

The Prevention Diet: Anti-Cancer Superfoods

by Rachel Hochhauser

For many of us, eating healthy means embracing organic, avoiding packaged foods and steering clear of Big Macs. Instead of staying on the defensive lines, it's time to go on the offense and combat cancer before it arrives on your doorstep. Mother Nature has an abundance of powerful antidotes to disease in her arsenal — particularly when it comes to cancer prevention. There are plenty of delicious, wholesome foods that will not only improve the quality of your meal, but also the quality of your health. Here are six anti-cancer superfoods you should be incorporating into your diet.



Flaxseed

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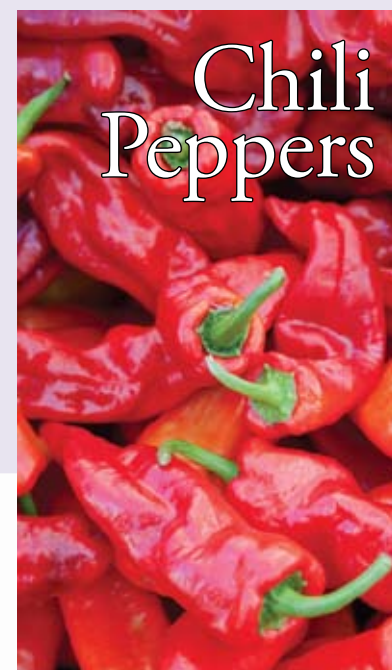
Rich in lignans, compounds that have an antioxidant effect and act as anti-estrogens, flaxseed can play a role in the prevention of estrogen-related cancers, such as breast cancer. That doesn't mean that men shouldn't up their consumption as well; American Cancer Society studies have shown that a diet supplemented with flaxseed slows the growth of benign prostate cells, reducing the risk of prostate cancer. The seeds also contain Omega-3 fatty acids, which discourage colon cancer and heart disease. Consumption of whole flaxseeds is a piece-of-cake if you sprinkle them onto cereal, on top of salad, or mix into baked goods. If you prefer your seeds ground, avoid the pre-ground flax mixes from the grocery store — fresh-ground flaxseeds have greater health benefits while store-ground seeds have often oxidized and gone rancid.



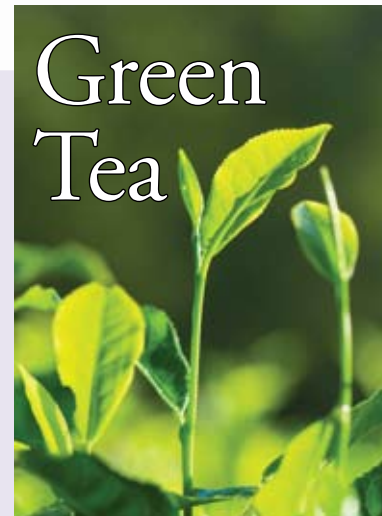
Berries

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Though commonly espoused for their deliciousness, low glycemic index, and nutritional value, berries also contain antioxidants, the cancer-prevention bingo word. Antioxidants assist in the prevention of cellular damage by fighting free radicals, which affect DNA and lead to cancer. The fruit's high Ellagic Acid content also helps to inhibit the growth of tumors (notably, black raspberries have more of this compound than any other berry). The medicine isn't hard to swallow — there are plenty of delicious ways to boost your berry consumption: put blueberries in your oatmeal, strawberries in your salad, blend into smoothies, or snack on them on their own. Just keep in mind when stocking up that shopping organic is the way to go; you don't want to counteract the benefit of the antioxidants by consuming pesticides.



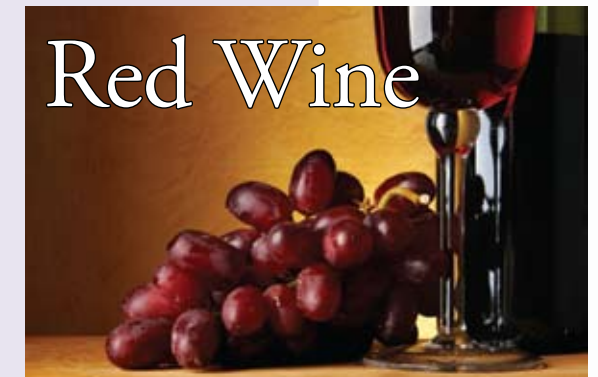
Chili Peppers



Green Tea

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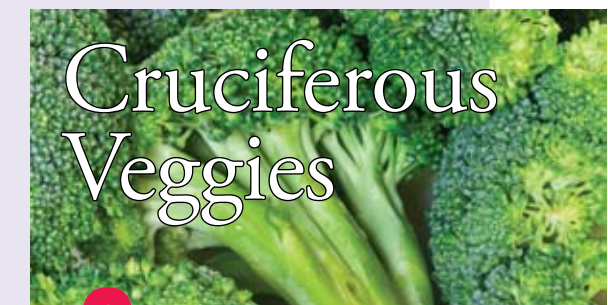
Heralded in some circles as a miracle superfood, green tea contains a myriad of special ingredients. A high amount of the antioxidant catechin helps to fight cancer in a variety of ways, namely the ability to shrink tumors and slow tumor cell growth. Elevated levels of a special chemical called EGCG stymies tumor growth as well as aids cells in avoiding damage and premature aging. With plenty of varieties and blends of green tea to choose from, there are no excuses not to make a cup a part of your daily routine. If you're a coffee drinker, try substituting a cup a day with the green stuff — and if you already drink black tea the switch should be easy. Supposing the flavor isn't your "cup of tea", you can always doctor it with ginger, lemon or honey.



Red Wine

4

While the key ingredient to red wine's cancer prevention is grape skin, which you could ostensibly ingest by itself, the benefits extend to red wine. Polyphenols, such as catechins and resveratrol, inhibit cell proliferation and are thought to have anti-cancer properties — like all antioxidants, they help to counteract harmful free radicals. The International Journal of Cancer published a study showing that a glass of red wine a day can cut a male's risk of prostate cancer in half as well as lower incidence of more aggressive forms of the disease. While most don't need an excuse to enjoy a good glass of wine, the health benefits are linked to the ingredients, not the alcohol, so doctors recommend moderate consumption of one glass a day.



Cruciferous Veggies

6

This veggie family — which includes cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli — contains sulforaphane, a compound that has anticancer, anti-diabetic, and antimicrobial assets. Cruciferous vegetables are cited as a promising breast cancer protective agent as well as linked with lowered tumor risks in the uterus, lung, colon, liver, cervix and prostate. If the thought of steamed cabbage turns your stomach, opt for some of the other veggies in this plant family; bok choy, kale, and brussel sprouts are cruciferous too. There are countless ways to turn these nutritional powerhouses into delicious dinner. Try roasting cauliflower, shaving the brussel sprouts with pecorino into a salad or opt for a lighter-dressed coleslaw.

5

Spicy is healthy; capsaicin, the component of chili peppers that give them their zing, has surfaced as an anti-cancer hero. The compound might render carcinogenic nitrosamines harmless — meaning a little extra spice could potentially prevent cancer. A study from Nottingham University, lead by Dr. Timothy Bates, found that capsaicin got rid of cancer cells. In The Natural News, Bates explains that this may be key in explaining why people who traditionally eat a spicy diet, such as those living in Mexico and India, tend to have lower incidences of many cancers. While adding more hot sauce to your meal is an easy way to up your intake, have fun exploring recipes from other cultures that utilize hot peppers.