

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Good News for the New Year

If you're still considering healthy eating resolutions to work on for the New Year, there are at least a few things you can take off the list. A major category of foods that are not living up to all their hype and publicity are the 'super-foods'. Most of them are obscure berries or fruits from far-away rain forests. They range from acai berries to goji and hoodia, maca (a root from the high elevations of South America) to turmeric. Chocolate makes it onto some lists of superfoods along with soybeans and persimmons. Check the internet and you can find list after list of superfoods, from the top 10 to the top 111.

There's not much doubt that most of these foods do have some nutrient value. They have vitamins and minerals. They might have fiber, they might have antioxidants. But none of them have enough of anything to merit being the center of attention in a diet. And adding any of them to another food does not automatically make the other food a superfood too. Adding a tiny bit of fruit juice to a bottle of sugar water does not mean that the fruit punch is now a healthy alternative to milk or water for you or your children.

Antioxidants definitely do have a place in a healthy diet and in our bodies. But the amount of antioxidant measured in a test tube or a lab machine often has little relationship to the effect it will have in our bodies. The simple act of eating and digesting food can destroy some antioxidants. How much we need to eat of this berry or that fruit to get a certain effect is mostly unknown. And there's no way to guarantee

that any antioxidant in the berries will reach a certain part of our bodies. Yes, antioxidants can destroy some cancer cells. But the most effective ones are produced by other cells, right there on the spot.

On the other hand, there are plenty of excellent foods that were not recently discovered in the wilds of Africa. Check out your local grocery store for all the ingredients for a super-healthy diet, without breaking your budget. For example, pick up a can of beans. Any bean - black, red, pink, white, spotted - take your choice, has plenty of antioxidants. Beans have more fiber than almost any other fruit. They have minerals, including iron that is in short supply in most plant-based foods. They should certainly qualify for a super-food list. But they're grown in North Dakota, not a rain forest. Sorry.

Other foods could be super-foods if they weren't so common (and so can't be sold for exorbitant prices). Grab a can of tomatoes (No Salt Added please!). Here you have lycopene for vision and maybe for Alzheimer's disease protection, lots of Vitamin A, some vitamin C, folate and niacin, practically sodium-free but offering potassium and magnesium instead. Put grapes and cherries on your list. All those dark red and purple fruits, even eggplant, offer antioxidants as well as vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Be sure to add some cabbage, broccoli or cauliflower to your shopping cart. The veggies in this family add some very healthy sulfur compounds to fight cancers, as well as tons of vitamin C, some A in the dark green ones, fiber and minerals. Some onion or garlic adds more protective sulfur compounds.

Do you need a good protein for your meal? Choose fish. Salmon is great, but so are many others. Just don't deep fry your fish! Use fat free or low fat dairy products to

get your calcium as well as top quality protein. The super-diet is a balanced diet. You can find all you need in your local grocery, farmer's market or produce stand. Buy local, buy in season, choose whole grains. Steer clear of things with added salt, sugar and fat. Empty calories can wreck your health, super fast.

Here's a different way to eat your beans. It's quick, it's healthy and it's delicious. If you want some, be sure to serve yourself quickly, because the kids will polish it off. Happy, Healthy New Year!

Apple Bean Bake

1 can 16 oz baked beans	2 small Golden Delicious apples
1 Tbsp brown sugar or substitute	¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Wash, core and cube the apples. Combine all ingredients in a 2 quart microwave-safe dish. Microwave on High, uncovered, 4 minutes. Stir. Microwave another 4 minutes or until apples rise to surface and are soft. Stir, and serve. Serves 6.

To prepare on the stovetop, just simmer all ingredients in saucepan, stirring occasionally, until apples are tender.

Recipe from Northarvest Bean Growers Association.