

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Why So Much Soy?

Soybeans are little, mostly round, brownish beans when they're ripe and dry. Green ones, called edamame, look more like fat lima beans. Very plain, they certainly don't look like wonder-beans. Maybe they're the Clark Kent side of Superman-beans. But as anyone who has a soy allergy knows, soy products are in *everything!* It is amazing the number of foods alone that contain soy products. Plus, soy is used in cosmetics and medications, carpets and clothing, inks and paints. And now certain soy compounds are being studied as drugs themselves, to prevent some cancers and reduce heart disease. What is there about soybeans that make them so special?

Compared to lima, kidney, black or pinto beans, soybeans have a lot more oil and protein, and less starch. The bottles of soy oil in the grocery show how much oil there is in those beans. It's hard to find a bottle of salad dressing that doesn't have soy oil. Many baked goods and baking mixes use soy oil. Soy oil has a light color, very little flavor, takes a lot of heat for cooking and frying, and is not expensive. And because soy oil is so very highly refined there is no protein left it is safe for many people with allergies to soy who can't eat soy protein in foods.

Another common ingredient in salad dressings, mayonnaise, mixes and baked goods, as well as non-stick pan sprays is soy lecithin. Lecithin is one of the few things that will make oil and water mix. It's in egg yolks too. Originally mayonnaise and many sauces were made with egg yolks to keep the oil and vinegar from separating. But now many of these products use soy instead. It's less expensive and easier to get.

The other big nutritional value of soybeans is the protein. Just like wheat gluten and milk casein, soy protein is very, very useful. Added to bread dough it makes the dough stretchier and easier to knead. And it lets the bread rise more and the slices bend more when we make a sandwich. Soy protein also helps hold moisture and fat in the dough, so the breads or cakes don't dry out so quickly.

Soy protein is often added to ground meats for the same reasons. It might be injected into pieces of meat along with the flavoring marinade. Marinated roasts that have soy protein in the marinade won't lose as much juice when they're cooked. Ground beef with soy protein won't leak

ooze as much fat when it's made into meat loaf or grilled burgers. And these meats will also provide more protein in your diet.

If you read the fine print on your non-dairy coffee creamer you'll see that it usually has soy protein. Taking the place of dairy protein, the soy makes your coffee look whiter. It also feels creamier than just whitened water would feel. Soy proteins also help whiten flour, but when the flour is cooked, soy helps the bread or pancakes to brown more evenly.

Soy proteins are good glue. They help ground meats in hot dogs and luncheon meats stick together better. And when the hot dogs or sausages are formed and cooked, soy proteins make a better skin on the outside.

Notice that all of these uses are for soy protein. You might see it on a food label as soy flour, soy protein, soy protein isolates or soy concentrates. On top of all of these foods there are soy tofu, milk, yogurt, cheese, crumbles, burgers, tempeh, miso and other whole soy products.

Finally, soy isoflavones are compounds that help lower our blood cholesterol, reduce our blood pressure, and lower a woman's risk of breast cancer. There's some evidence that they might help reduce the risk of diabetes too. These isoflavones travel with the protein in whole beans or soy flour, and may be in some protein isolates as well. All in all, there are a lot of good reasons to use soy in foods, and for us to eat soy.

Here's an Asian take on Italian/American pizza. Give it a try!

Chicken Pizza, Asian style

3 tbsp peanut butter	2 tbsp water
1 1/2 tsp soy sauce	1 1/2 tsp white rice vinegar
1 1/2 tsp minced ginger	1 pre-baked pizza crust, 12-inch
1/2 cup reduced-fat mozzarella cheese, shredded	1/2 cup red bell pepper, sliced
1 cup cooked chicken breast, diced	1/4 cup chow mein noodles
1/2 cup frozen edamame, cooked according to package directions	

Preheat oven to 450°F. Combine peanut butter, water, soy sauce, vinegar and ginger in small bowl; stir until smooth. Place pizza crust on foil-lined baking sheet. Spread peanut butter mixture evenly over pizza crust. Sprinkle cheese, chicken, edamame, bell peppers and chow men noodles evenly over crust. Bake 8 to 10 minutes until cheese is melted. Serves 8. From SoyConnection.com

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