

SUMMER *Superfoods*



SUMMER SUPERFOODS

When you think of summer, you probably have visions of warm weather, cooling off in a lake or ocean, and enjoying time with friends and family.

Another thought people often have with summertime is what your diet might look like. The foods you eat not only affect your waistline, but can also improve your health. That is where superfoods come in.

What are Superfoods?

These are a selection of foods that contain more nutrients than the average. They tend to be very high in vitamins and minerals that are essential for overall health and wellness. Superfoods on this list contain vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other important nutrients that you need for your body inside and out.

These aren't just any superfoods, but ones specifically meant for the summertime. They are easy to find this time of year, are great for those classic summer dishes, and perfect for lighter fare

Keep reading to learn more about the best superfoods for the summer season.

1. Cherries

First up are cherries. These are a fan favorite, which is great because the delicious, sweet taste of cherries encourages you to eat more of them. What you might not know is that cherries are very good for you, being labeled as a superfood thanks to their higher-than-normal amount of vitamins and minerals.

More specifically, you are going to get a lot of amazing antioxidants when you add more cherries to your diet. The antioxidant anthocyanin is in cherries, which provides ease of inflammation in your body and can help a lot with joint pain.

You can find cherries fresh or frozen in the summer season, depending on where you live. Many states have delicious cherries year-round as they are in mild climates, but you can also get them frozen if you prefer.

2. Kiwi

Who doesn't love kiwi in the summertime? This is one of the ultimate summer fruits since it is sweet, a little tart, and goes great with snacks and desserts this time of year. You will be happy to know that if this is your favorite fruit, it is also a superfood!

Nutrients in Kiwi

There are a lot of essential vitamins and minerals in kiwi, among them are the high amount of potassium. The potassium in a cup of sliced kiwi is the same amount as a cup of bananas! So, if you are not a fan of bananas but need more potassium in your diet, you can't go wrong with some fresh kiwi.

More Benefits

Not only does kiwi have a lot of potassium and many other nutrients, but it is lower in sugar and calories than bananas and many other potassium-laden fruits and veggies. Kiwi only contains 7 grams of sugar in one serving, yet it has 5 grams of fiber.

3. Bell Peppers

Moving on to vegetables, we start with your bell peppers. These are nightshade vegetables, so of course you should be careful if you tend to be sensitive to them. However, if you don't feel sick after eating nightshades, have yourself some bell peppers this summer.

Choose all colors of bell peppers, such as green, yellow, orange, and red. In fact, using multiple colors adds vibrancy to your meals and often gives you a variance in the nutrients you get.

Bell peppers contain vitamins and minerals like vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium, and phytonutrients. They are very low in fat and calories, and can help fill you up and bulk up your meals.

Ways to Sneak in More Bell Peppers

Not really a fan, or have kids that don't like veggies? Bell peppers are perfect for those picky eaters! You can slice and dice them into smaller pieces, and add them to your salads for a boost in nutrition, or sneak them into foods like egg scrambles and omelets, spaghetti sauce, cold pasta salad, and chili or other soups your family enjoys.

For the summertime, they are perfect when you want a light breakfast of eggs with some veggies.

4. Herbs

While there are many fruits and vegetables that are considered to be superfoods, the summertime also has another unique benefit. This is a great time to grow or buy fresh herbs that you can add to your meals and get additional nutrients at the same time.

Best Herbs for the Summertime

Most herbs are going to be considered superfoods since they contain so many wonderful vitamins and minerals, but here are some of the best ones to find in the summer:

Basil – Basil is a wonderful herb for the summer season. You can use it to add flavor to your dishes when you want to reduce your sodium and get away from using so much salt.

Nutrients in basil include vitamin A, vitamin K, manganese, vitamin C, omega=3 fatty acids, magnesium, iron, folate, and calcium. As you can see, they are loaded with important nutrients for your body!

Cilantro – If you are a fan of making your own pesto or sauces in the summer, the next two herbs will be perfect to add to the kitchen. Cilantro is extremely low in cholesterol, but it contains vitamins like C, E, A, and K. It also has dietary fiber, iron, potassium, magnesium, and calcium.

Parsley – The next herb you can use for sauces and pestos in the summer is parsley. Like many other herbs, it contains a good amount of folate, iron, vitamin A, vitamin K, and vitamin C.

5. Swiss Chard

This might not be your favorite vegetable, but give it a chance. Swiss chard can go a long way toward a healthy diet, especially when you find new and interesting ways to use it. It also happens to be one of the top superfoods to enjoy in the summertime, or any time of the year when you can find it fresh.

