

[CHAPTER 3]

Eat Your Fruits And Veggies



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Our journey into the wonderful world of eating right now brings us to the two remaining categories of carbs: fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are my favorite nutrition topic. Every time you include this amazing food group in your diet, you immediately improve your health. I regard fruits and vegetables so highly that I think people should be racing to their grocery stores to grab them before they're all gone!

So what exactly makes these foods so awesome? Well, for starters, fruits and vegetables are high in nutrients, yet low in calories, which is a great combo. They are bursting with an assortment of vitamins and minerals, and they offer loads of beneficial zero-calorie fiber, which means you can eat plenty without worries of weight gain. In fact, for most of us, the more fruits and vegetables we eat, the less we will weigh.

When it comes to fruits and vegetables, the first thing I want to talk about is phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are really what catapults fruits and vegetables into a league of their own. I want you to have a basic understanding of what phytochemicals are, and what they can do in your body, because I know from personal experience that it will motivate you to eat more fruit and veggies.

The Phytochemical Lowdown

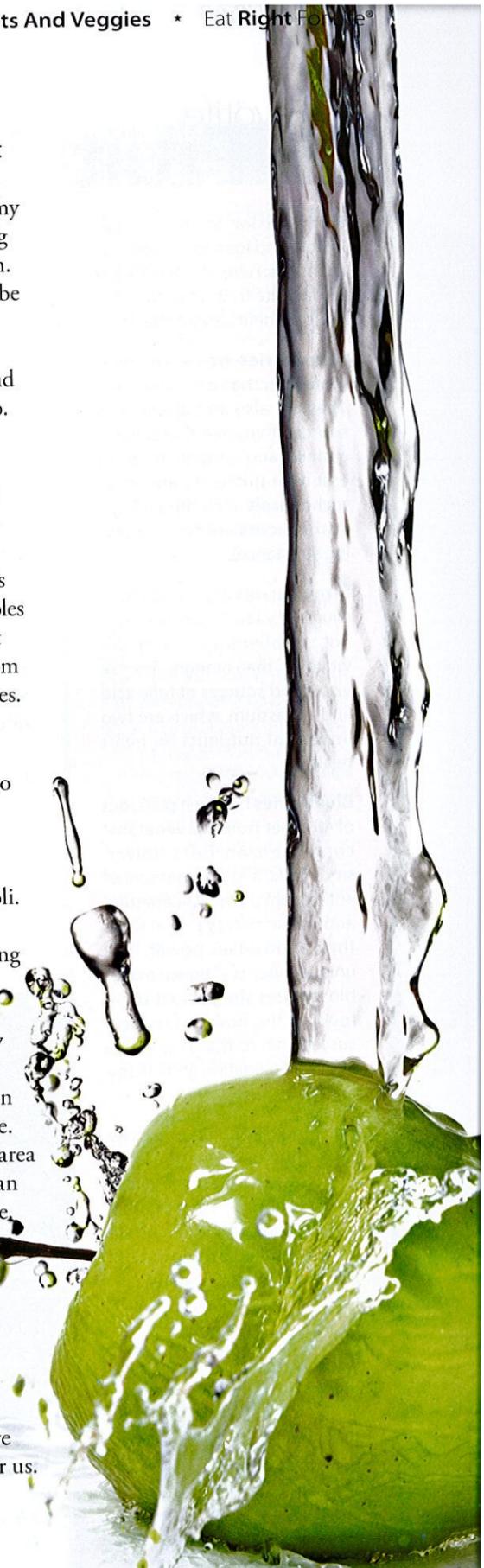
The first phytochemical was just discovered about 30 years ago and I remember it vividly. Aware of my passion for nutrition and my family history of breast cancer, my father, then a practicing cancer surgeon, called to let me know scientists had discovered a breast cancer-fighting compound in broccoli. This was the very first phytochemical identified. It's called sulforaphane and it is now widely known for its cancer-fighting prowess. Since that time, more than 10,000 phytochemicals have been identified, and scientists speculate there are up to

100,000 phytochemicals yet to be discovered. You may be familiar with some phytochemicals already—

lycopene found in tomatoes, resveratrol found in red wine, and flavanols found in dark chocolate.

The study of phytochemicals is a very exciting area of nutritional science, as these substances offer an unmatched ability to protect our cells from damage. Drug companies can only dream of creating substances that do what phytochemicals can do with no side effects!

