

5 favorite foods

BY NEIL ZEVIK

As the years go by, you may find yourself becoming more concerned with the ability of foods to provide more than basic nutrition and oral gratification. Studies show that certain foods can make significant contributions to improving health. Here are five all-star foods that not only taste great but also help ward off disease.

1. strawberries

The rich array of phenols in strawberries makes them a triple-threat protector—anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and heart-helpful. They guard against rheumatoid arthritis, liver cancer, atherosclerosis, and other maladies. Delicious medicine indeed!

hot tip: They're very perishable, so try to buy them the day you'll use them. And organic is infinitely preferable—conventionally grown berries get a lot of pesticides. They should be firm, plump, and dark red, with a sweet, strawberry scent. Rinse well, pat dry, and store loosely in an airtight container in the fridge for up to four days.

2. salmon

Utterly delicious, and oh-so-good for you, salmon supplies a massive helping of protein, to be sure; however, it's the omega-3 fats that are its main attraction. The benefits to improved heart health are nearly endless; its anti-inflammatory effects contribute to reduced risk of fatal arrhythmia, lowered triglyceride levels, and increased protection against high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. And this cold-water fatty fish also provides protection against cognitive decline.

hot tip: Buy wild-caught, not farmed, whenever you can. Wild salmon is freshest April through September. Smell it to make sure it's fresh—it should seem faintly briny, but not fishy. Ask your fishmon-

ger for a bag of ice, or bring your own cold bag; it's best to keep it chilled at all times, especially in the summer months. Store it in the bottom back of the fridge, and use within 24 hours. Grill, broil, roast, poach—it's all good!

3. spinach

This leafy green vegetable is low in calories but high in vitamin K, which strengthens bone mass and limits damage to neurons in the brain—yes, more protection against cognitive decline! And there are 13 flavonoid compounds that provide antioxidant power and protection against cancers, especially prostate and ovarian. Iron to provide increased energy and folate to guard against heart attack also help to make this veggie a can't-lose proposition.

hot tip: The leaves should be bright green and crisp, with no yellowing, bruising, wilting, or slimy coating. Store loosely packed in a plastic bag in the veggie drawer of the fridge for up to four days. Rinse well just before cooking (even the prewashed, bagged kind). Cook quickly, no more than a minute or two; blanch, steam, or sauté.

4. pomegranate juice

This gorgeously colored fruit has been prominent in Ayurvedic medicine for centuries, but is only now coming into its own in Western culture. The most convenient and readily available form is the juice, and though lacking the fiber of the whole fruit, it is rich in a unique polyphenol called punicalagin. This element causes the pomegranate to be one of the highest-rated fruits for antioxidant activity, and provides protection against atherosclerosis and prostate cancer, as well as numerous other contributions to improved health.

hot tip: Try to find a brand with as little added sugar as possible. Use for sauces, salad dressings, smoothies.



no. 1 strawberry



5. green tea

Endless studies have shown that this mild-mannered beverage is actually an aggressive warrior against numerous potentially fatal conditions. Cardiovascular maladies of all sorts are blocked, including heart attack, stroke, and hypertension, and there are multiple compounds that fight a wide array of cancers. Green tea has been shown to promote fat loss, increase exercise endurance, and even fight the flu. The list goes on and on. This is one beverage you want to keep on your daily menu without fail.

hot tip: It should be as fresh as possible. For loose-leaf tea, pinch a small amount and smell it—it should seem sweet and grassy; for bagged tea, check the expiration date. Buy in small amounts, and store in an opaque container with a good seal—dark glass or ceramic is best. Keep the container in a cool, dark cupboard. Brew a pot and serve it hot for breakfast, cold for lunch, and freeze it for a granita for dinner.

See betternutrition.com for tasty, healthful recipes for *Grilled Planked Salmon with Pomegranate and Port Reduction*, and *Seared Baby Spinach with Lemon and Garlic*.

Expert tip



"Add whole salmon oil to your regimen," says Robert Newman, PhD, a professor and fish oil researcher. "Hundreds of trials support the efficacy of fish oil omega fatty acids in promoting cardiovascular health." He recommends **New Chapter WholeOmega**.

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