

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Better than Apple Pie?

Apple pie might have been one of the mainstays of the traditional American diet for some very good reasons. These days we don't need the extra calories from the sugar, or the lard in the pie crust. But we certainly should still be eating our way through the bins of apples at the grocery.

Now's the time for the freshest, juiciest apples of the year since this the middle of the fresh apple season. They're being picked by the cratefuls, huge cratefuls of them, in Pennsylvania and New York. The aroma just driving down the roads is wonderful. And the trees are so full that their branches are drooping with the weight.

It doesn't matter which variety you prefer, or if you want green or red or yellow ones. They're all good for you. But do eat the apples, not just drink the juice. When the juice is extracted all the fiber is lost. Don't peel the apple either, or you'll lose more fiber. And fiber is one of apples' great health benefits.

Apples have two kinds of fiber, soluble and insoluble. You can't usually see soluble fiber, but it's there inside the fruit. Soluble apple fiber is often used to make pectin for jams and jellies. It swells in water and makes it thick. In our guts, it acts like a sponge, trapping cholesterol and carrying out of the body. It also slows down how fast we digest and absorb sugar. That means our blood sugars don't go up so fast.

Insoluble fiber is what's in the peel. It helps make it tough. This fiber won't dissolve in our guts. It's more like the old-fashioned 'roughage' that helps keeps things moving through our intestines. That means less constipation, diverticulitis and hemorrhoids. And both kinds of fiber may help us keep the weight off by keeping us feel full longer. Eating an apple before a meal is likely to reduce how much you eat in the meal. You end up eating fewer total calories.

Other benefits of apples are their polyphenols. If you've been reading about health benefits of red grapes, these are in the same category. But apples have at least five or six different kinds of them. They are antioxidants, to help protect our genes. They help keep our cholesterol levels down and protect the fat in our blood from being changed into more dangerous chemicals. They seem to

protect us so much that a study in Finland found that people who ate half an apple a day had about half the risk of dying from a heart attack. How's that for keeping the doctor away?

Beside the effect of fiber on blood sugar, the polyphenols also slow down how fast sugar gets into our blood. So even though they have sugar, they don't make blood sugar go up too fast. They may even slow down how fast our brain gets old.

If all of that hasn't been enough to convince you to go buy an apple, there's also an anti-cancer connection! More apples have been tied to less lung cancer. And they help ease the effects of asthma on the lungs. Several other cancers might also be prevented or slowed down by something in apples.

If you don't know what kind of apple you want to buy, try several. Red Delicious and Golden Delicious are very popular varieties. Mackintoshes are not as sweet. Gala and Fuji are newer varieties that have lots of flavor too. Just be sure to get ones that are not bruised or soft. Wash them before you eat them. Cool running water is enough, no special washes are needed. They'll keep for weeks or more in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Add a damp paper towel to the drawer to keep a little humidity around them.

This recipe might look a little odd to you, but when we've made it with parents' groups, the youngsters gobbled it down so fast the adults barely managed to taste it! So give it a try. It will be great as a side dish with barbeque, chicken or pork. Enjoy!

#### Apple Bean Bake

1 16-oz can pork and beans or vegetarian baked beans

2 Golden Delicious apples

2 Tbsp brown sugar or sweetener

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Wash the apples, remove the cores and cut them in cubes. Combine all the ingredients in a 2 quart dish that is safe for the microwave. Cook uncovered on High for 4 minutes. Stir. If the microwave does not have a turntable then turn the dish half way around. Microwave again for 4 minutes, until the apples are soft and rise to the top. Or, simmer in a saucepan until the apples are tender. Serve hot. Serves 6.

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