Plants produce phytochemicals to protect themselves against environmental elements, such as the damaging effects of the sun and plant-eating parasites. Phytochemicals essentially help plants survive and thrive. And it turns out that phytochemicals can do the same for us.



My Favorite Fruit

Berries are low in calories, high in fiber and loaded with phytochemicals. Here's a closer look at my favorite fruits and the wonderful benefits they provide.

Raspberries are packed with more fiber than any other fruit. They are also an outstanding source of vitamin C and manganese, and contain 10 other essential nutrients and phytochemicals, including ellagic acid (a prominent cancer-fighting substance).

Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C. Believe it or not, strawberries contain more vitamin C than oranges. They're also good sources of folic acid and potassium, which are two important nutrients for heart health.

Blueberries hold first place out of 49 other fruit and vegetable contenders on Tufts University's ORAC score (a measure of antioxidant power). Blueberries' anti-inflammatory power rivals their antioxidant power. This unique "one-two" punch makes blueberries the perfect brain food, as the brain is uniquely susceptible to the destructive effects of oxidation and inflammation.

Blackberries come in a close second behind blueberries in the ORAC score. They are also an excellent source of vitamin C, potassium and folate, and are rich in antioxidants, including vitamin E, ellagic acid and anthocyanin pigments.

Best of all, berries can be enjoyed in a variety of ways. Enjoy them fresh or frozen, eat them alone or toss them into salads, smoothies, yogurt, cereal or cottage cheese. Yum!

The Power Of Phytochemicals

Phytochemicals protect the human body in four primary ways. First, they offer powerful inflammation protection. In this book, I've mentioned that inflammation is a fundamental driver of many chronic diseases. However, if you consume fruits and vegetables, you can readily tap into potent anti-inflammatory phytochemicals. Phytochemicals also provide robust antioxidant power. Antioxidants neutralize toxic agents in our bodies called free radicals. Free radicals attack and damage critical areas of our cells and ultimately initiate disease and aging. Some phytochemicals comprise the most potent antioxidants ever identified. Phytochemicals also provide immune-boosting activity. The phytochemicals in fruits and veggies provide your immune system a nice turbo charge, kicking up its efficiency and effectiveness. Lastly, some phytochemicals shore up the body's innate detoxification systems. Think of them as your body's personal fleet of garbage men, working 24/7 to keep your body clear of toxic substances.

Keep in mind that these miraculous agents of good health can only be found in plant-based foods, namely fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Be forewarned that you miss out on these life-preserving chemicals if you choose supplements, meal replacement bars and protein powders in lieu of eating real plant foods.

Let's now take a closer look at a few of the most famous phytochemicals.



Three Phytochemicals You Need To Know About

I am certain that a brief profile of these three amazing plant chemicals will compel you to eat your fruits and vegetables with hearty and renewed enthusiasm.

LYCOPENE

Lycopene gives tomatoes their vivid red color and is one of the most potent antioxidants ever identified. As we touched on earlier, antioxidants are scavengers of rogue molecules called free radicals, which initiate a cascade of damaging oxidation. Free radicals are by-products of the body's normal metabolic processes, although they can also enter our bodies from environmental sources like tobacco smoke, smog, prescription drugs, ultraviolet radiation and even the foods we eat. The oxidation induced by free radicals damages vital cellular structures and ultimately contributes to the development of cancer, heart disease, cataracts, arthritis, and even the aging process itself. Good thing lycopene provides protection from all of these conditions!

As an anti-cancer agent, lycopene seems to protect the prostate the most zealously. A Harvard-based study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* found that men who consumed 10 or more tomato products a week reduced their risk of aggressive prostate cancer by nearly 50 percent. Furthermore, research has revealed that lycopene's protective power is enhanced when tomatoes are processed and/or cooked, so enjoy salsa, tomato paste, and marinara sauce too.

ANTHOCYANINS

Berries owe their deep red, blue and purple hues to a class of phytochemicals called anthocyanins. Like lycopene, anthocyanins have potent antioxidant power, but they are also true workhorses when it comes to fighting inflammation. Science now tells us that excessive inflammation plays a major role in the development of several diseases, including heart attacks, some cancers, Alzheimer's, autoimmune disease, and allergic conditions. When you regularly consume berries, along with other anthocyanin-rich foods like cherries, red cabbage and red onions, you are protecting your body from some of the most common and deadliest illnesses known to man.

