

Food pairing

Abstract

Obesity rates are at an all-time high in the United States as one-third of adults are obese. Hence, individuals are constantly looking for answers to weight loss and to better their health status. For individuals with a myriad of disease states, such as obesity, anemia, heart disease, cancer and diabetes food pairing can help maximize their nutritional benefits to help lower one's risk. Many studies have shown the benefits of combining foods rich in antioxidants, fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. They have a significant decrease in blood levels which correlates with the above disease states. Also, this is valuable for any healthy person wanting to maximize their overall nutritional status. There are a lot of options to consider next time you are preparing foods, many found in one's own pantry. Listed are the most noteworthy mentions to try.

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Introduction

When it comes to thinking about preparing meals, some foods go together naturally, without any thought. To maximize one's nutrient benefits, here is a list of food pairings that will pack a good punch for health and fitness. The importance of these food pairings listed below have evidence-based studies to support that they can lower one's risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Since obesity is at an all-time high of one-third or 34.9% or 78.6 million Americans are obese per the Center for Disease Control.¹⁻⁶ These conditions are all interwoven, hence, grouped together can be known as Metabolic Syndrome. Consider these options next time you are prepping foods. They have significant benefits to help one stay on course for prevention of disease states.

Iron rich foods and vitamin C foods

The combination of iron-rich foods and vitamin C food is a perfect food pairing. This helps those dealing with iron anemia. There is still a debate of whether low iron stores can contribute to heart disease. The LDL (low density lipoprotein in one's blood) levels and iron can provide to be important for the modification of lowering the lipoprotein. The recommended dietary allowances for iron in males are 8-11mg depending on age and women is at the higher end needed for iron along with vegans. Vegans do not eat meats or animal products, which are considered the highest sources of iron. Meats, especially red meats are packed with heme iron. Greens, meats, eggs, beans, iron-fortified cereals are other good iron sources. Non-heme iron foods have iron but not as much. Just remember this: Heme iron foods are found in animal tissue. Non-heme foods are found in both animal and plant products. For example, choosing a spinach salad with citrus fruit or a lean cut of beef with tomatoes is a good choice. Heme iron foods are good protein sources that are nutritional components to build muscle.

Pairing these foods with high Vitamin C will help absorption of iron. Vitamin C foods consist of fruits, tomatoes, broccoli, bell peppers. The source of Vitamin C does not matter if its food-based or coming from a supplemental use. Most adults consume 65-90mg daily of vitamin C. However, it's important to note, some beverages contain polyphenols that can limit the absorption of iron. Many might have also heard that tea and coffee contain tannins, which is a form of polyphenols. The recommendation is to limit drinking these beverages

when consuming iron foods. Also, high consumption of calcium foods can inhibit the absorption of iron. This is more commonly found in young children that have high milk intake in their diets. Males and females need 1,000-1,300mg of calcium daily and pregnant and lactating women need to upper range of 1,300mg daily.

Brown rice and beans

This combination is a common staple in some diets and its cost efficient. You might be thinking, what about white rice and beans? White rice is in essence brown rice; they just remove the hull and germ and then enrich it to add back the nutrients lost. Even though it's enriched white rice it will never be back to its original powerhouse food it once was. Brown rice has a lot of healthier benefits. Brown rice has been shown to lower risk of type 2 diabetes.⁷ It doesn't generate glucose as fast to increase in blood sugar levels. Since brown rice includes the hull and germ making it higher in fiber, which in turn helps promote gastrointestinal (GI) health and feelings fuller longer. That aids in weight loss. Brown rice is also high in selenium and manganese. These minerals aid in reducing the risk for developing heart disease, arthritis and manganese helps the body synthesize fats.⁸⁻¹⁰ Brown rice has the carbohydrate and beans for the fiber, protein and folate. Protein from beans help to sustain glucose levels. The major benefits of combining these two foods are the amino acid or protein they can provide. Alone they are considered incomplete protein but together are complete. Thus, this food combination can help reduce the risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and improve weight loss.

