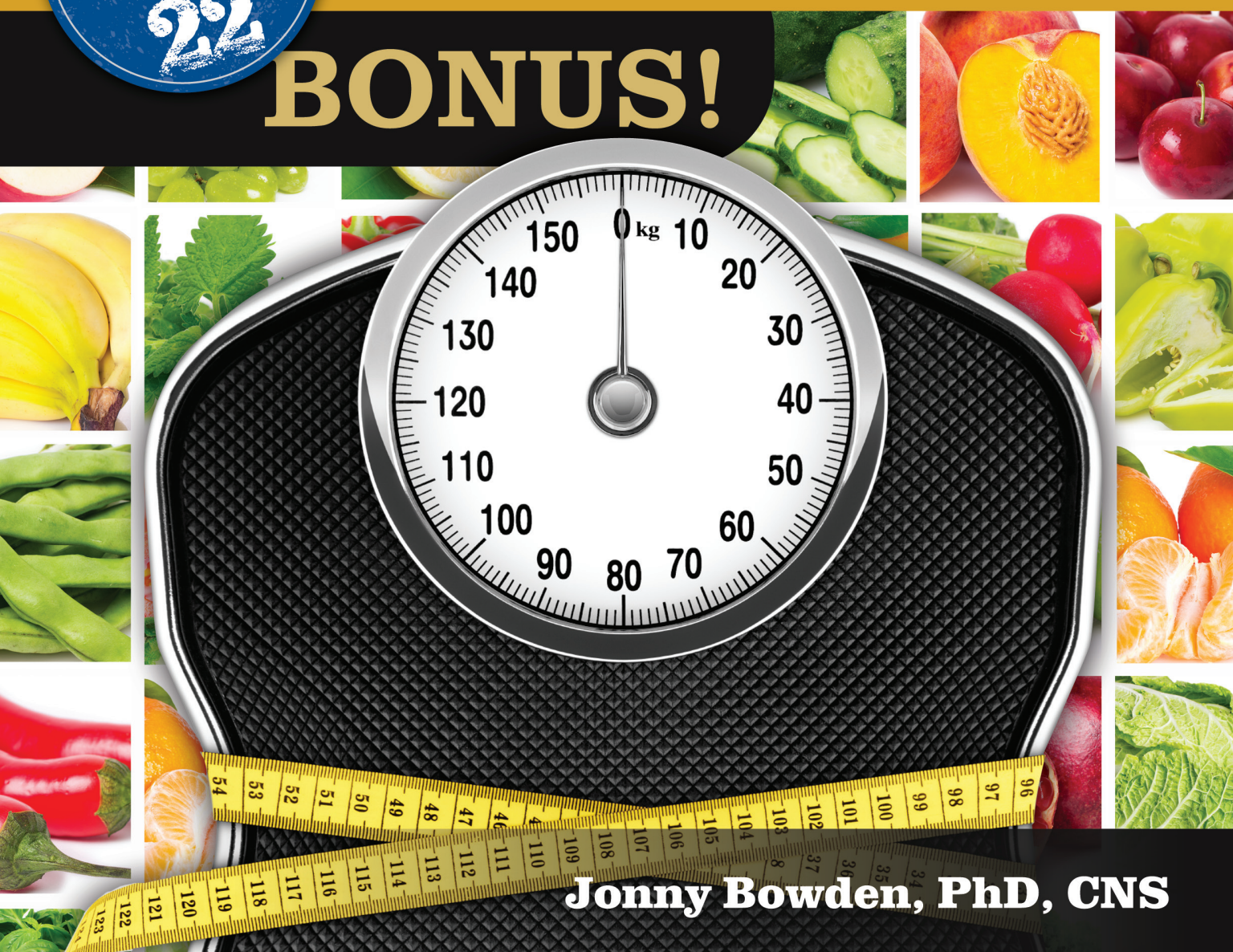
THE WORLD'S 50 MOST POWERFUL FAT-BURNING FOODS

NEW YOU in 22

BONUS!



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Natural Health Sherpa

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INTRODUCTION

There's a few important things to know about the foods on this list.

1. There's not one food on this list that doesn't have a health benefit.
2. There's not a food on this list that will contribute to heart disease, diabetes or obesity.
3. If you spent a year eating nothing but the foods on this list (plus spices) you'd be in extraordinary health.

Now understand me. I'm not saying you should eat nothing but the foods on this list, but I'm saying that you could and you wouldn't be missing a single important nutrient.

And now that we've got that out of the way, let's talk about fat burning.

The foods on this list were selected not only for their amazing resume of health benefits, nutrients, phytochemicals, flavonoids, vitamins, minerals, and other essentials, but also because they contribute in some way to fat burning. Let me explain.

I'm *not* saying that if you eat any one of these foods, fat is miraculously going to melt off. That's the kind of promise you find on late-night infomericals, and, frankly, most of those promises are just plain nonsense. What I *am* saying is that these foods will:

1. Help control blood sugar
2. Help keep your hormonal symphony playing in tune
3. Not contribute to the trifecta of metabolism destroyers—inflammation, oxidation and glycation

Controlling blood sugar is the first key to an effective fat-burning metabolism.

By keeping blood sugar nice and even, you assure that your fat-storing/ fat-making hormone, *insulin*, doesn't shoot through the roof, because when that happens, fat burning becomes essentially impossible.

Controlling blood sugar also prevents the ups and downs of energy that go *with* that blood sugar roller coaster. And it prevents many of the cravings that sabotage even the most determined dieters.

If you're following *New You in 22*, you may notice that some of these foods aren't recommended for the days on which you don't do the carb feast. That doesn't mean they're not great foods, and it doesn't mean you can never eat them.

Take apples, for example.

While we're on the low-carb plan, apples (along with cherries, berries, and some of the other superfruits) might be limited, but they are great foods to add to your menu on carb nights. And once you've begun to lose weight and you want to experiment with adding back certain foods, these foods are a great place to start. (I'm talking here about beans, legumes, and all the low-sugar fruits that made it to the top 50 list below.)

You'll also notice that there are a couple of items that you may have decided against consuming during the stricter program—coffee, for example.

I've included coffee because the research is pretty clear on the benefits to metabolism and health, but if you're one of those people whose stress and anxiety goes up when you drink coffee—or if it interferes with your sleep in any way—then by all means, pass it by.

It's included because—for some people, some of the time—it *does* have benefits, but that doesn't mean it has benefits for *you*! Remember, we're all different, and no one menu—even the one we recommend in the program—is perfect for every person all the time.