SULFORAPHANE

Broccoli is teeming with sulforaphane, one of the most powerful anti-cancer compounds nature provides. Like lycopene and anthocyanins, this phytochemical is also a potent antioxidant. Its special cancer-fighting powers are largely due to its ability to boost the body's detoxifying enzyme systems. Eating your broccoli, along with other cruciferous veggies including cabbage, kale, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and collards, will send your detoxifying, cancer-protective enzyme systems into overdrive.

(Continued on page 66)

Calling Out All Men

Fruits & Vegetables Matter

Eating an abundance of brightly colored fruits and vegetables brimming with phytochemicals is akin to adding a turbo engine to a car. Phytochemicals supercharge the body's metabolic engine so that our natural biological processes occur faster and more efficiently than they would otherwise. This is an especially apt metaphor for all of the veggie-resistant gentlemen out there—and according to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), there are quite a few of you. The NCI reports that 96 percent of the American male population does not get the recommended seven to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Men are often trained to pile on the protein from an early age, and in the process, they often fail to realize that vegetables are also integral to building muscle, strength, stamina and strong bones. If you need to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet, here are a few snack and meal strategies:

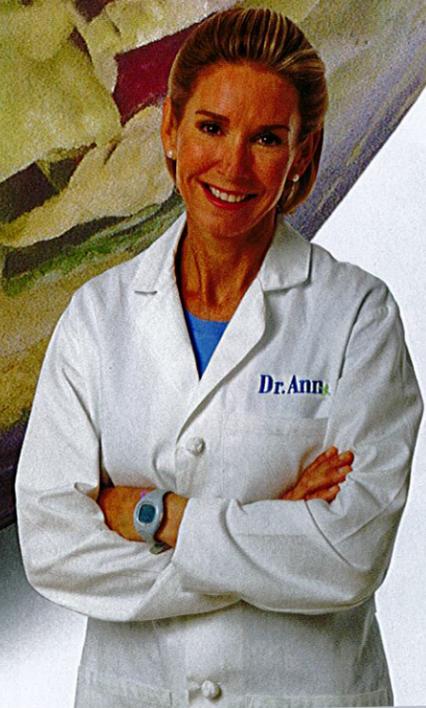
- Eat sliced apples with almond butter
- Toss a handful of veggies in an omelet
- Add extra lettuce, tomatoes and onions to your sandwich
- Put some dried apricots in your cereal
- Add grilled onions and mushrooms to any chicken dish

Remember, fruits and vegetables really matter, as they provide protection from the conditions men are most prone to, namely cancer and heart attacks. They also enhance physique, so load up!

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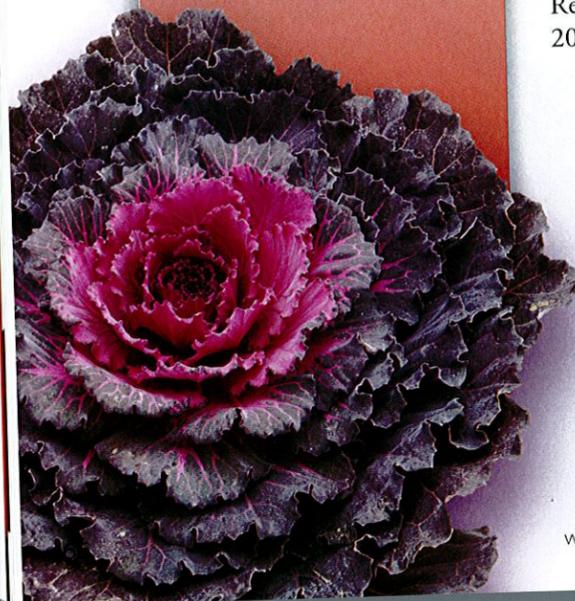


"Have you had your daily dose
of phytochemicals today?
I never miss mine!"



Did You Know You Can "Eat" Your SPF?

Did you know that some of the same pigments that give plant foods their deep, rich color can provide "built-in" SPF for your skin? Certain phytochemicals can indeed provide valuable skin protection against the ravages of excess ultraviolet radiation (sun exposure). When you eat plant foods, some of their phytochemicals are actually deposited in your skin. The most potent SPF foods include dark leafy greens, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, red and orange bell peppers, berries, and even dark chocolate. If you include these foods in your diet regularly, your skin will develop a subtle, orange cast, (especially visible in your palms) which is visual proof of your success. To see my orange palms and to learn about other superstar foods for your skin, visit DrAnnWellness.com and watch my "Super Foods for Skin" video.