What is Swiss Chard?

If you haven't had this vegetable yet, not to worry! This is another type of dark, leafy green vegetable just like spinach and kale, except it is a little more bitter. It is this bitter taste that often keeps people from enjoying it, but that is only because you haven't had the opportunity to use it properly.

Swiss chard is full of phytonutrients, especially in the red-purple stems and veins of this vegetable. That is where you get a lot of the nutrients. Swiss chard also contains potassium and magnesium, two nutrients that are essential for a healthy, well-balanced diet.

How to Eat Swiss Chard

As a leafy green, you can have swiss chard fresh or cooked. If you don't mind the taste, enjoy it in a salad with other greens, or add it to your homemade juice or smoothie. You can also add some of the greens to your wrap or sandwich.

If you don't like the bitter taste, try sautéing it as a side dish, by cooking it with some olive oil and garlic. This is very simple to do and adds a lot more nutrition to your meals.

6. Lemons

You will be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't enjoy lemons and lemon-flavored drinks or foods in the summertime. Citrus fruits and summer seem to go hand-in-hand, so the fact that it is a superfood makes it even better.

Why are Lemons so Good for You?

Let's count the ways. First of all, you know that as a citrus fruit, the lemon is loaded with vitamin C and antioxidants. These are often the nutrients people think about when they think about lemons. However, that's not all. They also contain fiber and micronutrients, as well as being very low in calories.

Using More Lemons This Summer

Curious about the different ways to have more lemons in your diet this summer? There is almost an endless amount of ways to use them, but here are a few ideas:

Infused Water – During the summer, the temperatures rise and you tend to be more dehydrated. It is more important than ever to drink lots of water. If you aren't a big fan of plain water, why not try some infused water? You can make simple lemon water or add in other fruits as well, like watermelon, lime, or strawberries.

A simple sugar-free strawberry lemon water tastes like lemonade, without added sweeteners. Use meyer lemons for added sweetness.

Lemon Ice Cubes – A simpler way to turn any water or beverage into one with some lemon in it is to make your own ice cubes. Just add lemon juice to an ice cube tray and cover with filtered water. Add these to every glass of water you drink for nutrients and flavor.

Garlic Lemon Sauces – There are also quite a few summer-inspired sauce recipes that will use lemon and garlic together. These seem to go great together when making a citrus sauce or dressing. These sauces might go in a casserole with chicken, over a light salad, on pasta, or even to coat veggies.

7. Spinach

Swiss chard isn't the only leafy green on this list – spinach is a powerful superfood that is also great to have in the summer. If you have been working on eating healthier, you are probably no stranger to the powers of spinach. It has a lot of essential vitamins and minerals, and tends to be more nutrient-dense than romaine or iceberg.

Even if you aren't a big fan of spinach or other dark, leafy greens, you could always make a salad of mixed greens with your favorite iceberg, along with some spinach and maybe even swiss chard or kale.

Why Eat More Spinach?

You know it is good for you, but why? Here is a list of all the top vitamins and minerals in spinach:

- Vitamin K
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin B2
- Iron
- Folate
- Copper
- Vitamin B6
- Vitamin E
- Manganese
- Magnesium

And that's not all! It also has some trace amounts of protein and zinc. This is an extremely healthy leafy green everyone should be eating more of.

8. Avocado

It's a good thing so many people love avocados, since they are so good for you. Yes, they are on the higher side for fat and calories, but not all fat is bad for you! This is considered a good, healthy fat, so while you should eat them in moderation, they are still good to have on a regular basis.

Avocado is actually a fruit, and often considered a "superfruit" – or a superfood fruit. You get a lot of great fiber in avocados, plus vitamins and minerals like vitamin C, vitamin B6, vitamin E, vitamin K, beta-carotene, omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, and potassium.

Easy Ways to Eat More Avocado

Love avocado, but aren't sure how to use it more in the summertime? We got you covered! Here are some simple ways to add avocado to your summer dishes:

Add them to salads for more healthy fats.

Make a healthier potato or egg salad with avocado instead of mayonnaise.

Try a green smoothie with some avocado added.

Make a taco bowl or taco salad with lean turkey and avocado.

Enjoy homemade guacamole with some healthy chips.

9. Watermelon

Let's move on to some more fruits on these superfoods for summer list, starting with watermelon. If you ask someone what fruit they love the most in the summer, there is a good chance watermelon will be at the top of the list.