Oatmeal and blueberries

Oatmeal is high in fiber and rich in phytochemicals. Phytochemicals considered antioxidants, help reduce free radicals. Which involved in the formation of several types of cancer. Blueberries are high in fiber, manganese, Vitamins C and K. Vitamin C is a vitamin that also helps reduce free radicals. Combining both phytochemicals and Vitamin C together they quickly reduce free radicals from oxidizing, which can lead to cancer risk. Also, oatmeal and blueberries are high in fiber, which in turn can help GI health and help with weight loss. Anthocyanin, is found in blueberries which aid in giving blueberries their dark blue color. Studies have shown that anthocyanin, reduces the risk of heart disease.¹¹ Other berries besides blueberries also contain the anthocyanin in varying amounts. Studies have indicated

that anthocyanin can lower risk of oxidation, which can in turn lower blood pressure and lipid levels in blood, the risk of heart disease. The fiber content berries help with GI track health and weight loss. Try some for breakfast you will full fuller longer, have a better satiety and reap the benefits.

There are a few other food items to mention, such as honey, cinnamon and olive oil that are commonly found in one's pantry.^{12–14} These are important to mention due to their beneficial health benefits. They can be paired with a huge variety of other foods for entrees and side dishes in cooking to enhance flavor. The other foods commonly found in one's pantry.

Honey

Studies have shown benefits of using honey, otherwise, listed in a group called functional foods. It can help to prevent cancer and cardiovascular disease. Honey is a natural sweetener. Please remember even though honey has good health benefits, the American Heart Association recommends women to consume no more than 6tsp daily and men 9tsp daily. Honey functions as an antioxidant, which can help prevent cancers from forming. Honey has been shown in research studies to help prevent high blood pressure and LDLs from Oxidation.^{15,16} Other studies have indicated the darker the honey the more antioxidants it contains. As much as 8 ounces of honey can give your protection as much as 8 ounces of fruit. Research has also showed honey can have beneficial effects with blood sugar levels.^{17–22} There is still of how much effectiveness, but honey has a 1:1 fructose to glucose ratio, hence the reason behind its health benefits. It makes for easier conversion of glucose to be converted to glycogen. It can be used for a greater energy sources.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon is an ancient spice that can prove significant benefits. Rich in anti-oxidants. Cinnamon intake can help lower cholesterol, lower blood sugar levels and help hypertension.^{23–26} Also, cinnamon can help with Alzheimer's disease.

Although studies have showed no benefits with Type 1 diabetes. A study from Diabetes.org have reported it can lower the hemoglobin A1C_e levels. That is a reading of blood sugar levels for a course of 3 months before the measurement. Other studies do not report the same effects, as there is not enough evidence to support this fact. Cinnamon is either found as Ceylon, considered the true form, or as Cassia. These forms are different. It's been recommended 1-6gm of Ceylon form of Cinnamon to be used, the latter form can be toxic if too much is consumed. Recommended to speak with your physician before taking any supplements, especially if you are taking medications or taking other supplements. Also not all individuals have the same effect.

Olive oil

The olive oil is the staple of a Mediterranean diet plan and has become an everyday cooking staple. This diet consists of healthy fats, such as canola oil and olive oil. Olive oil can help lower cholesterol because of its mono-unsaturated fats, prevent cancer and improve cognitive function over time. Also, Olive oil has shown improvement with osteoporosis and breast cancer. Breast cancer and following a Mediterranean type diet along with extra servings of olive oil daily, has showed significant benefits.^{27–31} The olive oils stating "extra virgin" or "virgin" on the label. These are the least processed oils and are better with providing the antioxidant affect. Next time use olive oil when cooking.

Conclusion

In addition, foods such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, fish and red wine are recommended to be included in this eating plan. Aim to choose fresh fruits and vegetables, as their will taste better, less sugar or sodium for preservation and provide better sources of fiber. In addition, small amount of red wine, no more than 5 ounces for women and 10 ounces for men, usually a good source of antioxidants including resveratrol.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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