Fruits & Veggies: Our Magic Bullet

Fruits and vegetables provide powerful, broad-spectrum disease protection. Eating a diet chock-full of fruits and vegetables can help ward off heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal diseases, Alzheimer's, cataracts, macular degeneration, type 2 diabetes as well as a host of cancers.

For optimal success, you should aim to eat as many and as much of a variety of fruits and veggies as you possibly can. When it comes to food and vitality—fruits and veggies are your magic bullet! In fact, there are thousands of scientific studies that document fruits and vegetables' ability to protect our health. Below are some of the primary diseases fruits and veggies protect us from.

Cardiovascular Disease

The famous DASH clinical trial provides perhaps some of the most favorable scientific evidence for fruits and vegetables. In this intervention study (the kind that proves cause and effect), subjects were placed on a diet rich in fruits and veggies (seven-plus servings a day) and low-fat dairy products. At the end of the eight-week trial, the study group eating the DASH diet lowered their blood pressure as effectively as standard doses of prescription blood pressure medications. Subsequent studies of the DASH diet have found it also lowers cholesterol and reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes. According to the largest and longest study to date, those who consumed the most fruits and vegetables (about eight servings a day) were 30 percent less likely to have a heart attack or stroke. Further, in a 28-year study involving more than 10,000 men and women, those consuming the most flavonoids (a large class of antioxidant phytochemicals abundant in apples, berries and onions) were less likely to die from heart attacks and strokes or develop chronic diseases, including asthma, diabetes, and lung cancer.

Cancer

Population studies have consistently linked fruit and vegetable intake to a reduced risk of cancer. According to the most definitive review of food and cancer studies, evidence is especially strong for cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus and stomach. According to the American Institute of Cancer Research, if everyone ate the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, 20 percent or more of all cancer cases could be prevented.

For optimal success, you should aim to eat as many and as much of a variety of fruits and veggies as you possibly can. When it comes to food and vitality—fruits and veggies are your magic bullet!

Don't Be Color-Blind!

The more colorful the food, the more it's packed with valuable nutrients. Eat from the entire spectrum to fully leverage the tens of thousands of beneficial compounds these foods offer. Have a little bit of every color: blue and purple (blueberries, eggplant, etc.), red and green (peppers, apples, spinach, etc.), and yellow (peppers, squash, bananas, etc.) each and every day. Remember, color means health: the deeper and richer the color, the more phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals present in the food. Red grapefruit is always a healthier choice than white grapefruit; red onions are better than yellow onions; deep green romaine lettuce is certainly healthier than iceberg. In fact, dark leafy greens are a nutritional Goliath, packing more nutrition per unit calorie than any other food. For perspective, consider that 100 calories of kale provides 190 times more calcium, four times more iron, 12 times more magnesium, 15 times more folate, 800 times more vitamin A, two times more protein and 11,000 times more antioxidant power than 100 calories of sirloin. Be sure to include some form of dark leafy greens in your diet each day!



A Quick Veggie Tip

Roasted vegetables are so tasty that you won't believe you're eating "health food." This wonderful cooking technique capitalizes on the natural taste of vegetables. Virtually any vegetable can be roasted (remember to stay away from white potatoes, though). Simply place your vegetables of choice on a cookie sheet and mist them lightly with canola or olive oil pan sprays, or toss them in a little olive oil. Season them to your preference—try a little kosher salt, pepper and garlic. Roast at 375 degrees for 15 to 25 minutes or until they have a golden to brown covering and texture that suits you. Sprinkle with a little balsamic vinegar and dig in. My favorite vegetables to roast are cauliflower, sweet potatoes, brussels sprouts, carrots, and asparagus.

Weapons Of Mass Protection

Infusing our bodies with a constant and steady stream of antioxidants should be the bedrock for healthy living. We know that oxidative stress at the cellular level is a key driver of aging and many chronic diseases. However, a recent landmark study reveals the major role antioxidants play in providing cancer protection. This study monitored genetic mutations through the human equivalent of 5,000 years and revealed that the majority of all genetic mutations (the defining step in cancer development) occur through oxidative damage. In other words, plant foods are the most powerful weapons you have for combating chronic diseases and aging. The plant foods that provide the most potent antioxidants include: red onions, tomatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, red bell peppers, garlic, dark leafy greens, apples, red grapes, berries, pomegranates, cherries, oranges, plums, black beans, kidney beans, tea and dark chocolate. Go eat some now!

