

# ANTIOXIDANTS

## EAT YOUR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

As children, we are told to eat our fruits and vegetables. In fact, the USDA recommends 3-5 servings a day. However, most of us don't even get half of that amount. Why is this so important?

The answer is simple. Fruits and vegetables are so important to your overall health because they are major purveyors of antioxidants. So what are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are substances or nutrients in foods which can prevent or slow oxidative damage to our body. They are the defense system of your body, preventing damage from free radicals. What are free radicals?

Free radicals are harmful byproducts of the chemical reaction your body goes through when converting food and oxygen into energy. Energy is used by our bodies to perform necessary tasks such as breathing and exercising. These free radicals damage healthy cells resulting in any number of major health problems, including heart disease, memory loss, and cancer.

Antioxidants, however interfere with this process to produce safe, instead of toxic, substances.

### Most commonly known antioxidants are:

**Vitamin A and Carotenoids:** Carrots, squash broccoli, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, kale, collards, swiss chard, peaches, apricots, (bright colored fruits and vegetables).

**Vitamin C:** Citrus fruits like pink grapefruit, oranges, limes, strawberries, and some exotic fruits like lychee, passion fruit, acerola cherry, and camu camu which has the highest amount of natural vitamin C known on the planet.

**Vitamin E:** Nuts seeds, flax seed, whole grains, green leafy vegetables, vegetable oil, and liver oil.

**Selenium:** Fish & shellfish, grains, eggs, chicken, and garlic.

**Other common Antioxidants:**

### Phytochemicals

**Flavonoids /polyphenols:** Red wine, purple grapes, pomegranate, cranberries, tea.

**Lycopene:** Tomatoe, pink grapefruit, and watermelon

While all these foods are at the top of the antioxidant list, there is one gemstone of fruits that rises above all the ACAI BERRY. It is the super food of all antioxidants. This is most commonly available in juice form.

## September 2009

### Giada's: WHOLE WHEAT SPAGHETTI WITH SWISS CHARD

1 Tbls. extra-virgin olive oil

2 onions, thinly sliced

2 bunches of swiss chard, trimmed and chopped (about 14 cups)

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 (14 1/2 ounce) can diced tomatoes in juice

1/4 cup dry white wine

1/4 teaspoon crushed dried red pepper flakes

Salt and freshly ground pepper

8 ounces whole wheat spaghetti

1/4 cup pitted kalamata olives, coarsely chopped

2 Tbls. Freshly grated pecorino cheese

2 Tbls. pine nuts

Preheat oven 300\*f. Place pine nuts on a heavy baking sheet. Toast nuts in oven, stirring occasionally to ensure they brown evenly, about 10 min.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and saute until tender, about 8 minutes. Add the chard and saute until it wilts, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic and saute until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes with their juice, the wine, and the red pepper flakes. Bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes begin to break down and the chard is very tender, about 5 minutes.

Season the chard mixture to taste with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile cook spaghetti to package directions. Drain, add spaghetti to chard mixture. Sprinkle cheese, olives and nuts on top. Serves 4.

373 calories; 19g protein; 63g carbs; 5g fat; 14g fiber