I hope you'll use this list as a template for designing your own meals and snacks going forward. You can't go wrong with any of the foods on this list, especially if you use them intelligently and mindfully.

And one more thing... there are plenty of really good foods, even some that can contribute to fat burning, that didn't make this list. I tried to keep it to 50, and that meant some really nice foods and oils and beverages didn't make the cut.

Avocado oil, for example, or any of the nut oils (walnut oil, for example) are perfectly good oils to use in different circumstances, but in the interest of keeping this list manageable, I didn't talk about them here. Same with specialty items like wheat grass juice, or spirulina, or kimchi.

The point here is to use this as a guide, not as the final word. The fact that a food didn't make this list doesn't make it bad, and I'm sure when you start eating in this way, you'll find many good choices that you can include that also support your fat-burning efforts.

No one food is perfect—but, taken together as a whole, the foods on this list sure do come close.

1. ARTICHOKES



Artichokes are a liver-cleansing, flavonoid-rich nutrient powerhouse. Since the liver is detoxification central in the body—and since toxins can seriously compromise fat burning—anything that supports the liver supports fat burning, and artichokes do that in spades.

One medium artichoke contains 72 mg of magnesium (a mineral three-quarters of us are deficient in), 425 mg of potassium, and almost 7 grams of fiber. Fiber helps stabilize blood sugar levels, slows stomach emptying, and helps you eat less. That's why fiber is such an effective supplement for weight loss.

Artichokes give you all that benefit for a mere 60 calories (okay, 76 if you're going for the big guy). It's a good nutritional deal no matter how you slice it.

2. ARUGULA

A member of the cancer-fighting cruciferous family that packs an astounding amount of nutrients including carotenoids and vitamin K for just 5 measly calories per cup. It won't make your blood sugar budge, and the nutrients will help your mitochondria—as well as your detoxification pathways—function a lot better. Egyptians and Romans considered arugula an aphrodisiac, but no promises there.



3. ASPARAGUS



Another (touted) aphrodisiac that actually has a male and female version. (Who knew?) Low in calories, high in nutrients, with almost 4 grams of fiber per cup, asparagus also offers the anti-inflammatory compound *quercetin*.

Inflammation is a major component in virtually every disease, including obesity and diabetes. The more inflammation you've got, the less effective your mitochondria are at producing energy, and the less effective your metabolism is at burning fat. A diet higher in anti-inflammatories is a surefire strategy for fat burning as well as for protection against disease.

4. BROCCOLI

Broccoli is the most popular of the cruciferous vegetables, a class of veggies I call "vegetable royalty". It's best known for its anticancer phytochemicals—called *isothiocyanates*—that help neutralize carcinogens, but broccoli is also a nutritional powerhouse.



One cup contains more than 2 g of protein, 2 g of fiber, 288 mg of potassium, 43 mg of calcium, 81 mg of vitamin C, plus folate, magnesium, phosphorus, beta-carotene, vitamin A, and 1,277 mcg of the superstars of eye nutrition, lutein and zeaxanthin.

You can eat broccoli raw, dunked in hummus or sautéed with coconut oil and garlic.

5. BRUSSELS SPROUTS



Brussels sprouts aren't really sprouts at all. They're members of the cruciferae family that come loaded with fiber, nutrients, and cancer-fighting compounds like *isothiocyanates* and *sulforaphane*.

Like other vegetables here, they provide serious nutrition for very few calories, and those cancer fighting chemicals do double duty by helping your liver. Brussels sprouts—which actually look like miniature cabbages—are another vegetable for the veggie-phobic: Roasted Brussels sprouts with onions and nitrate-free bacon are sure to convert even the biggest hater.

6. BEANS

Anything that provides fiber is going to help you burn fat because fiber stabilizes blood sugar. That, in turn, prevents insulin—the fat storage hormone—from going too high. And remember, insulin is both the fat-storing and the fat-*making* hormone!



Paleolithic humans got 50–100 grams of fiber a day. Modern-day humans? Not even close. If for no other reason than their awesome fiber content, beans deserve a place on your plate.

Overall, a cup of cooked beans will give you anywhere from 11 g (kidney beans) to an amazing 17 g (adzuki) of fiber per serving. That's phenomenal. Compare that to the miserable 1-2 grams you get in a slice of sugar-raising bread!

There's no other food I know of that is as good a source of this important food component. Beans—or at least the fiber in them—have major consequences for those with diabetes and blood sugar challenges. The soluble fiber in beans influences the rate by which glucose is absorbed. And a very significant amount of research dating back to the 1970s has shown that large amounts of fiber in the diet improve hyperglycemia (high blood sugar), the kiss of death if you're trying to burn body fat.

Low-glycemic diets are on the cutting edge of nutrition and are recommended for diabetics, those with weight challenges, and those with metabolic syndrome. Frankly, they should be recommended for *everyone*.

Beans are the ultimate low-glycemic food. Their high fiber content means they raise blood sugar very, very slowly, and eating high-fiber foods like beans has been shown in a number of studies to improve what's called "glycemic control"—the regulation of blood sugar and insulin.

Besides fiber and nutrients, beans are also loaded with protein: an average cup contains about 15 grams. And unlike most commercial animal protein sources, they don't come with any steroids, hormones, or antibiotics.

7. CABBAGE



Cabbage is another cancer-fighting cruciferous vegetable that's absolutely loaded with nutrients. Red or purple cabbage is also a source of *anthocyanins,* which belong to the family of plant compounds known as *flavonoids* and which provide serious anti-inflammatory, antioxidant protection.

Instead of a bun or wrap, I recommend using a cabbage leaf as your sandwich "bread". It's far more nutrient-rich and you don't get any of the junk in processed carbs.

8. CAULIFLOWER



To lose body fat, I always tell people to "nix the white stuff." One big exception (there always is): Cauliflower. Cauliflower is yet another cruciferous that's ridiculously low in calories, has 3 g of fiber, plus over 50 mg of vitamin C, 176 mg of potassium, and 55 mcg of folate in every cup.

Hankering for mashed potatoes but trying to lose weight? Try "faux-tatoes" instead: Cauliflower mashes easily with a little butter, lemon, and sea salt. Beyond delicious and incomparably healthier than traditional mashed spuds.

9. CELERY



The nutrients in this undervalued vegetable can help lower blood pressure, protect your bones, and even fight certain cancers. In ancient Rome, they used to wear celery around the neck to ward off a hangover after a particularly demanding night of Roman-style partying. (Could be where putting a stick of celery in a Bloody Mary came from.)

