

My Top 10 Best Foods List

In compiling my list I have taken into consideration the various categories of foods and have select foods from the various categories. My categories include: Protein, Dairy, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Legumes and Fats. Here goes!

Protein – Salmon & Eggs

Salmon was my first pick because it is an easy to digest protein that is high in Omega-3 fats, especially DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid). It is an excellent food for protecting cell membranes and helping the cell to contain adequate fluid which aids in communication between the cells. It is helpful in supporting the brain with both intelligence and memory and is an excellent food for the pregnant woman to eat as it supports development of the fetal brain. Salmon helps with reducing inflammation in the body which can cause problems with arthritis, heart disease, cancer and other chronic conditions. It can improve circulation (as a blood thinner) and improves insulin glucose metabolism. Salmon also improves skin health and kidney function. Wild salmon also contains astaxanthin, a potent carotenoid that prevents lipid oxidation and assists in mending DNA breakdown. Astaxanthin is 50x more powerful than Vitamin E.

It is important to eat wild salmon rather than farmed salmon. Farmed salmon does not eat a natural diet, it is raised on grains and is pumped full of antibiotics. Farmed salmon does not contain the helpful Omega 3 fats; instead it has Omega 6 fats and the lovely pink color is not from natural carotenoids. The color of farmed salmon is based on the shade selected by the “farmer” on a color chart called a “SalmoFan.”

Lastly, salmon contains excellent protein content at 18g per 3 oz serving. This serving size would also contain 360 mg potassium and good amounts of selenium, B₁₂, niacin, Vitamins A and D. Wild caught salmon has a minimal amount of mercury. What’s not to like about salmon?

Eggs were my next pick for a protein food was the egg, touted as nature’s most perfect food. Eggs are a perfect source of protein containing all nine essential amino acids and loaded with vitamins and nutrients that are good for the brain, eyes and heart. It is best to select “free range” eggs, when available, as there is a better possibility that the chickens will be healthier, better fed and perhaps less fat since they may have more exercise. Omega-3 eggs are also an excellent choice as they will also have a better Omega-3 to Omega-6 ratio which is good for us.

Eggs are one of the best sources of choline, which is essential for cardiovascular health, brain function and cell membrane health. It is an essential part of phatidylcholine which keeps fat and cholesterol from accumulating in the liver! Choline also forms a metabolite called betaine which helps lower homocysteine levels, a risk factor for heart disease. Choline also helps with memory and may be protective against Alzheimers disease and certain types of dementia.

Eggs contain lutein and zeaxanthin, two important nutrients for eye health. Eggs and spinach together are a good combination for the eyes as they both contain these important carotenoids. The risk of certain cancers may be reduced with the regular consumption of eggs. Some studies have shown a reduction of breast cancer by as much as 44% with the regular ingestion of six eggs per week.

Additional nutrients in eggs include trace amounts of fifteen vitamins and minerals. One jumbo egg will contain up to 18% of the daily requirement for riboflavin (Vitamin B₂), 14% of Vitamin B₁₂, and 29% of needed Selenium. Their high content of sulfur is good for healthy hair and nails. Eggs also contain Vitamin E and A. Eggs also are a good source of Vitamin K.

It is best to poach or boil the eggs so the yolk has minimal exposure to oxygen, or simply eat them raw. Dietary cholesterol intake has minimal if any impact on serum cholesterol readings. Studies have not shown that people who eat fewer eggs are less likely to have a heart attack than those people who eat eggs. A good snack to consider could be egg whites, which provide a low fat good protein source when coupled with carbohydrates, or fill a hard

boiled egg with humus in place of the yolk. Eggs should consider being avoided by people with gall bladder disease as they may worsen the condition.

Dairy - Yogurt

Yogurt is the clear winner and was an easy selection. Yogurt contains large amounts of healthy bacteria to help improve digestive health. Yogurt helps balance the intestinal flora and can help reduce the “bad bugs” (like *Candida albicans*) and supports the immune system. Some types of yogurt contain a bacteria called *bulgaricus* or *bifidobacteria* which have been shown to be antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is another member of the same family. These probiotics in yogurt have been shown to help control inflammation in the body and increase NK cells (natural killer cells) which help to protect us from degenerative diseases.

All brands of yogurt are not created equal. Always make sure to purchase yogurt that has “Live and Active Cultures” (LAC) in it. The National Yogurt Association has set a standard for live cultures and all yogurts that meet this standard can display the (LAC) seal. Watch for this as a good indicator regarding the content of live cultures in the yogurt. It is best to purchase plain yogurt and to forego those with lots of added sweeteners or artificial sweeteners and flavorings or color.

Yogurt is a great source of protein and calcium and potassium. It also has some B vitamins and selenium. Remember some fat helps to utilize the other nutrients in the food and also helps to fill you up. Yogurt also contains magnesium and is helpful in preventing osteoporosis and hypertension. Yogurt is also easy to digest and can often be tolerated by people who otherwise have a lactose intolerance. The last tip is to purchase organic yogurt, whenever possible, to avoid any potential for pesticide and antibiotic residue in the yogurt.