Watermelon is relatively low in calories, is fresh, sweet, and has a high-water content so a little bit goes a long way.

It is also loaded with nutrients just like the other superfoods on this list. You will get plenty of vitamin C and vitamin A when you add more watermelon to your diet, which help reduce inflammation, lower your blood pressure, and even protect your skin from UV rays thanks to the lycopene.

Try adding your watermelon to summer salads or just enjoying it as a snack. It also happens to be perfect to bring on picnics or to summer barbecues.

10. Strawberries

The next superfood fruit on the list is strawberries, another top favorite among many people. The great thing about strawberries is that they are juicy and sweet, so they are good for sugar addicts who want sweet foods, but on the healthier side.

Why are Strawberries Considered a Superfood?

First of all, strawberries have a higher-than-average amount of vitamin C. If you need more vitamin C in your diet, but are not a fan of citrus fruits like lemons and oranges, strawberries are the next best thing. They are very antioxidant-rich to help fight illnesses and boost your immune system.

Strawberries also contain an excellent amount of manganese, a mineral that helps improve your health and vitality. Other important nutrients in this fruit are potassium and B vitamins.

They are low in carbohydrates and have a good amount of fiber, so even people on low-carb diets can enjoy strawberries every day.

11. Summer Squash

There are many different varieties of squash, from yellow squash to zucchini, but not all of them are available year-round. If you live in a mild climate, you might have squash in your supermarket every season of the year, but if not, you will need to find a variety available in the summer.

This is when it is great to go for the summer squash. It is low in calories, moderate in carbohydrates, and is considered a summer superfood thanks to the many vitamins and minerals it contains.

Important Nutrients in Summer Squash

Why eat more squash this summer? For starters, it has a good amount of vitamin C. You will notice many fruits and vegetables (and herbs) on this list have vitamin C, and that is because it is an essential nutrient everyone should have in their diet.

Vitamin C is one of many antioxidants that helps to boost your immune system and keep you healthy all year-long. Other antioxidants in summer squash are lutein and zeaxanthin. You can get help preventing a summer cold thanks to some squash in your diet.

Ways to Eat Summer Squash

Not quite sure how to use squash? If this isn't a vegetable you are accustomed to having on a regular basis, you will be pleased to note all the many ways to enjoy it. Plus, it is really easy to prepare and add to your dishes since it has a mild flavor.

Here are some of our favorite ways to eat squash in the summertime:

Make a roasted veggie side dish – One of the simplest ways to have summer squash is to cook it in the oven. You can roast it alone or with other veggies like zucchini, broccoli, and carrots. Roast it alone or with some oil and garlic on top.

Sautee it on a pan with olive oil and seasonings – Another way you can cook your summer squash is by slicing it any way you want and cooking it on the stove. All you need is some olive oil and your choice of seasonings. This is a great time to have it with your chosen herbs.

Enjoy squash in your pasta – Summer squash is a yellow color and goes great with pasta. Slice up some of this fun squash, cook it first on the stove, then add it to a fresh pasta dish with other veggies, a little oil, and some fresh herbs.

12. Peaches

If you enjoy grilling in the summertime, then you should definitely consider adding some peaches to the grill! These are delicious, sweet, and offer a fresh taste to any food or snack.

Vitamin C, Fiber, and More

Yes – peaches are another summer superfood that are going to provide all the vitamin C you need! This vitamin is great not only for boosting your immune system and helping with general health and wellness, but it can also improve your skin health.

Not only does it have vitamin C, but peaches also contain fiber that is great for helping with your waistline. In addition to these nutrients, peaches contain potassium, so they work great as an alternative to bananas.

Eating More Peaches

The great thing about peaches is that you can just grab one and eat it. The skin is soft and easy to eat, plus it contains lots of fiber. You can also slice it up and add it to salads, top your yogurt or ice cream, or enjoy peaches in a summer salad.

Another option is to grill them, which brings out a lot of the sweetness, and makes for a healthy side dish to your barbecue chicken or hot dogs.

13. Blueberries

Last, but not least, is your blueberries. If you want more antioxidants this summer, it really doesn't get much better than these blue-purple berries. They fit in with many different diets, even low-carb diets.

Blueberries contain vitamin C, fiber, vitamin K, and manganese. They are low in fat and calories as well.

Enjoy your blueberries many different ways, such as on your salads, mixed in with yogurt or granola, as a side dish, or just a light snack.