Smeared with some natural peanut or almond butter, celery makes a nutrient-rich, craving-busting snack which will keep your blood sugar from skyrocketing and help ward off cravings for the empty-calorie sugary stuff.

10. UNPASTEURIZED SAUERKRAUT



Sauerkraut combines one of the healthiest foods on the planet (cabbage) with one of most healthy forms of *processing* on the planet (fermentation). Studies show the probiotics in fermented foods like sauerkraut can repopulate healthy gut flora to reduce inflammation, a sure-fire enemy of a healthy metabolism.

Sauerkraut is also a high-fiber food with a ridiculously low number of calories. One cup of undrained sauerkraut provides almost 6 g of fiber for only 45 calories. Pasteurization kills off many of its beneficial nutrients, so always look for unpasteurized sauerkraut.

11. OLIVES



Olives are an ancient fruit. Olive trees have been around since at least 3,000 B.C.E., particularly in the Mediterranean. They provide a host of healthy plant compounds including tocopherols, flavonoids, anthocyanins, sterols, and polyphenols. Polyphenols are especially noted for their anti-inflammatory properties, not to mention their other numberous health benefits. Olives are also rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fat.

Look for olives that have been traditionally fermented, a rare, slow process that preserves their healthy compounds and active cultures. (These are the olives you'll see at "olive bars" in your better healthy groceries. They're *not* the green kind that come in the little jars. For fat loss, olives make a great appetizer, the perfect alternative to bread and other high-carb appetizers at restaurants or dinner parties.

12. WHEY PROTEIN POWDER



Hands-down, my favorite protein powder is whey, especially whey protein that comes from grass-fed cows. In addition to being great for fat loss, whey provides a lot of benefits to the immune system, largely by boosting the body's stores of glutathione, arguably the most important antioxidant that the body produces.

Whey also proves superior for curbing appetite. In one study,[1] researchers consumed a liquid meal containing equal amounts of either whey or casein. Ninety minutes later, allowed to eat freely at a buffet, the whey group consumed significantly fewer calories. How's that for "natural" appetite control without a drug or stimulant?

I usually start my morning with a protein shake loaded with fat-burning foods like berries, freshly ground flaxseed, and unsweetened coconut milk.

13. KALE



Kale deserves its reputation as a vegetable superstar for a very good reason. Actually a cabbage (with all the usual benefits of cruciferous vegetables), kale has the highest oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC) value of any vegetable. What the heck is ORAC?

Well, it's a rating system that basically measures how well all the different phytochemicals and antioxidants in a given food perform together. It's easy to understand if you think about sports teams, or even rock 'n roll bands, both of which are much more than just the sum of their parts. Similarly, superfoods aren't just a collection of the nutrients they contain—they're superfoods because all those nutrients work synergistically for an effect that's greater than the individual components.

The overall effect is about how well the elements work together as a group. And that's what the ORAC rating tells you: how much protection and value antioxidants and phytochemicals give you *as a group* in a particular food. In addition to its high ORAC rating, two cups of kale also contain 3 grams of protein, 4 grams of fiber, and a whole long list of nutrients—all in a very low calorie package.

It's also incredibly versatile: Enjoy it sautéed or raw in salad. And for those who are looking for something to eat while watching the game, kale chips with guacamole make the perfect crave-busting snack.

14. MUSHROOMS



This favorite vegetable comes in a wide variety of types. Maitake, shiitake, and reishi mushrooms have long been used for their medicinal properties. Just don't neglect other kinds, such as nutrient-dense cremini mushrooms. Even the lowly button mushroom has been shown in research to have health benefits, on the immune system, for example.

Whatever the variety, mushrooms contain a powerful antioxidant called L-ergothioneine, which neutralizes dangerous free radicals and increases enzymes with antioxidant activity. In at least two studies, L-ergothioneine seems to act as a metabolic energy enhancer, stimulating the breakdown of sugar in red blood cells and mimicking the nutrient carnitine in its ability to transport fat into the mitochondria of the cells where the fat can be burned for energy.

That's exactly what most over-the-counter weight loss supplements promise but rarely deliver.

15. OKRA



Long a Southern staple, okra contains a unique combination of valuable nutrients. It's one of a select group of foods that include naturally occurring immune-boosting glutathione, arguably the most important antioxidant in the body.

Besides being high in nutrients, one cup of cooked okra—a tiny 35 calories' worth—provides 4 g of fiber, way more than the average slice of sugar-boosting bread or the average cup of commercial cold cereal. And for a vegetable, it's also pretty high in protein. That same 35-calorie cup also provides almost 3 g of protein.

Steamed, pickled, boiled, baked, or added to gumbos: Okra is also one incredibly versatile vegetable and deserves a place in your fat-burning diet!

16. ONIONS



Onions belong to the allium family, a pretty impressive group which also includes leeks, garlic, and shallots. They contain a whole pharmacy of compounds with health benefits, including thiosulfinates, sulfides, sulfoxides, and other smelly sulfur compounds.

Onions contain powerful antioxidants and are anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, and antiviral. They are a great source of quercetin, one of my favorite anti-inflammatories. We know that reducing inflammation is critical for the health of the fat-burning mitochondria.

Onions also contain a number of sulfides very similar to those in garlic, which may lower blood lipids and blood pressure. Like many vegetables here, you can enjoy onions raw in salads or sautéed with mushrooms and green vegetables.

17. PEPPERS



Low in calories, peppers are a well-kept secret as a snack food. They blend with everything. I've eaten them raw like an apple, or combined them with some string cheese. They're crunchy, tasty, and will take the edge off your appetite, making them the perfect "craving buster" food.

They're also good sliced up with some buffalo mozzarella and extra virgin olive oil. And they're great in salads and in stir-fries.

Nutritionally, they're an excellent source of vitamins C and A (beta-carotene) and the mineral potassium. They also contain vitamin K, which is a vitally important component of bone health.

Both chili peppers and sweet peppers belong to the capsicum family. The major difference between the two is that chilies contain fiery capsaicin and are used mainly as a spice. The sweet ones lack capsaicin and are mainly used as vegetables. Studies show capsaicin provides thermogenic (fat-burning) benefits, and is sometimes an ingredient in fat-burning supplements.

18. PUMPKIN



For about 10 months a year, most of us don't give pumpkin a thought, but we should. It's a surprisingly healthy vegetable that's high in fiber and low in calories, and it's one I often include on my "top ten" lists when editors ask me to write about foods for fat-burning.

