



A Fresh Crop of Superfoods

NUTRITIONISTS HAVE GOOD REASON TO RAVE ABOUT THESE FOODS: THEY ENHANCE YOUR HEALTH, TASTE GOOD, AND CAN BE MIXED INTO YOUR DIET IN EASY, DELICIOUS WAYS.

By Leslie Goldman

A PERSON CAN EAT only so much in a day. So we asked experts for the new fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious bites most worthy of a try. Their recommendations—from modern takes on mushrooms to unexpected protein sources (watermelon seeds?!)—are a tasty new way to infuse your meals with disease-battling phytonutrients and other plant chemicals, stacking the odds of better health in your favor.

FOOD STYLING BY ALI RAMEE

FAMILIAR BUT CUTE

Caulilini

The name conjures images of a bouncing newborn cauliflower, but caulilini is a different variety of the cruciferous veggie. And it has taken the plant-based world by storm. With an edible green stem that explodes into sprays of tiny blond florets, it tastes milder and a bit sweeter than cauliflower but offers the same nutritional benefits, says Wendy Bazilian, DrPH, RD, coauthor of *The SuperFoodsRx Diet* and *Eat Clean, Stay Lean*. “It has fiber, vitamin B₆ for energy, and vitamin K for bone health and blood clotting. And one cup has nearly 75 percent of your daily vitamin C, for immune functioning and skin health.”

WHY IT'S A SUPERFOOD

Like other members of the Brassica family, caulilini contains phytochemicals called glucosinolates, “anti-inflammatory power nutrients that may help reduce certain types of cancers and improve heart health,” Bazilian says. Cruciferous veggies are also high in sulfuraphanes, phytochemicals that have been shown to help interrupt the progression of cancer cells.

And unlike the giant head of cauliflower currently occupying your produce drawer, this tender veggie requires no chopping, meaning less prep work.

How to eat it: Caulilini, which originated in Asia, was recently introduced in the U.S. by the same company that sells cutie Broccolini. The delicate florets brown and crisp up quickly, adding appealing texture and color to stir-fries and side dishes. Thanks to its neutral flavor, it pairs well with spicy sauces.

MOVE OVER, CHIPS

Snacking beans

Beans have been infiltrating snack foods for a while (see: Beanitos chips, Hippeas chickpea puffs). Now a new generation of healthy snacks features beans in their original form—think roasted fava beans and marinated lupin beans. That's good news for people looking to inject energy into their day or to quiet their grumbling stomachs.

“We tend to eat beans in the evening, with dinner, but snacking beans are a great way to spread protein throughout the day, which allows our body to use it more efficiently while helping with satiety between meals,” says Leslie Bonci, RD, MPH, owner of Active Eating Advice in Pittsburgh.

WHY THEY'RE A SUPERFOOD

Beans have been tied to a reduced risk of everything from heart disease to diabetes in multiple studies, and they're a dietary staple in regions of the world where people live the longest. That makes sense: Across the board, beans and legumes are generous sources of protein, fiber, complex carbs, and phytonutrients, compounds that may help protect against the effects of aging.

Snacking beans are great to enjoy on the go, but they add texture to salads and cheese plates too.



Unlike that giant head of cauliflower in your produce drawer, tender caulilini requires no chopping.

Lupin beans

Roman Empire soldiers reportedly relied on these big, hearty yellow beans for sustained energy during battle. With a buttery, savory taste and a meaty texture, lupins have twice as much fiber as edamame, almost 50 percent more protein than chickpeas, and 80 percent fewer calories than almonds.

How to eat them: For a tasty snack with seriously satisfying hand-to-mouth action, try Brami's lightly pickled varieties, which come in flavors like Garlic and Rosemary and Chili and Lime (\$20 for 8 [2.3 oz.] pouches; braminsnacks.com).

Fava beans (broad beans)

These lima bean doppelgängers are excellent sources of folate. Pregnant women need this vitamin to reduce the risk of certain birth defects, and *everyone* needs it for optimal blood circulation.

How to eat them: The brand Bada Bean roasts the beans until crunchy—Bonci likes the Zesty Ranch flavor (\$3 for 3 oz.; amazon.com). They're also a snappy alternative to croutons.

THE NATURAL MEAT SUBSTITUTE**Mushrooms**

Plant-based “meat” is trendy, but it’s generally ultra-processed—the ingredients have gone through so many changes that they may have lost some of their nutrients. Mushrooms, on the other hand, “have a naturally meaty texture and savory umami flavor, but they contain very few calories and none of the saturated fat or cholesterol of beef,” says Lara Field, RDN, founder of Feed Nutrition Consulting in Chicago.

WHY THEY’RE A SUPERFOOD

Mushrooms boast antioxidants plus impressive amounts of immune-boosting vitamin D and selenium, says Megan Meyer, PhD, director of science communication for the International Food Information Council. Selenium, she says, “can help detoxify some cancer-causing compounds in the body.” And a 2019 study in the *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* found that seniors who eat more than two servings of mushrooms a week may have a 50 percent reduced risk of mild cognitive impairment.

How to eat them: Everyone’s favorite fungi is now showing up as better-for-you jerky. Try Pan’s Mushroom Jerky (\$7.50 for 2.2 oz.; thrivemarket.com), which comes in tasty flavors like Zesty Thai and Applewood Barbecue. Or go for a bag of Shrooms Snacks Splits Jerky (\$8 for 2.5 oz.; itsamushroom.com), which mixes portabella jerky with meat or fruit jerky.



