

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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It's getting into harvest time for apples and pears. That means there will be plenty of newly picked, sweet, juicy, crunchy fruit in the stores. Of course the standard Delicious apples and Bartlett pears will be there, but you might see a lot of other, newer varieties there too. You won't find them all in the store, but there are at least 7,500 different kinds of apples! Most bags have a bit of description about the type of fruit, whether it's better for cooking, eating or making sauce with. Some work well for all uses, others really are better used just one way. Try a new variety next time you buy fruit. No matter whether it's a cooking apple or an eating apple, they all have plenty of health benefits.

In fact, it's beginning to look like Grandmother was right again, 'an apple a day' may very well keep the doctor away. At least in Italy where the biggest survey was done, people who ate apples every day had a much lower risk of getting cancer than those who didn't. The benefits included lower levels of many different types of cancers. Here in the US, the Nurses' Health Study found that eating either apples or pears would reduce the risk of lung cancer. And the more that were eaten, the lower the risk became. Eat more!

Of course, medicine today wants to know why it works. So the doctors are trying to figure out exactly what in apples or pears stops the cancers from growing, or prevents them from starting. They're trying to separate out all the individual chemicals in the fruit and test each of them. The problem is that Mother Nature packs her fruit with

thousands of different compounds, so it's going to be a long, slow process.

Right now it looks like two groups of compounds, phenolic acids and flavonoids, are most likely to be part of the health benefits. There are dozens of each, so there's still more work to do. Apples have more of them than pears do, but pears have more dietary fiber. Both have vitamins and minerals and both are low in calories, less than 100 calories for a medium sized of either fruit.

As with so many other compounds in foods, when science isolates one to study, supplement makers soon try to sell us purified extracts, with all kinds of grand promises about how much it's going to help our health. And as with so many supplements, they never live up to their promises. A big part of the reason is that in fruit, just like most things in nature, everything works together. So just one compound extracted from a fruit is not going to have the benefit that several hundred or thousand would have when we eat a whole fruit. Another reason to eat up!

Apples are fairly easy to take care of. Buy the apple or the bag you want, take them home, wash and eat them. They'll keep longer if they're kept cool, but the refrigerator is not necessary. Pears are a bit more delicate. They have to be picked while they're green, and once they're ripe they bruise very easily. Look for pears with just a touch of yellow or pink on them. They should be firm, not mushy. The stem should be tight, not loose or dry. They'll ripen in several days on the counter. But if you need them sooner, put them in a paper bag with a banana. Gas from the banana will speed up the ripening. Do not refrigerate them because the cold will make the centers get brown and soft. A wash with running tap water will have them ready to eat.

If you prefer your fruit cooked, leave at least some of the peel on. And don't

drown them in sugar and butter! All those extra calories are not worth the health risk. Both fruits can be used in pies, cakes, muffins, cobblers and crisps. Cinnamon is a favorite spice to add, but ginger, cloves, nutmeg, lemon and vanilla are great as well. There are a lot of new recipes for fruit and pepper salsas to serve with meat too.

Here's an apple dessert that doesn't involve rolling out pie crusts but tastes a lot like a traditional pie. Serve it with plain or vanilla yogurt, milk or ice cream.

Apple Walnut Cobbler

3 pounds tart cooking apples (Granny Smith, Jonathan or Rome Beauty)

½ cup chopped walnuts

2 Tbsp no-calorie sweetener

1 tsp lemon juice

½ tsp apple pie spice or cinnamon

1 cup low-fat biscuit mix

¼ cup sugar

1 egg, beaten lightly

2 Tbsp melted margarine

¼ cup evaporated milk

Preheat oven to 325°F. Wash apples and slice into small, greased baking dish.

Sprinkle lemon juice, then ¼ cup nuts, sweetener and spices over apples. In small bowl combine baking mix and sugar. In another bowl combine egg, margarine and milk and mix well. Pour over baking mix and stir until smooth. Pour over apples. Sprinkle rest of walnuts over batter. Bake 45-50 minutes, until toothpick inserted into batter comes out clean. Serves 4.