Nutritionally, it's a great food—a potassium heavyweight that's also rich in carotenoids and other nutrients. Remember that carotenoids, like the ones in pumpkin, need fat for absorption, so cook it with a dab of butter or olive oil.

It can make a healthy side dish or you can add the traditional nutmeg and cinnamon and call it a dessert. If you like it sweet, try adding some xylitol, stevia or erythritol (TruVia). It's an extraordinary substitute for mashed white potatoes; way healthier, and in my opinion, way more delicious.

19. SPINACH



Calorie for calorie, green leafy vegetables like spinach provide more nutrients than almost any other food on the planet. Spinach is a fine source of calcium, and a great alternative source of calcium for people who don't want to drink milk.

It's also got vitamin A, manganese, folic acid, magnesium, iron, vitamin C, and the wonderful anti-inflammatory quercetin.

I suggest enjoying your spinach steamed, sautéed, or fresh in spinach salad with a little olive oil and a topping of chopped hard-boiled eggs. One of my favorite ways to eat it is to stir-fry it in some coconut oil. Even if you think you hate spinach, you'll find that way of preparing it to be absolutely delicious!

And spinach is one of the lowest-calorie foods on the planet. You'd have to eat barrels of the stuff to equal the calories in even one small serving of French fries.

20. SQUASH



Squash comes in 2 varieties—summer or winter—and both have unique nutritional benefits. One of the good things about squash in general is that it has a high water content. Dr. Barbara Rolls at Pennsylvania State University, calls foods like squash "high-volume" foods because of the high water content—that means there's a lot there for a very low number of calories.

Because they're both filling *and* low calorie, high-volume foods are an integral part of successful fat loss programs. And though some varieties are higher in fiber than others, squash gives you a nice amount of fiber overall for relatively few calories.

And here's something amazing you can try with squash, especially butternut: Peel it, seed it, then cut it into the shape of French fries. Spray a cookie sheet with nonstick cooking spray, or better yet, lightly coat the tray with olive oil or butter, then place the "fries" on the sheet and bake for about 40 minutes (turning them over halfway).

You can season with sea salt or any spice you like (call me crazy, but I put turmeric on everything). Then feed them to your kids the next time they're jonesing for fast food! These "faux fries" are way healthier than the junk version, and they taste amazing.

21. LENTILS



Lentils have a rich history, but their real claim to fame is that, like other legumes, they're loaded with fiber, *especially* soluble fiber. Soluble fiber helps control blood sugar by delaying the emptying of the stomach and slowing the entry of sugar into the bloodstream.

This is why high-fiber foods like lentils have such a low glycemic load. Because fiber slows the digestion of foods, it can help blunt the sudden spikes in blood sugar and insulin that can cause you to be hungry again an hour after eating a low-fiber meal. Those constant spikes in blood sugar and insulin can also contribute to diabetes and can make weight very hard to take off.

A cup of lentils contains a nice amount of hunger-curbing protein—about 18 g. Best of all, that same cup contains a whopping 16 g of fiber. Lentils are also a terrific source of folate and a good source of at least seven minerals.

22. APPLES



Apples contain a whole host of phytochemicals, including the aforementioned anti-inflammatory quercetin, plus catechin, phloridzin, and chlorogenic acid. So what does that mean for you? Strong—*really* strong—antioxidant power.

Among their fat-loss benefits, apples contain pectin, a valuable source of soluble fiber that can help regulate blood sugar. By the way, when you eat (or juice) apples, ***don't forget the peel***. Apple peels have been found to have potent antioxidant activity and can greatly inhibit the growth of liver cancer and colon cancer cells.

Though almost all apples contain valuable phenols and antioxidants, the good old Red Delicious seems to frequently come out the winner when it comes to antioxidant power.

Like with celery, I like to smear almond butter on apple slices for the perfect appetite-curbing snack. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" turns out to be one of those old sayings that's actually based on truth.

23. AVOCADOS



Avocados almost became a casualty of the fat phobia that swept the nation back in the 1980s and is, sadly, still hanging on despite the fact that it's way past its expiration date though there are promising signs that it's dying out.

Yes, avocado is almost pure fat, but so what? That fat is largely monounsaturated fat, specifically oleic acid, the very same omega-9 fatty acid that is found in high amounts in olive oil and macadamia nut oil and is a staple in the Mediterranean diet.

Besides a bonanza of nutrients like potassium and lutein, an avocado contains a whopping 11 – 17 grams of fiber. Call me crazy, but I've been known to eat a whole one as a mini-meal right out of the skin. Couple

hundred calories, tons of heart-healthy fat, one-third to one-half of the day's fiber, plus it's filling and delicious. And next to zero effect on blood sugar, which is good news for your waistline.

24. BLUEBERRIES



Blueberries are one of the few foods that truly deserve the title "superfood." Loaded with nutrients and fiber, they contain compounds like anthocyanins which are both antioxidants and anti-inflammatories. Remember the ORAC values I mentioned earlier? Well, when tested by scientists, blueberries were the highest scoring ORAC fruit of all.

Besides being brain food and helping reduce the risk of cancer, blueberries provide the anti-aging compound resveratrol (the very same compound found in red wine).

Throw them on a salad, in a blender with a protein powder, or, best of all (and my personal favorite) eat them frozen with a dollop of yogurt. The yogurt sort of freezes upon making contact with the ice-cold blueberries, making the resulting blend the most delicious, healthy "dessert" you can imagine.

25. CANTALOUPE



Cantaloupe is a perfect example of the "high-volume" food category I spoke about earlier. That means that for a given amount of weight, they contain a relatively high amount of water, fiber, and air (and a relatively *low* number of calories). Why should it matter? Glad you asked.

Barbara Rolls, PhD, a nutrition researcher at Pennsylvania State University, has done a ton of research on appetite and appetite control, and in study after study, Rolls found that people basically ate about 3 pounds of food a day, *regardless* of whether the food was high calorie or low calorie.

After about 3 pounds worth of food, people just stopped eating. They'd eat nearly identical servings of food (by weight), whether it was watermelon (high volume—lots of nutrients for very little calories) or cheesecake (low volume—lots of calories for very little nutrition).

Most important, the subjects in her studies felt just as full after the low-calorie meals as they did after the calorie-rich meals—*provided* both meals contained the same volume of food.

Bottom line: Foods with high volume and low calories—that is, foods with a lot of water and fiber—are your best friend in a weight control program.