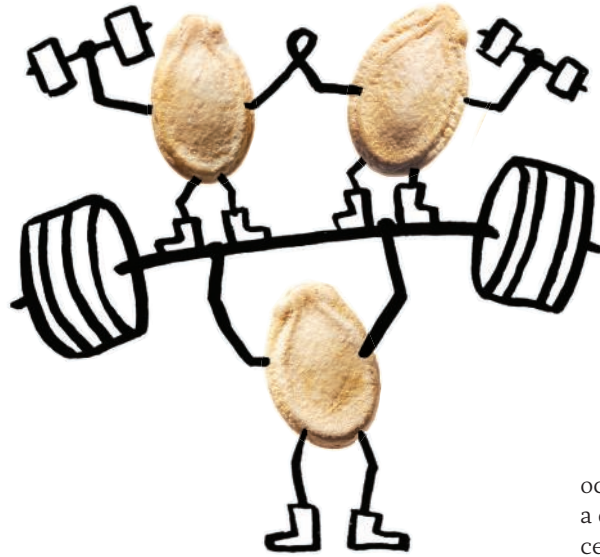
For a quick side dish, throw mushrooms onto the grill—according to a Spanish study, grilling increases mushrooms’ antioxidant activity. And in ground beef recipes, Field recommends replacing a quarter to a half of the meat with chopped mushrooms. Blended burgers are better for the planet as well as your health: A World Resources Institute report found that if Americans swapped 30 percent of the beef in our burgers for mushrooms, we’d slash agricultural-related greenhouse gas emissions by so much, it would be like taking 2.3 million cars off the road.

**THE SURPRISE****Seeds**

As more Americans experiment with plant-based eating, the demand for meatless protein sources is rising. (Sixty percent of U.S. adults are trying to squeeze in more protein, according to the market research firm NPD.) Seeds are a smart swap, Field says.

WHY THEY’RE A SUPERFOOD

“Seeds carry the ingredients needed to create a new plant, so they tend to be incredibly nutrient-dense,” Field explains. “They offer a nice dose of protein—about eight grams per ounce, on par with one egg—plus fiber and antioxidants.” Thanks to the appetite-satiating protein and fiber (and the portable size), seeds are ideal for snacking. They also pack a lot of key minerals into their tiny package, most containing brain-protective omega-3 fatty acids.



And they can be a safe alternative for folks with nut allergies, Field says. (They're also gluten-free, vegan, and Paleo, if any of those diets are your jam.)

Watermelon seeds

Mom warned you not to swallow them as a kid, but watermelon seeds are a stellar source of magnesium (good for blood pressure), have more protein per serving than peanuts or almonds, and are loaded with fiber (14 grams per ounce—that's about the amount in 25 prunes, so go easy!).

How to eat them: They taste and chew a bit like pumpkin seeds. Mix shelled, roasted seeds into trail mix or sprinkle them over salads or yogurt. Or buy a spread like Roasted Watermelon Seed Butter (\$15 for 14 oz.; 88acres.com) to give your kid the honor of having the only WSB&J at school.

Sacha inchi seeds

With a roasted soybean flavor, sacha inchis (hailing from South America) are loaded with brain-supporting alpha-linolenic acid, an omega-3 similar to the type found in salmon.

How to eat them: Enjoy these almond-shaped seeds right out of the bag. Starseed offers a few flavor varieties, including caramelized (\$8.50 for 4.9 oz.; amazon.com). You can also smear them on toast in butter form (try Brass Roots Organic Sacha Inchi Seed Butter, \$15 for 16 oz.; amazon.com).

OLD STANDBY, NEW SCIENCE

Prunes

Dried plums have a reputation for speeding things along your gastrointestinal tract—and with 12 grams of fiber per cup, they certainly can do just that. But prunes are currently in vogue for a totally different reason: bone health.

WHY THEY'RE A SUPERFOOD

"Prunes contain micronutrients, including potassium, boron, and vitamin K, that work together to protect bones," Bonci says. Combined with compounds called polyphenols, "these nutrients help inhibit the bone breakdown that

occurs with age." Eating six prunes a day was enough to slow bone-cell turnover in postmenopausal women, according to a small but promising study in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*. Researchers are currently looking at whether the bone-strengthening benefits extend to younger women. Prunes are even being studied as a way to prevent bone-mass loss among astronauts in space.

How to eat them: Try prunes in salads or oatmeal, stuff them with walnuts, or just pop them plain. Their natural sweetness lets you cut back on refined sugar when baking—you can substitute prune puree for half the sugar called for in a recipe. (To make a cup of puree, blend eight ounces of prunes with six tablespoons of hot water.)

KIMCHI 2020

This fermented cabbage dish is a go-to for probiotic health, but nutritionist Bazilian says the traditional Korean side isn't technically a superfood—it's a "superfood concoction." Cabbage brings the same anti-inflammatory, anticancer game to the table as broccoli and Brussels sprouts.

HOW TO EAT IT: Once-fringe kimchi has gone mainstream, living its best life as a burrito filling, scrambled egg garnish, and more. "Anywhere tangy fits, kimchi can fit," Bazilian says. Try it on pizza or grilled cheese, or in soup or grain bowls.