrated, savory paste made from soybeans--often mixed with a grain such as rice, barley, or wheat--that is fermented with a yeast mold (koji) and then combined with sea salt and water.

The mixture is aged from one month to three years. While it is a good source of protein and carbohydrates, miso is, nonetheless, high in sodium and should be consumed sparingly if you are salt-sensitive.

Ones to try: sweet white, mellow white, chickpea (safe for those with soy allergies), barley (mugi), and red.

## **(8.) WHOLE GRAINS (ESPECIALLY GLUTEN FREE ONES)**

Whole grains have some valuable antioxidants not found in fruits and vegetables. They also contain B vitamins, vitamin E, magnesium, iron and fiber. To include more servings of whole grains in your diet, use whole-wheat flour in your recipes instead of white flour.

Look for the word "whole" when purchasing packaged foods such as cereals, biscuits, pasta and breads. We all tend to consume too much wheat and other grains that contain gluten, which can cause bloating, so try to eat more gluten free grains such as: quinoa, brown rice, millet, teff, corn, and amaranth.

## **(9.) SARDINES**

This slender fish is packed full of important nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and calcium. Cold-water fish, such as sardines, contain the highest amounts of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. One of the world's first canned foods, the sardine is rich in phosphorus, iron, potassium, vitamin B6, and niacin.

Try to get the ones packed in water only without salt added.

## **(10.) EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL**

Olive oil, a nutritionally impressive fat derived from the olive fruit, is a principal source of dietary fat in the Mediterranean region. Numerous studies have shown that those who consume the traditional Mediterranean diet (compared with people who consume an American style cuisine high in saturated fat), are at decreased risk of developing heart disease and cancer. And epidemiological studies show that they also live longer. Recent data suggests that olive oil has anti-inflammatory benefits.

I especially like Spanish and Italian extra virgin olive oil.

## **(11.) CHILE PEPPERS**

In addition to their high capsaicin content, cayenne peppers are also an excellent source of vitamin A, including beta-carotene. Beta-carotene may therefore be helpful in reducing the symptoms of asthma, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis. In addition, its antioxidant activity make it useful in preventing the free radical damage that can lead to arteriosclerosis, colon cancer, and diabetic complications, like nerve damage and heart disease.

If one feels a cold coming one, indulge in some hot sauce because chiles help boost immunity and clear congestion. Lastly, chile peppers can help one lose weight due to the fact that they temporarily evaluate the metabolism.

## **(12.) GREEN TEA**

Besides tasting great and counting towards your daily liquid intake, green tea has many benefits. The secret of green tea lies in the fact it is rich in catechin polyphenols, particularly epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG).

EGCG is a powerful anti-oxidant: besides inhibiting the growth of cancer cells, it kills cancer cells without harming healthy tissue.

There are many green tea on the market. I especially like genmaicha, green tea with brown rice.

## **(13.) BEANS**

Black beans especially are a very good source of cholesterol lowering fiber, as are most other legumes. In addition to lowering cholesterol, black beans' high fiber content prevents blood sugar levels from rising too rapidly after a meal, making these beans an especially good choice for individuals with diabetes, insulin resistance or hypoglycemia.

When combined with whole grains such as brown rice, black beans provide virtually fat-free high quality complete protein. Other good varieties include: aduki, chickpea, pinto, kidney, and navy.

## **(14.) SHIITAKE & MAITAKE MUSHROOMS**

Most mushrooms provide a wealth of protein, fiber, B vitamins, and vitamin C, as well as calcium and other minerals. Two species have demonstrated phenomenal healing potential: shiitake and maitake.

These medicinal mushrooms have been shown to boost heart health, lower the risk of cancer, promote immune function, ward off viruses, bacteria, reduce inflammation, combat allergies, help balance blood sugar levels, and support the body's detoxification mechanisms.

## **(15.) NUTS**

Although nuts are high in fat, the fat is mostly unsaturated fat, which has a beneficial effect on heart health. Studies with almonds and walnuts have both shown a beneficial effect on blood cholesterol levels. Walnuts in particular, are high in omega-3 fatty acids that are protective to the heart and circulation. Lastly, nuts are also good sources of dietary fiber, magnesium, copper, folic acid, protein, potassium, and vitamin E.

Try to get unsalted raw nuts and toast them yourself and sprinkle with sea salt. The salted nuts at the store are usually too high in sodium. Ones to try: cashews, macadamias, Brazil nuts, and pistachios.