Cantaloupe is truly a high-volume food: It's about 90% water, yet it's also loaded with beta-carotene, vitamin A, potassium, and numerous other nutrients. Cantaloupe also makes the perfect lower-calorie dessert without the sugar overload.

26. CHERRIES



Loaded with nutrients, fiber, and the superstar anti-inflammatory quercetin, cherries are also high in ellagic acid, a naturally occurring phenolic known to be both anti-carcinogenic and anti-mutagenic.

Then there's anthocyanins, the pigments that give cherries their bright red color and are also believed to be the main reasons cherries are so effective against gout. As an added bonus, these same anthocyanins may significantly reduce your risk for colon cancer, the third leading cancer in America.

You can get the health benefits of cherries by eating the tart ones whole, or by juicing them. I buy organic frozen red cherries and put them in my freezer. When I'm ready to eat them, I put them—direct from the freezer—into a little bowl with some raw milk or full-fat yogurt, which promptly semi-freezes on the cherries, forming a kind of "ice milk."

Stir it up, sprinkle with almonds and coconut and the resulting mixture is like Cherry Garcia ice cream, only better and with a zillion times more health benefits. It's absolutely delicious, and it's my secret weapon against both inflammation and The Attack of the Ice Cream Craving.

27. COCONUT



Lets be clear: Coconut and coconut oil are superfoods. And yes, I know, it's full of saturated fat. So what? Coconut—and coconut oil—is one of the most healthy, amazing things you can ingest.

The saturated fats in coconut are mainly medium chain triglycerides, also known as MCTs. The physiology and biochemistry of medium-chain triglycerides are rather unique. For one thing, they are very easy to metabolize. For another, the body likes to burn them for energy rather than store them as fat around your hips. That's one reason bodybuilders often supplement with MCT oil when they need more calories and don't want to put on body fat.

Third—and most important—they're mainly composed of a particular fatty acid called lauric acid, which is both antiviral and anti-microbal. Fifty percent of the fat in coconut, in fact, is lauric acid. In the human body, lauric acid is formed into monolaurin, which is basically a bug killer: It's antiviral and antibacterial.

MCTs are popular these days for weight control, as evidenced by those folks who put butter and MCT oil in their coffee. Whether it really works is controversial, but it definitely can't hurt.

When you use coconut or coconut oil, you'll be getting those fat-burning MCTs and you'll be giving your immune system a nice little goose.

28. CRANBERRIES

Cranberries are low in calories (44 per cup), low in sugar, and high in fiber and nutrients. It's the prefect nutritional trifecta. Besides having a traditional place at the Thanksgiving table, cranberries contain anti-bacterial properties that can help fight a urinary tract infection (UTI).



You can get raw, whole berries in the frozen section of the grocers. I find them a terrific addition to smoothies. If the tart taste is too much for you, sweeten with some xylitol, a healthy natural sweetener that's actually a sugar alcohol—it has minimal effect on blood sugar but tastes just like sugar.

29. GRAPEFRUIT



Remember that silly grapefruit diet back in the 80s? Well, it may not have been so silly after all. In spring 2006, a study from the division of endocrinology of the department of nutrition and metabolic research at the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, California, was published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*, and guess what? The grapefruit legend now actually has some science to back it up![2]

The researchers wanted to study the effect of grapefruit on weight and on insulin resistance, a central feature of metabolic syndrome and, often, of diabetes and obesity as well.

They took 91 obese patients and divided them into four groups. Group one got grapefruit capsules before meals, group two got grapefruit juice, group three got half a grapefruit, and group four got a placebo (nothing).

The placebo group lost about ⅓ of a pound, the grapefruit capsule group lost 1.1 pounds, the grapefruit juice group lost 1.3 pounds, and the real grapefruit folks lost 1.5 pounds.

Overall, only the fresh grapefruit group reached "statistical significance," but among those with metabolic syndrome, all three grapefruit groups lost significantly more weight. Insulin resistance was improved in everyone. The authors admitted that the mechanism isn't understood, but that it would be prudent to include fresh grapefruit in a weight loss diet. No kidding!

Grapefruit is a good low-calorie source of potassium and vitamin C. It even has a drop of calcium and magnesium, 20 mg of phytosterols, and a gram or two of fiber. The red and pink varieties also have vitamin A, beta-carotene, and the cancer-fighting antioxidant lycopene.

30. RASPBERRIES



Raspberries deserve a place of honor on the healthy foods list if for no other reason than the fact that they're a high-fiber powerhouse. For a measly 64 calories a cup, they provide—get this—8 g of dietary fiber, making them calorie for calorie one of the most high-fiber foods on the planet. You'd have to eat more than 100 calories' worth of black beans to get the same amount of fiber.

But the benefits of raspberries hardly stop with the fiber. Raspberries have the aforementioned ellagic acid, anti-inflammatory anthocyanins, plus calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, vitamin C, and bone-building vitamin K. And, if you're watching your carbs, only about 7 g of "net" carbs (the kind that count) per cup.

Raspberries are fragile. They'll turn to pulp if you hold them in your hand too long. So if you buy them fresh, handle carefully and eat soon. You can also get them frozen, and they're great in shakes.

31. STRAWBERRIES



An all-around favorite fruit that comes loaded with nutrients, fiber, and the aforementioned anthocyanins, ellagic acid, and other anti-inflammatory compounds. Strawberries can improve memory and protect against cancer.

A cup of strawberries has only about 50 calories and delivers about 3 g of fiber. They also have calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium, plus a very nice dose of vitamin C (about 85 mg).

Strawberries make the perfect dessert, either alone, in unsweetened whipping cream, or as a strawberry "shake" blended with protein powder.

32. ALMONDS AND ALMOND BUTTER



Let's get the "almonds are fattening" thing out of the way right from the beginning. Epidemiologic studies such as the Nurses' Health Study, the Adventist Health Study, and the Physicians' Follow-up Study have all shown clearly that those who eat the most nuts also tend to have the lowest body mass indexes (a measure of overweight).

Sure, almonds have fat and calories, and you can't eat two tons of them at a time and expect to lose fat, but there is a massive amount of research showing that fat (and protein) are highly satiating, and that almonds eaten in moderation can actually *help* with weight loss.

One study compared two groups of dieters eating the same number of calories; one group ate 520 of their calories from almonds and lost more weight. How's that for a fat-loss food?

Preliminary research is indicating that almond cell walls may partially limit the amount of dietary fat available for digestion or absorption, so it's possible that a small portion of the calories from almonds are not fully absorbed.