It's Not All In The Genes

There is a mountain of compelling science that supports the benefits of vegetables, and thanks to researchers from the British Institute of Food Research, we now know the science behind vegetables' "magical" effects. Reporting in the *Public Library of Science*, scientists found that vegetables' phytochemicals can directly incite hundreds of beneficial genetic changes. In the study, researchers had one group of men with pre-cancerous prostate lesions eat four extra servings of broccoli a week while a second group ate four extra servings of peas a week. Over the course of the one-year investigation, prostate tissue samples were monitored from both groups. Those that ate the broccoli had between 400 to 500 positive changes in genes known to fight cancer!

Broccoli and its cruciferous cousins (brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, arugula and watercress) are uniquely high in two classes of phytochemicals, isothiocyanates and indoles. These phytochemicals have repeatedly displayed a championship anti-cancer performance in the lab. I urge everyone, especially those at high risk for cancer, to include a serving of cruciferous veggies in their diets every day.

This study also provides powerful confirmation that genes do not play the only role in disease formation. Genes are in constant interaction with the environment. In other words, your lifestyle (maintaining a healthy weight, eating right and being physically active) can have a tremendous impact—keeping good genes turned on and bad genes turned off.

Vision And Cognitive Decay

Our brains and eyes love fruits and veggies too, especially dark leafy greens. In a six-year study involving 3,700 elderly subjects, those who consumed two or more servings of vegetables a day had up to a 40 percent slower rate of cognitive decline. Those who consumed the most dark leafy greens fared the best in maintaining mental agility. For vision protection, leafy greens and citrus fruits are the consistent standouts. In a study evaluating the overall dietary pattern of 4,000 older adults in relation to age-related macular degeneration (a leading cause of adult blindness), those consuming the most dark leafy greens and citrus fruits had the lowest risk. A second study found men and women who ate three or more servings of fruit a day had a 36 percent lower risk of getting macular degeneration.

Canned Pumpkin Is Great For You!

Believe it or not, this convenient and inexpensive "canned" food is one of the healthiest ones available to you. It is fresh, pureed pumpkin, cooked down to remove its water, which concentrates its awesome nutritional attributes. Low in calories, high in fiber and providing the most potent package of disease-defying carotenoids known, canned pumpkin is an under-utilized superstar food. Add it to your soups, muffins, cornbread, and other baked goods. Put 2-3 tbs. in your morning oatmeal or yogurt and top it off with a dash or two of cinnamon for a sweeter kick.



Spice up your life!

Get into the simple, tasty and super-healthy habit of adding herbs and spices to your foods. They add flavorful intrigue to almost any dish, (which means we can cut back on added fats, sauces and salt) and are virtually exploding with a seemingly endless list of beneficial phytochemicals. Here are my favorites:



Parsley—This refreshing herb provides vitamin A, potassium, calcium, vitamin C and can boast a higher concentration of flavonoids than any other food! Flavonoids are powerful antioxidants that provide cardiovascular and cancer protection. You can grow your own parsley or buy it prepackaged. Add it to your favorite salads and pastas or go green with your rice dishes by adding a generous portion of chopped, fresh parsley.



Rosemary—This savory herb contains phytochemicals that can reduce the amount of cancer-causing compounds known as heterocyclic amines (HCAs) that form in cooked meats. In addition, rosemary can enhance insulin sensitivity, which translates to a healthier metabolism. I always add a dash of dried rosemary or a tablespoon of fresh rosemary to my ground venison before grilling my burgers.



Cilantro—This super flavorful herb contains a natural antibiotic called dodecanol. One study found that dodecanol killed the bacteria Salmonella more effectively than a powerful prescription antibiotic. Try adding cilantro to salsa for an extra tasty and healthy punch.



Oregano—This is the perfect herb for adding Mediterranean flavor to your favorite dishes. Oregano is loaded with antioxidant power (up to 40 times more than apples). Add it to your salad dressings, include as a rub mixed with extra virgin olive oil on your chicken, or mix it with smashed avocado and lemon for a tasty substitute for mayonnaise on your sandwiches.



Garlic—This popular spice contains medicinal plant compounds called allyl sulfides, which have been proven to boost the immune system. This makes garlic the perfect spice for cold and flu season. To maximize the goodness in garlic, use it freshly chopped or minced and add it to your foods at the end of cooking.



