A+ for Almonds, Abundant in Vitamin E, Minerals

The Folklore. In ancient Greece, the almond tree was considered special, as it was the only tree that flowered before developing leaves. Ancient Romans showered newlyweds with almonds for fertility.

The Facts. Almonds are related to stone fruits like cherries, peaches, apricots and plums; they resemble the kernels inside peach and nectarine pits. They are extremely nutrient-rich; a handful is an excellent source of vitamin E. While all nuts are valued for their E content, none has close to the amount—nearly 40% of the Daily Value—that almonds do. Almonds are also rich in protein, as well as magnesium and manganese, two minerals that can be hard to come by, and are a good source of copper, fiber and the B vitamin riboflavin.

The Findings. Almonds are not only rich in vitamin E and numerous minerals, their skins contain antioxidant flavonoids and phenols. All likely contribute to the heart-healthy benefits as seen in a recent study in which participants ate 2 1/2 ounces a day of almonds plus a cholesterol-lowering diet (less than 200 milligrams a day of cholesterol and less than 7% saturated fat). The participants significantly lowered their total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (“bad” LDL) cholesterol levels and raised their levels of high-density lipoprotein (“good” HDL) cholesterol compared to a control group.

The scientific proof behind the health benefits of almonds is so strong the Food and Drug Administration allows a health claim on food labels that says eating 1.5 ounces a day of nuts, like almonds, along with a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease.

The Finer Points. Almond trees are dormant in winter months, but are harvested in the fall, so are plentiful in stores all winter. Raw or roasted, almonds are pasteurized before packaging to kill unsafe bacteria. To keep fresh, buy from a store with high turnover; store in a cool, dry place or freeze whole almonds for up to two years.

Almonds are versatile in main dishes and desserts. Use ground almonds as a partial replacement for flour. Sprinkle slivered almonds on top of salads, soups or desserts or simply eat whole nuts out of hand for an energy-boosting snack.

—Mindy Hermann, M.B.A., R.D.

Notable Nutrients
(1 ounce almonds, about 23 nuts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% Daily Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>6 grams</td>
<td>(12% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riboflavin</td>
<td>0.2 milligram</td>
<td>(14% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vitamin E</td>
<td>11 International Units</td>
<td>(37% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>0.3 milligram</td>
<td>(16% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>1.2 milligrams</td>
<td>(7% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magnesium</td>
<td>76 milligrams</td>
<td>(20% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>0.7 milligram</td>
<td>(36% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molybdenum</td>
<td>8.4 micrograms</td>
<td>(11% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>135 milligrams</td>
<td>(13% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>3.4 grams</td>
<td>(13% DV)</td>
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</tbody>
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DV=Daily Value

Sautéed Vegetables With Roasted Almonds

1/2 cup sliced almonds
3 teaspoons olive oil, divided
1 small red bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 small orange or yellow bell pepper, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 head bok choy, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Place almonds on baking sheet; roast for 10 minutes, turning once or twice.
3. Heat two teaspoons of the olive oil in a large sauté pan or wok. Add peppers and sauté on medium-high for three minutes.
4. Stir in garlic and continue to sauté for three more minutes. Remove and set aside in a medium-sized bowl.
5. Heat remaining olive oil in pan. Add bok choy and sauté for one minute.
6. Add lemon juice and cover pan; heat until bok choy wilts. Return peppers to pan; add the roasted almonds and stir.

Serves four.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 137 calories, 6 grams protein, 10 grams carbohydrates, 10 grams fat, 701 milligrams potassium, 10,003 International Units vitamin A (mostly beta-carotene), 0.3 milligram riboflavin, 151 micrograms folate, 187 milligrams vitamin C, 6 International Units vitamin E, 77 milligrams magnesium, 0.7 milligram manganese, 138 milligrams sodium, 4 grams fiber.

(Recipe courtesy of The Almond Board.)


Research Roundup

- Taking daily fish oil supplements may lessen damaging health effects of pollution due to oxidative stress, researchers in Mexico concluded after giving two grams of fish oil a day to 52 nursing home residents for seven months. Prior testing revealed that pollution levels in the nursing home were as high as outdoors. The omega-3-rich supplements boosted blood levels of antioxidant enzymes and reduced oxidative damage in blood cells, which are both affected by pollution. 

- Supplementing with vitamin C before starting chemotherapy may interfere with treatment. A group of New York researchers tested the theory in mice and in the laboratory using human leukemia and lymphoma cells, and found that vitamin C negated much of the cancer-killing benefits of many chemo agents. Levels of C in the mice were similar to levels found in the white cells of people taking vitamin C supplements, suggesting that the findings may apply to humans as well. The researchers noted that the amount of C found naturally in foods is not a problem.

In Coming Issues

- When to Worry, When to Not. EN dispels some nutrition myths.
- Stay Fit. How to meet the government’s new physical activity goals.
- How Many Calories Are in That? EN tests your portion control acumen.
- Silicone Kitchen Gadgets. Safe?
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