In any case, research is quite clear that replacing a given amount of calories in the diet with an equal number of calories from almonds does *not* equal weight gain. Far from it.

Almonds are also a nutrient powerhouse, loaded with protein, healthy fat, important nutrients like magnesium and vitamin D, and fiber. Raw almonds make a great snack (especially on the go), and I like to smear natural almond butter on apple or celery slices.

Either way, you can't go wrong. Just don't overdo almonds or almond butter, since they're very easy to overeat.

33. MACADAMIA NUTS



Very high in healthy monounsaturated fat, macadamia nuts contain calcium, phosphorus, heart-healthy potassium, the anti-cancer mineral selenium, plus a couple of grams of fiber per ounce. And let's not forget magnesium, which helps to lower both blood sugar and blood pressure, and is associated with lower insulin resistance to boot.

That's a fat-burning whallop if there ever was one!

And macadamia nuts contain phytosterols, including beta-sitosterol, which has anti-inflammatory activity.

Macadamia nuts are very high in calories—about 204 per ounce—so keep them in check. But a small portion as a snack or mini-meal can take the edge off your appetite and cravings. Interestingly, macadamia nuts were one of Dr. Robert Atkins personal favorite snacks.

34. PECANS



Pecans deserve their reputation as a health food largely because they provide a generous helping of monounsaturated fat—the same stuff found in olive oil. Pecans are also loaded with nutrients like potassium, vitamin E, phytosterols, and the anti-inflammatory beta-sitosterol. And one portion of pecans has almost 3 g of fiber.

Like other nuts here, pecans are high in calories, so portion-control them if a handful becomes the whole bag.

35. PUMPKIN SEEDS



Pumpkin seeds are a rich source of minerals, especially magnesium, potassium, manganese, and phosphorus. Interestingly, according to the USDA food database, the roasted kind have far more protein. Roasted pumpkin seeds also have way more magnesium, phosphorus, and potassium, as well as more zinc, fiber, and cancer-fighting selenium.

You can roast your own pumpkin seeds really easily and combine them with great oils and spices to multiply their health benefits even further. Try melting some organic butter—or macadamia nut or olive oil—then tossing in the pumpkin seeds and spreading them on a single layer on a baking sheet. That's a true fat-burning snack if there ever was one!

36. WALNUTS



Besides nutrients, antioxidants, and fiber, walnuts contain more omega-3 fat than any other nut. The omega-3 found in nuts like walnuts is the plant-based omega-3 known as alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). While not as well known as the two omega-3s found in fish and fish oil, it's still a powerful anti-inflammatory.

In addition to the other remarkable things omega-3s do for you—like help lower triglycerides and reduce plaque formation—they also support brain function on a number of levels including improved mood and feeling.

Walnuts may also be a great tool for weight management. According to experts at Loma Linda University, eating a few walnuts (say four to six halves) before meals decreases levels of hunger and may cause people to eat less at meals.

"Walnuts help alleviate hunger and are naturally nutrient dense, meaning you consume many essential nutrients for a relatively small percentage of daily calories," said Joan Sabate, MD, MPH, DrPH, chair of the University's Department of Nutrition.

Just don't add walnuts to an already high-calorie diet and expect to lose weight. As long as you replace some calories from your regular diet with an approximately equal number of calories from walnuts, you'll do fine—the nuts may even work as a natural appetite controller in addition to providing you with all those nutrients.

37. WILD ALASKAN SALMON



By now you've heard plenty about the anti-inflammatory (and other) benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, so no need to recount them here. Trust me, their one of the most important fats you can eat.

Salmon is not only a superb source of the two most famous omega-3s—EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid)—but it's also a great source of high-quality protein.

One 3-ounce serving of wild salmon gives you more than 18 g of first-rate protein. Protein is the perfect fat-burning food—it stimulates metabolism and helps promote satiety (fullness) meaning you're less likely to crave a Krispy Kreme mid-afternoon.

It also provides 360 mg of potassium and almost half of the recommended daily value of the important cancer-fighting trace mineral selenium. And salmon also contains more than half of the recommended daily value for vitamin B12 and 30 percent of the recommended daily value for niacin.

One thing though: there's a huge difference between farm-raised and wild-caught salmon. Besides the atrocious state of farm-raised salmon—which has the same problems as factory farmed meat. Wild-caught is also higher in omega-3s. When it comes to salmon, wild is the only way to go.

38. DARK CHOCOLATE



Chocolate for weight loss? Yup—at least if it's dark. Dark chocolate is loaded with minerals, flavonoids, and even a little bit of fiber. And studies show it is associated with better cardiovascular outcomes and even with longer lives.

But here's the thing: The wholesale endorsement of chocolate comes with a very big qualification. I'm not—repeat *not*—talking about commercial chocolate bars. And I'm *definitely* not talking about those chewy caramel-marshmallow-nut-covered candy bars you see in the grocery store. That's *not* the stuff that has the health benefits.

The health benefits shown in a substantial amount of chocolate research come from the flavanols and antioxidants, and those are only found in real cocoa—in fact, those are the compounds that make cocoa kind of bitter.

So if you want the benefits of these cocoa flavanols in your diet, you've got to get the real deal chocolate—high-cocoa-content dark chocolate. How do you know it's there? Look on the label. The best of these bars say things like "60 percent cocoa". 70 percent or higher is even better—much higher than that starts to taste kind of bitter.

Milk chocolate only has about 10 precent cocoa and very little flavanols, while white chocolate has zilch. Plus, commercial chocolate candy bars are loaded with extra sugar, fat, waxes, and chemicals that have no place in your diet. And the more chocolate is processed, the more the beneficial flavonoids go bye-bye.

The fat in chocolate is from cocoa butter, and actually contains three different kinds of fatty acids. One of them is oleic acid, which is the same kind found in olive oil—a very heart-healthy fat. The second is stearic acid, which has a neutral effect on the body. The third kind, palmitic acid, is probably not the best kind of fat to be eating large amounts of, but it really only accounts for a third of the fat in chocolate, and if you keep your portions small, you don't need to worry about it at all.

39. EGGS



Eggs are simply one of the best protein sources on the planet. Period. And we already know that protein stimulates metabolism and helps keep you full, both of which ultimately help you with burning fat.