Cinnamon—This sweet spice has recently won enthusiastic acclaim for its ability to boost insulin sensitivity and improve cholesterol and glucose metabolism. These properties may be especially beneficial for people with type 2 diabetes, pre-diabetes, weight issues and metabolic syndrome. Simply sprinkle cinnamon on to foods like cereals, oatmeal, yogurt, toast, cooked apples, coffee, hot cocoa, etc. One-half teaspoon is a good dose—I always add this amount to my morning cereal.



Ginger—Ginger is packed with potent anti-inflammatory properties. Because excess inflammation is now widely recognized as a major contributor to many chronic diseases, ginger is one of the best all-around spices for disease prevention. The phytochemicals in ginger are also valuable for boosting immunity and for reducing nausea. For optimal results, include ginger in your diet regularly. Chop or grate fresh ginger root into sauces, salad dressings or right on top of your salad, poultry or seafood dishes. Drink freshly brewed tea steeped along with a small piece of chopped ginger. Dried powdered ginger is even more potent than fresh and can be used in cooking or sprinkled directly on to foods.



Curry and Turmeric—These Indian spices are filled with a yellow pigment called curcumin which is one of the most potent natural anti-inflammatory agents ever identified. Several exciting studies are touting curry and turmeric for cancer protection, Alzheimer's protection and arthritis pain relief. For a boost of color and health, sprinkle curry or turmeric over bean dishes, poultry, tofu or rice.



Hot Pepper—Spices made from hot peppers, like chili pepper, wasabi and cayenne pepper, can boost our mood. These hot spices stimulate the pain receptors in the mouth, which in turn triggers the release of endorphins—a natural morphine-like chemical that makes us feel good.

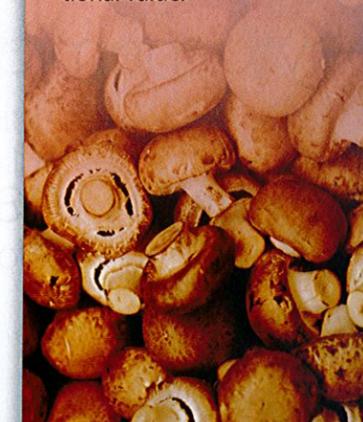
Lastly, although fresh herbs offer the most flavors and a higher concentration of antioxidants, dried herbs are still powerful and beneficial.

(Continued on page 72)

Make Room For Mushrooms

Although they are not technically a fruit or vegetable, mushrooms are great for you, and I encourage you to include them regularly in your diet. Mushrooms are low in calories (20 calories per ½ cup) and high in key nutrients, including B vitamins, copper, potassium and selenium. Additionally, a little known fact is that mushrooms are packed with powerful antioxidant chemicals. According to Penn State food scientist, Jay Dubost, mushrooms commonly found on grocery store shelves, like white buttons, criminis and portabellas, provide more antioxidant power than many vegetables. As an added bonus, mushrooms are especially high in beneficial polysaccharides, which enhance immune function.

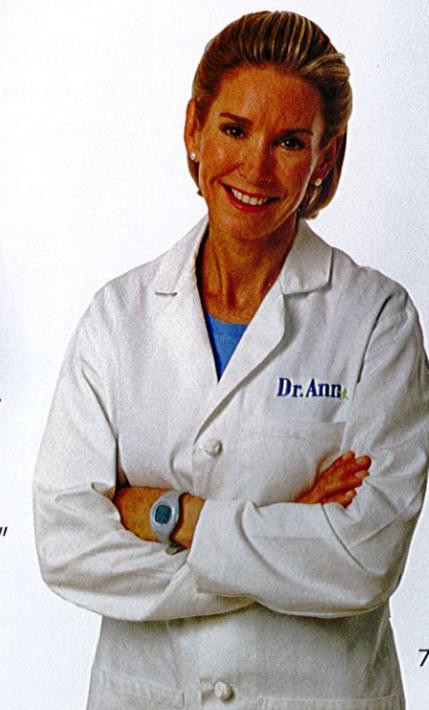
Cooked mushrooms maintain their antioxidant capacity and make an excellent substitute for meat due to their savory flavor and hearty texture. I throw mushrooms into most of my salads, soups, stews, spaghetti and pasta sauces as a quick and simple way to boost my meal's nutritional value.



