crazy for coconut water

Quench your thirst with this refreshing and healthful tropical beverage

By Jack Challem

When I first heard about coconut water, I was skeptical. It just sounded too good to be true. But one sip made me a believer.

Coconut water has long been served as a refreshing beverage in the hot and humid climates of South America and Southeast Asia. Over the past year or so, it has gained a loyal following in the United States too. The reasons are simple: it tastes good, it's loaded with good nutrition, and it's natural. And it contains relatively few calories.

What's more, coconut water is often promoted as a mineral-rich rehydrating beverage for athletes—it restores fluids and minerals lost during exercise. For those who don't routinely pump iron or pound the pavement, it's a tasty beverage with a light coconut taste.

Either way, coconut water is one of the richest food sources of potassium, a mineral that's good for the heart and blood pressure. A typical serving provides 660 mg of potassium, almost seven times more than what can be legally sold as a dietary supplement. Coconut water also contains magnesium and calcium, but no fat, no cholesterol, and very little sodium.

The naturally occurring sugars, 14 g per serving, are a fraction of what's in a soft drink.

Medical Uses

Much of my original skepticism about coconut water came from reading what seemed to be totally outrageous claims. One of them was that doctors had given coconut water intravenously to patients. Incredibly, the claims turned out to be true.

Doctors first described the intravenous use of coconut water in a 1942 article in the American Journal of Diseases of Children. Other reports on the IV use of fresh coconut water—and its safety—appear from the 1950s through 2001 in publications such as The American Journal of Emergency Medicine and Archives of Surgery.

A Distinctive Beverage

Coconut water is distinctive and very different from coconut milk, a thick cream-like liquid commonly used in Thai cuisine. Coconut water is obtained from young green coconuts. Slight variations in flavor result from different growing regions. According to Bruce Fife, ND, author of Coconut Water for Health and Healing, coconut trees can grow to a height of 100 feet and live for 70 years. The trees yield bunches of five to 12 coconuts year-round.

Most coconut water is currently obtained from Brazil, where farmers grow coconut palm trees on large

Product Examples

We recently taste-tested the top brands of coconut water. Here's what we found:

ZICO. (Not shown.) Zico's pure coconut water has a great taste. The fruit-flavored Zico coconut waters—Mango and Passion Fruit & Orange Peel—contain the essence of fruit and no additional sugars, a big plus for people watching their weight.

AMY & BRIAN COCONUT JUICE. Although called coconut juice, it's actually coconut water. The pulp-free beverage has a slightly sweeter taste than other brands.

HARVEST BAY. The pure coconut water has a great taste. The açai-flavored version has a bold berry flavor and 2 g of naturally occurring sugars.

O.N.E. O.N.E. stands for one natural experience. Like Zico, O.N.E. coconut water has a nice smooth flavor.

VITA COCO. Vita Coco's pure coconut water has slightly more potassium and 1 g fewer sugars than a serving of other brands.
plantsations. It would have remained a regional beverage had it not been for recent improvements in low-cost (and recyclable) packaging technology. Fresh coconut water spoils when it is not quickly consumed or refrigerated, precluding its shipment over long distances. Researchers found that packaging coconut water in aseptic Tetra Pak cartons protects against heat and bacteria. Coconut water is best served cool.

**scrumptious scones**
Makes 8 scones

You will love to share these scones with anyone since no one can tell they are gluten free. Recipe by Chelsea Lincoln, courtesy of bobsredmill.com.

- 1 cup gluten-free sweet white sorghum flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup organic coconut flour
- 1/4 cup potato starch
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/4 cup cranberries
- 1/4 cup walnut pieces

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Spray baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Combine sorghum flour, sugar, coconut flour, potato starch, baking powder, and salt in large bowl. Cut butter into flour mixture with pastry cutter until mixture resembles small peas. Stir in buttermilk to form soft dough. Add cranberries and walnuts, and mix until just combined.
3. Place dough on top of waxed paper. Form into 1-inch-thick circle. Cut circle into 8 wedges. Place wedges on greased baking sheet, and bake 10 to 12 minutes.

**PER SERVING:** 330 CAL; 5 G PROT; 12 G TOTAL FAT (6 G SAT FAT); 53 G CARB; 20 MG CHOL; 340 MG SOD; 5 G FIBER; 30 G SUGARS

**Cooking with Coconut: Flour and Oil**

You can find organic coconut flour—which is gluten free—at your local health food store. It's high in fiber (61 percent fiber content, compared with 27 percent in wheat bran), low in carbs, and has a subtle coconut flavor. You can mix coconut flour with other types of flour, but the coconut flour will require more water to make a consistent batter.

**TRY:** Bob's Red Mill Organic Coconut Flour, which is the basis for the Scrumptious Scones recipe above. For more recipes, visit bobsredmill.com.

Coconut oil (or butter) has a high smoke point, meaning that you can use it to cook hotter than with many other types of vegetable oils (e.g., olive oil). It contains lauric acid, a type of saturated fat that doesn't seem to have much of an impact on blood fats or blood sugar—and it might actually have some heart benefits and antimicrobial benefits. Use a little coconut oil instead of butter on steamed vegetables.

**TRY:** Health Support Raw Organic Coconut Oil. For a delicious, sweet treat, try Premier Organics Artisana Raw Organic Amazon Bliss, featuring a heavenly blend of coconut oil, coconut butter, acai berries, yacon, cacao nibs, goji berries, and agave syrup. Spread on bread or add to cereal and/or yogurt.
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