Eggs are rich in lutein and zeaxanthin, choline and phosphatidylcholine, and trace amounts of more than fifteen vitamins and minerals. One jumbo egg contains 18 percent of the recommended daily value for riboflavin (vitamin B2), 14 percent of the recommended daily value for vitamin B12, and 29 percent of the recommended daily value for the important cancer-fighting trace mineral selenium.

Not only that, eggs make you look good! Their high sulfur content promotes healthy hair and nails.

And please, for goodness sake, eat the yolk! Whole eggs contain almost a perfect balance of all three fats (saturated, monounsaturated, and polysaturated). Studies show higher-protein breakfasts help people lose fat better than high-carbohydrate foods. You can try this yourself. Have cereal with skim milk one morning and eggs (maybe a veggie omelet) the next. You'll most likely find yourself not crashing mid-morning with the eggs.

But quality matters a lot—so go for the good stuff. Barnyard eggs from free-range chickens (you'll find these at your farmers market) provide more vitamin D and other nutrients; second best are organic free-range grocery store eggs.

39. BUTTER/GHEE



Butter provides a good source of fat-soluble vitamins, but for our purposes I want to focus on something else in butter—a particular fatty acid that can actually help increase fat burning, at least if the butter comes from grass-fed animals. That fatty acid is called CLA (conjugated linolenic acid), a particularly healthy fat that has demonstrated anticancer properties.

Research has also shown CLA to have a lot of promise in fighting fat, particularly abdominal fat, which is the most metabolically active (and dangerous) fat on the body.

The promise of CLA is so great that it has been the subject of an entire research conference—Perspectives on Conjugated Linolenic Research, Current Status and Future Directions—which is posted on the National Institutes of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements website.

Butter, milk, and meat from grain-fed (factory farmed) animals contain virtually no CLA, while food from grass-fed animals is a rich source of this health-promoting fatty acid. Bottom line: Always look for grass-fed butter. It's more expensive and harder to find, but entirely worth the effort and cost.

Ghee is clarified butter, which means it's basically butter with the milk solids removed. Ghee has a long and respected history as a medicinal and healing food in Indian (Ayurvedic) medicine, a tradition that dates back nearly 5,000 years. Even people incredibly sensitive to dairy often do fine with ghee.

40. GRASS-FED BEEF

Like wild salmon and butter, quality matters with beef, maybe more than almost any other food. Factory farmed meat is—there's no other way to say it—a toxic waste dump.



Remember, the natural diet of cattle is grass, not grain. Grain makes cows sick and acidic, which is one reason they're fed massive amounts of antibiotics. (The other reason is to fatten them up.) And most if not all of the beef that comes to us via traditional routes is grain-fed, feedlot farmed and horrendous.

When a ruminant like a cow is taken off its natural diet of pasture and fattened on grain, everyone suffers (from the cow to the person eating it). The meat of grain-fed factory farmed cows is high in inflammatory omega-6s and virtually lacking any omega-3s. And the more inflammation you have, the less likely you have healthy mitochondria and a smooth, fat-burning metabolism.

Meanwhile, cattle that are primarily raised on grass have fat that's high in omega-3s and only moderate in omega-6, a far better balance of inflammatory and anti-inflammatory fats. Grass-fed beef is also higher in the aforementioned CLA, plus it's naturally rich in protein and zinc.

Served with loads of spinach and other leafy or cruciferous greens, grass-fed beef makes one of the healthiest fat-loss meals on the planet.

41. TUNA



After shrimp, canned tuna is the second most popular seafood product in the United States. If other healthy foods were as popular as tuna, we'd be in good shape! All of the good stuff you've heard about seafood applies to tuna.

Although it doesn't have as much omega-3 fat as salmon does, it's still considered a fatty fish, and does provide some healthy omega-3s. A single can of light tuna canned in water provides an astonishing 42 g of high-quality protein, for under 200 calories.

That same can has more than 100 percent of the recommended daily value for niacin, 29 percent of the recommended daily value for vitamin B6, and 82 percent of the recommended daily value for vitamin B12. And tuna is a superb source of the vitally important cancer-protective trace mineral selenium.

Tuna steak is higher in omega-3s but unfortunately can be higher in mercury. (Interesting fun fact: Selenium actually helps chelate (bind) to the mercury, making it a little less available to you—a good thing!) Whichever variety you choose, quality matters: I highly recommend purchasing from a reputable company like Vital Choice.

42. SARDINES



Sardines are a health food in a can. They come loaded with anti-inflammatory omega-3s plus calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, and manganese, not to mention a full complement of B vitamins. And they're notable for being a superb non-meat source of vitamin B12: One little can provides a whopping 150 percent of the recommended daily value! Sardines are also a good source of selenium.

Because sardines are really low on the marine food chain, toxins like mercury don't accumulate in them. Get sardines packed in their own oil. They're harder to find, but worth it. And for goodness sake, don't be afraid of the fat—it's good stuff! If you can't find sardines in sardine oil, then olive oil is a perfectly fine substitute.

Do not—repeat, do *not*—buy the kind that's packed in vegetable oil, which simply soaks them with highly inflammatory omega-6 fats from a heavily processed oil that does nothing good for you.

43. GREEN TEA



Whereas black tea is fully fermented, green tea is not fermented at all, but pan-fried and dried. Now let's be clear: All teas provide health benefits—and that includes black, oolong, white, green, yerbe matte and rooibo— but green tea ranks highest for fat burning.

That's because green tea contains a very powerful group of polyphenols called catechins. One of these catechins in particular—epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG)—is believed to be responsible for the anticancer effects of green tea. We're not sure whether the EGCG alone or combined with caffeine provides thermogenic (fat-burning) effects, but either way it seems to do so.

Green tea also contains an amino acid called L-theanine that promotes calm, clear focus and is probably the reason green tea drinkers don't get the jitters.

Sipping green tea all day by itself is not going to magically help you lose weight, but combined with the foods on this list, it might give your body that extra nudge to burn fat. I recommend 3 cups a day.

44. WATER



Think about it: Your body is 83 percent water. Your muscles are 75 percent water. Your brain, for goodness' sake, is 74 percent water, and your bones are 22 percent water. You need water for *every single metabolic process* in the body and that certainly includes fat-burning.

Water is necessary to digest and absorb nutrients and vitamins. It carries away metabolic waste. It helps "flush" fat and toxins through the liver and kidneys.

My water recommendation for weight loss (and also for general health) is simple: Divide your weight in two and drink that number of ounces a day. There's no firm science to back that up, but I've been using it for years, and as a basic guideline, it works quite well.