The more colorful the food, the more it's packed with valuable nutrients. Eat from the entire spectrum to fully leverage the tens of thousands of beneficial compounds these foods offer. Remember, color means health: the deeper and richer the color, the more phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals present in the food.



"I never miss the opportunity to pop another fruit or veggie in my mouth. They can make you healthier right on the spot!"





Eat More, Weigh Less

When it comes to fruits and veggies, you can really eat more to weigh less! The more of them you eat, the leaner you will be.

Fruits and non-starchy vegetables are naturally slimming foods because they contain large amounts of zero calorie water and fiber. This combination is critical for weight loss and maintenance, as volume trumps calories when it comes to satisfying the desire for food. Filling your stomach with a certain volume of food can shut off the brain's appetite center regardless of how many calories it has. In fact, it appears that our bodies desire a given volume of food over a certain number of calories. This reality is invaluable for controlling hunger and appetite. Therefore, for weight loss and maintenance, you should always look to add fruits and non-starchy veggies to your meals.

Let me give you a simple example to make this point: If you ate a plate piled with steamed broccoli, you would feel satisfied (likely even stuffed) from its volume, yet would have only consumed about 130 calories. Indeed, this is a highly effective strategy that has been proven in many scientific studies. One weight loss study found that the most successful participants reduced caloric density by consuming more fruits and vegetables. These participants shed more than twice as much weight as those who reduced their caloric density the least. What's more, the study group who lost the most weight actually ate more food—about 10½ ounces more daily. In a study evaluating the diets of 7,500 “typical” Americans, those who ate the most fruits and vegetables ate more food by weight, yet weighed less. Another study presented at the same meeting found that study subjects instructed to eat more fruits and vegetables lost more weight without counting calories and without feeling like they were dieting than the control group who was put on a strict diet that reduced portion sizes and fat intake.

Dr. Ann's Fundamental Theorem Of Flavor

To improve the health and the taste of your diet, it's important to constantly tell yourself how good healthy foods are and how harmful the unhealthy ones are for your body. If you do, the good will taste better and the bad will taste worse. Try it, it works!

Getting The Most Nutritional Bang For Your Buck At The Salad Bar

Five Rules To Follow

Well-stocked salad bars offer a quick and convenient opportunity to tap into the nutritional excellence fruits and vegetables provide. To successfully navigate through the salad bar and get the most nutritional bang for your buck, keep the following five rules in mind.

- 1 BEGIN WITH A BASE OF HEALTHY GREENS.**
 - Go for those with the deepest green color. The more color, the more disease-busting phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals it will have. Baby spinach is my top pick followed by romaine and mixed mescline greens.
 - Keep in mind that iceberg lettuce offers minimal nutritional value.
- 2 ADD AS MANY RICHLY COLORED FRUITS AND VEGGIES AS POSSIBLE.**
 - Salad bar superstars include red onions, carrots, broccoli florets, tomatoes, bell peppers, olives, berries, cantaloupe and red grapes.
 - Remember, fruits and vegetables are the best option for those who want high nutrient content and satiety with low calories.
- 3 ALWAYS INCLUDE APPROXIMATELY 3 OUNCES OF HEALTHY, LEAN PROTEIN FOR LONGER LASTING APPETITE CONTROL.**
 - Three ounces is about the size of your palm. Your best choices include skinless turkey or chicken, hard-cooked eggs or low-fat cottage cheese. Shrimp and fish are also fantastic, if available.
 - Vegetable-protein alternatives are an excellent choice and include tofu squares, chick peas or other beans, and nuts and seeds (almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, pine nuts, etc.).
- 4 TOP YOUR SALAD WITH THE DRESSING KNOWN TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR HEART—OLIVE OIL AND VINEGAR.**
 - If not available, choose a reduced-fat variety or vinaigrette.
 - Avoid the thicker, creamier varieties—they are generally made from a less-healthy oil base—and stay away from fat-free as they are high in sugar.
- 5 AVOID THE “WHITE STUFF”—PASTA SALADS, POTATO SALADS, CROUTONS, CHICKEN SALADS, ETC.**
 - We covered the “Great White Hazards” in the previous chapter, so you know these foods are not good for you!

Salad bars are fantastic when you make the right choices. Take heed of these five rules and your next trip to the salad buffet will be a healthful one.



Go Green!

Dark leafy greens are Mother Nature's multivitamin. Be sure to include some form of them in your diet each day. You can choose from collards, kale, spinach, and a wide variety of lettuce greens.