Vegetables – Broccoli

Broccoli was my first pick here, however, this was difficult as there are really no “bad” vegetables. Broccoli is a member of the brassica family or cruciferous vegetables which include bok choy, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi and Swiss chard. All of these vegetables contain large amounts of cancer fighting phytochemicals called isothiocyanates. These isothiocyanates have been shown to inhibit tumors induced by chemical carcinogens. This is also true for mammary tumors.

Broccoli also contains indole-3-carbinol which is a strong antioxidant and stimulator of detoxifying enzymes that seem to protect the structure of DNA and also reduces the risk of breast and cervical cancer. Indole-3-carbinol increases the ratio of good (benign) estrogen metabolite to the potentially harmful ones. It has also been shown to be effective against the carcinogenic effects of pesticides and other toxins. Some studies have also shown protection against skin and gastric cancers.

Another phytochemical is sulforaphane which increases the activation of enzymes known as phase-2-enzymes that are believed to help reduce the risk of prostate cancer. And as if this was not already enough, look at the nutrient content. One cup of broccoli contains 2g of protein, 2 g of fiber, 288 mg potassium, 43 mg of calcium, 81 mg of Vitamin C, plus folate, magnesium, phosphorus, beta-carotene, Vitamin A and 1,277 mg of lutein and zeaxanthin (which potentially reduces the risk of macular degeneration in the eyes). Broccoli was also one of the top twelve least likely to be contaminated with pesticides as tested by the Environmental Working Group in 2003. (Page 25) You might also consider trying broccoli sprouts. The sprouts actually contain 30 to 50 times more nutrition than the mature plant! ENJOY!

Fruit – Blueberries & Apples

Blueberries are the king of the fruits in my opinion. Blueberries have been shown to help memory, coordination and balance. Blueberries contain anti-inflammatory compounds like anthocyanin which also acts as an antioxidant. These compounds can be helpful in the reducing the risk of developing degenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. Blueberries actually help the neurons in the brain communicate better with one another by turning on the signals with compounds called polyphenols that are found in blueberries and may actually stimulate the brain to grow new neurons! (Page 101) These great little berries can also help lower blood pressure and promote urinary health. A close relative to the blueberry, the bilberry, has been shown to improve night vision and to reduce eye strain.

Blueberries are the highest scoring fruit when looking at its ORAC value (oxygen radical absorbance capacity), which is a rating system for antioxidant power. Blueberries also contain a compound called pterostilbene which has the lipid-lowering capability that is actually superior to resveratrol (found in grapes) and also superior to some prescription medications. It helps regulate fatty acid metabolism and helps prevent the deposition of plaque in the arteries.

Suggested intake is just ½ cup of wild blueberries per day in either a frozen or fresh state. Some experts also suggest that blueberries can help with weight control. This berry, along with its cousins (raspberries, blackberries and strawberries) has a low glycemic index and good fiber content making it even more appealing as a fruit choice.

Apples are one of my personal favorites, having grown up in Maine where the apples are unsurpassed in quality, I had to have this fruit included in my top 10 list. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away!” Apples come in several varieties and can be eaten in several forms: fresh, baked, smashed or converted to vinegar.

For starters, apples contain quercetin, a flavonoid that was shown to prevent the growth of prostate cancer cells in one study. Another study showed that apple skins reduced colon cancer cell growth by 43% and another study showed a reduction in the risk of lung cancer to be by as much as 50%. Apples are full of antioxidants that include: quercetin, catechin, phloridzin, and chlorogenic acid. This means they have really strong antioxidant power. They have the second highest antioxidant activity of any fruit other than cranberries. They also contain the highest portion of free phenolics of any fruit. This means the antioxidants are not bound to any other compounds in the fruit so their cancer fighting ability is uninhibited. Quercetin is also considered to be nature’s antihistamine while pectin acts as a great gut regulator and detoxifying agent. An apple a day can also help with reducing constipation problems.

In addition to the cancer fighting potential of apples, they also can potentially help with asthma and may lower the risk for diabetes. Some studies link apples with weight loss. Apples contain pectin, a soluble fiber that can help lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. An apple also contains 5 g of fiber, which helps lower the glycemic index. Apples are also high in boron, which is known to assist in building new bone and may help with arthritis. Boron may help increase energy levels. Lastly apple skins can inhibit the growth of liver cancer and colon cancer cells. (Page 95) Apples are also a good source of potassium.

Unfortunately, apples are on the top twelve list of foods most likely to be contaminated with pesticides (Environmental Working Group study 2003) so buy organic. Eat the whole apple, not store bought apple juice that has been pasteurized, strained, sweetened and diluted! For healthy apple juice, make your own.

Lastly, apple cider vinegar (unfiltered and un-pasteurized) is full of nutrients and enzymes that have been shown to help with a variety of ailments. Oxymel – a combination of apple cider vinegar and honey – has been used for centuries to dissolve painful calcium deposits in the body. A recent study has shown some impact on blood sugar and insulin metabolism and may improve insulin resistance in some subjects.