45. MACKEREL



Mackerel has long been one of the most underappreciated fish. Mackerel live in both the Atlantic and the Pacific, but the Atlantic mackerel (also known as Boston mackerel) is preferable and that's the one I recommend.

A relative of the tuna, the Atlantic mackerel is found in the Atlantic's cold waters, where it swims in large schools and can live up to an astonishing seventeen years. Compared to other fish, mackerel is low in environmental toxins.

Three ounces of mackerel has roughly 20 g of protein and plenty of good healthy fat, though there are some slight differences between the Atlantic and Pacific varieties. Three ounces of Pacific mackerel has 6 g of monounsaturated fat and about 1½ g of omega-3, while 3 ounces of Atlantic mackerel contains 3 g of monounsaturated and a little more than 1 g of omega-3.

Both varieties are very good sources of the cancer-fighting trace mineral selenium, providing more than 50 percent of the recommended daily value. And while Pacific mackerel has a respectable amount of vitamin B12 (60 percent of the recommended daily value), the Atlantic variety is a B12 heavyweight, providing more than five times that amount.

46. COFFEE



Coffee falls into the "dose-dependent" category like chocolate: More is *not* always better.

Coffee increases antioxidants in the blood, what scientists call "plasma antioxidant capacity." In one study, researchers in Italy gave a standard amount (200 ml) of brewed coffee to ten healthy, nonsmoking, moderate coffee drinkers and found that it produced a 5.5 percent increase in plasma antioxidant capacity that was mostly maintained after 2 hours.

Even more impressive, a study in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* in 2001 found that coffee has significantly more total antioxidant activity than either cocoa, green tea, black tea, or herbal tea. Another study in the *Journal of Nutrition* in 2004 looked at the dietary records of 2,672 Norwegian adults and concluded—much to the surprise of the researchers themselves—that coffee was the single greatest contributor to their total antioxidant intake.

It could be the caffeine too, but coffee also seems to provide a thermogenic (fat-burning) effect for some people. The slight increase in blood sugar from caffeinated coffee is a boon for athletes, however, who need that blood sugar to fuel their muscles. That's one reason why a small amount of coffee before an event is considered a performance enhancer.

47. GARLIC



Garlic is the most-studied herb in the world with vast anti-inflammatory and antioxidant power. New research shows that garlic might hold some promise for weight control.

In this research, rats were fed a high-fructose diet designed to make them fat and hypertensive. It worked. Fat and hypertensive they were, with high triglycerides to boot. Then, one of the groups was given allicin (the active ingredient in garlic), while the bad diet continued with no supplementation

The allicin group lowered its blood pressure, insulin, and triglycerides. What's more, even though they were consuming the same amount of food, the rats given allicin stopped gaining weight. Even more impressive, a third group, given allicin from the beginning of the study, gained very little weight despite eating the exact same bad diet. Even though it's a rat study, that's pretty impressive, don't you think? (And no, the take-away message *isn't* that you should add garlic to your fast-food diet!)

Meanwhile, another recent study found that diabetic rats fed garlic oil had increased insulin sensitivity. Garlic may well turn out to be a useful addition to the weight control toolbox.

Allicin, the active ingredient in garlic, starts to degrade after it's produced, so the fresher it is when you use it, the better. Microwaving appears to destroy it completely—sorry. Garlic experts advise crushing a little raw garlic and combining it with the cooked food shortly before serving. Eating it raw isn't recommended because it can be irritating to the stomach.

48. TURMERIC



If there were ever a contest for a spice that deserved a whole book written about it, turmeric would be the clear winner. It's pretty much my favorite spice, not only for the almost encyclopedic list of health benefits but also for the incredible taste.

A member of the ginger family whose active ingredient is curcumin, turmeric provides serious anti-inflammatory and antioxidant power, making it a great helpmate for your fat-burning mitochondria.

Turmeric is also one of the easiest spices to use. It has a really pleasing taste and a beautiful color, and it tastes good on almost any food you can think of, from eggs to sautéed spinach.

49. CINNAMON



Though cinnamon has a formidable reputation as a health-giving compound, the buzz about it has to do with its uncanny ability to moderate blood sugar. And, in these days with a growing epidemic of obesity and diabetes, that sort of stuff gets people's attention.

A team of scientists at the USDA led by research scientist (and natural supplements expert) C. Leigh Broadhurst, PhD, identified new phytochemicals in cinnamon called chalcone polymers that increase glucose metabolism in the cells twentyfold or more.

The active ingredient in cinnamon acts as an "insulin mimic" to increase glucose uptake into your cells, helping modulate blood sugar levels, which, in turn, has a positive effect on insulin (the fat-storing/fat-making hormone).

Cinnamon isn't a miracle cure for weight loss, but like many other things here—like green tea, for example—it can give your body that extra nudge in the right direction.

50. PRUNES



The first thing most people think of when they think of prunes is shuffleboard courts and retirees in Florida, sipping prune juice for "regularity". But don't be so quick to dismiss this delicious fruit. It's one of the best—and easiest—ways to get soluble fiber into your diet.

And don't underestimate the whole idea of "regularity". Though it's hardly sexy, regular healthy bowel movements are a very good indication of good digestion, and since the gut is ground zero for both the immune system and nutrient absorption, they're more important for ultimate well-being (and a healthy metabolism) than you might think.

Prunes are high in fiber, which helps reduce the risk of colorectal cancer, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, diabetes, and diverticular disease. And high-fiber diets are usually much more successful for weight loss than low-fiber diets.

In addition, prunes are a good source of vitamins A and C, as well as potassium and iron. They contain large amounts of phenolics, the general name for a huge and diverse group of plant compounds with numerous health benefits. The phenolics in prunes have high antioxidant activity, and that helps protect your cell membranes and your energy-producing mitochondria.

The two types of phytonutrients (nutrients from plants) found in plums and prunes, neochlorogenic acid and chlorogenic acid, are effective antioxidants, particularly effective against a very destructive free radical called the superoxide anion radical, which can really wreck havoc on the cells in your body. And when your cells and their membranes are injured, the fat-burning messages of your hormones don't get through.

CONCLUSION

So there you have it. Let me reiterate that just because a food didn't make this list does not mean it should be banned from your kitchen. Use this list as a starting point, not as the final word on what to eat forever. Our goal here is to get you started with a new way of thinking about food.

The key word in that sentence is "started".

This is not the finish line, nor was it meant to be.

What it *can* be—what I *hope* it will be—is the beginning of a new life.

Enjoy the journey.

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