When it comes to fruits and veggies, you really can eat more and weigh less. So, load your meals and snacks up with as much high fiber, high water fruits and veggies as possible. In this regard, your very best choices include the following:

Fruits: berries, cherries, plums, any whole citrus, melon, grapes, peaches, apples, pears and kiwi (avoid “low volume” dried fruits)

Vegetables: cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, collards, carrots, garlic, onions, leeks, tomatoes, asparagus, spinach, dark lettuces, bell peppers and mushrooms

Here are some easy tips and strategies for success:

- Double up your fruit and vegetable side dishes
- Feature veggies as your main dish
- Fill the majority of your plate up with veggies before serving the rest of your meal
- Substitute a non-starchy vegetable for the side of potatoes
- If veggies are called for in recipes, throw in extra
- Slice up fresh fruits and vegetables at night and snack on them the next day

If you're weight-conscious, fruits and vegetables are a supreme choice. Not only do they satisfy the appetite, but they are also low in calories. Load up!

Always Focus On Fruits And Vegetables

When buying, ordering or preparing your food always think of fruits and vegetables! Make them your focus. For best results, strive for seven or more servings of fruits and veggies (total) a day. A serving is one-half cup in any form with the exception of raw, leafy greens. A serving of leafy greens is one cup uncooked. Because vegetables have a slight edge over fruit in terms of nutrient density and providing a lower glycemic response (fruits have some natural sugars), it's best to include them more often. If you need to lose weight or have diabetes, pre-diabetes or metabolic syndrome, be especially vigilant in eating as many non-starchy vegetables as you can and limit fruit to less than three servings a day.

Although seven servings is the ultimate daily goal, please don't view this as an all-or-nothing recommendation. Fruits and vegetables are so potent that any improvement you can make—even adding just a single serving a day—is valuable to your health.

Use the following *Eat Your Fruits And Veggies Plan Of Action* to help you in your healthy quest to include as many and as much variety of these remarkable foods as possible.

PLAN OF ACTION Eat your fruits and veggies.

1. VEGETABLES

- **Consume five or more servings a day.** The more the better, but any improvement is great.
 - A serving is one-half cup of any vegetable, except dark leafy greens.
 - For dark leafy greens, (spinach, lettuce, collards, etc.) one serving is one cup uncooked.
 - Dark, leafy greens are the most nutrient dense, disease-protective foods nature offers. Be sure to include them in your daily diet. Eat a big green salad with a variety of veggies at least once a day.
- **Focus on the superstars**—All cruciferous veggies (cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and collards), carrots, garlic, onions, leeks, tomatoes, asparagus, sweet potatoes, dark leafy salad greens (like spinach), and red, orange and yellow bell peppers.
- **Eat your vegetables fresh or frozen**, but try to avoid frozen veggies with added butter or sauces as well as canned vegetables, as they have inferior nutritional quality and excess sodium. Canned pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato products, roasted red peppers, olives, beans and artichokes are an exception, so include them freely.
- **Minimize the starchy, higher glycemic vegetables:** potatoes, parsnips, rutabagas and corn (avoid this group if overweight, diabetic, pre-diabetic or if you have metabolic syndrome).
- **Use fresh and/or dried herbs and spices in your food preparation.** They kick up the flavor of your food for zero calories and are exploding with health-boosting phytochemicals.
- **Snack on fresh veggies** (carrots, celery, bell peppers and broccoli florets). Dip in a healthy dip like hummus, salsa or guacamole.
- **Cook veggies by steaming, pan-sautéing or roasting.** Avoid boiling.

2. FRUIT

- **Strive for two or more servings of fruit a day.**
 - A serving is one-half cup fresh or frozen or ¼ cup dried.
 - If diabetic or overweight, include fruit daily, but limit to two servings. Avoid dried fruit (the exception is apricots) and the sweeter, high glycemic tropical fruits (bananas, pineapple, mangos and papayas).
- **Concentrate on the superstars**—berries (any variety), cherries, plums, any whole citrus, cantaloupe, red/purple grapes, peaches, apples, pears, kiwi, dried or fresh apricots.
- **Enjoy fresh or frozen as long as they contain no added sugar.**
- **Avoid canned fruits**, as they are nutritionally inferior and often have added sugar.
- **Snack on fresh fruit.**
- **Choose fresh fruit for dessert.**