Grains – Oatmeal

Oatmeal is a great pick as a grain favorite. It is high in fiber that helps slow the absorption of sugar and causes less of a rise in blood sugar than potatoes or wheat products. Fiber is known as the number one supplement in supporting weight loss and oatmeal has 55% soluble fiber and 45% insoluble fiber. The soluble fiber assists in lowering cholesterol which helps reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. One bowl per day reduces cholesterol by as much as 8% to 23%.

Oatmeal has a very low glycemic load with 5g of fiber per serving and the highest protein content of any cereal (8.5 g protein per 2/3 cup of oats). It also contains phosphorus, potassium, selenium, manganese and iron. Always buy steel-cut or rolled oats (old fashioned thick oats) to have the least processed form of oats. Instant oatmeal is not a good choice.

Legumes – Lentils

Lentils are loaded with fiber, especially soluble fiber, which is helpful with reducing high cholesterol. It also helps control blood sugar and has a very low glycemic load. There are over fifty varieties of lentils to choose from. Because of the high fiber content lentils are associated with better glucose control and can be helpful with diabetics and weight control. A cup of lentil soup before the meal is a great appetite suppressant. Lentils and other legumes also contain lignans which naturally help to balance hormones.

One cup of lentils have a nice amount of protein, about 18g per serving, and 16g of fiber! Lentils have a lot of folate and are a good source of at least seven minerals. One cup provides 37% of the daily value for iron and 49% for manganese. Manganese is important for growth, reproduction, wound healing, brain function, metabolism of sugars, insulin and cholesterol.

One other plus for lentils, over other legumes, is they do not need to be presoaked before cooking and can therefore be ready to eat in just 20 to 30 minutes. Lentils can also be sprouted and provide concentrated nutrition in the sprouted form.

Fats – Avocados & Almonds

Avocados, while technically a fruit, are really known for their excellent source of healthy fatty acids, especially monounsaturated fats; specifically oleic acid and Omega-9 that is also found in high amounts in olive oil and macadamia nuts. This fat will actually lower cholesterol. Daily intake of avocados was shown to drop blood cholesterol by 17% and reduced both LDL (bad cholesterol) and triglyceride levels. It also has been linked to a reduced risk of cancer and diabetes.

Avocados are also high in beta-sitosterol a natural substance shown to lower cholesterol and to be highly protective of the prostate. Avocados contain lutein which is good for the eyes, and skin. California avocados rank higher in lutein over Florida avocados. Lutein also acts as an antioxidant. Avocados are a great source of fiber, between 11g and 17g per avocado. They are a good source of potassium and also contain folate, Vitamin A, beta-carotene, and beta-cryptoxanthin (another healthy carotene). Avocados also contain lots of Vitamin E and glutathione.

Postmenopausal women who consumed a 25% fat diet, but with higher percentages of monounsaturated fats over saturated fats, showed less progression of coronary atherosclerosis (a high glycemic carbohydrate intake diet was associated with greater progression of the disease).

As a footnote, California avocados have about 20% fewer calories than Florida avocados (289 compared with 365); 13% less fat and 60% less carbohydrates. California avocados also have a good source of both lutein and zeaxanthin for eye nutrition. Florida avocados do have 20% more potassium and a bit more calcium and phosphorus.

Almonds, which are a nut, can be eaten in many forms. They can be eaten raw, roasted, as nut butter, as oil or even be made into milk. Almonds are known to reduce heart disease risk and in several tests were shown to effectively reduce total cholesterol by 5.3% to 7.2% and a 6.8% to 10% reduction in LDL (bad) cholesterol. About 70% of the fat in almonds is monounsaturated fat. Studies have also associated lower levels of cancer and longer life spans for almond eaters!

Almonds contain about 6g of protein in one ounce and 3 g of fiber. Almonds are rich in calcium with one ounce containing 80mg of calcium. They also contain phosphorus, Vitamin E and are an excellent source of magnesium. Since they contain no carbohydrates they are an excellent food for diabetics. Almonds are a nutrient dense food with one ounce containing about 250 calories.

Tip: Almond milk can be made by putting a few almonds in the blender with good water – add raw unfiltered honey or xylitol if you want it to be a bit sweetened.

In closing – it was all but impossible to choose just 10 foods as my top 10 list. There are so many options. It is important to remember that the best choice is always to eat foods in a state “as close to nature” as possible. This means eating a variety of foods from all the food groups that are in season, freshly picked, raw or minimally cooked, minimally processed and organic. With meat and dairy the animals should be fed a natural diet of fresh grasses. With fish watch for mercury and other toxicity content (eat “wild” not “farmed” products). Pay attention to

diversity in the diet by selecting a wide combination of foods in varying colors and from varying families of food. Watch for any particular food sensitivities that may be unique to you and avoid or rotate eating those foods. We are all biologically individual. Eating foods “as close to nature” as possible means you will ingest more enzymes, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals to support healthy processes within the body, improve digestion and enhance the regular elimination of toxins. Enjoy the journey to better health through better nutrition. What are your top 10 best foods?