



“That’s too good
to be true!”

No, really! These foods are good – and good for you.

Fabulous Hair FOR THE Holidays



by Christa Gala

Did you do the happy dance when you heard dark chocolate and red wine were good for you? Go science!

Gone are the days of bashing eggs and butter; recent research is revealing foods that taste good are actually good for you "from blueberries to cinnamon. But beware of tall tales too; Laura Dalton, owner of GNC at North Hills, separates fact from fiction and gives us the skinny on what you need to know to make the right choices.

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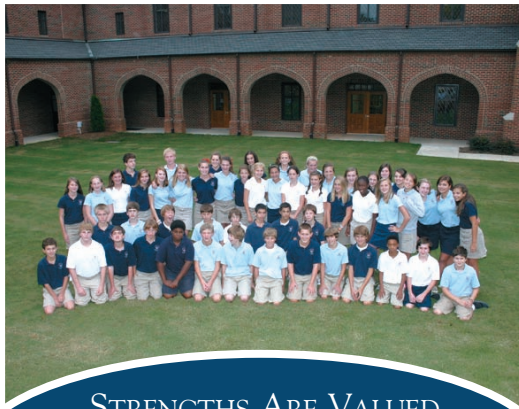
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- **DARK CHOCOLATE:** Sweet justice. Dark chocolate has plant phenols, namely cocoa, that have been proven in numerous studies to lower blood pressure. But don't drink milk with your dark chocolate or expect the same benefits from milk chocolate; the milk interferes with the absorption of the phenols. Also, don't overdo calorie-wise. Three dark-chocolate Hershey kisses have just under 70 calories.

- **ACAI (A-SIGH-EE) BERRY:** "It's like a super blueberry," says Dalton. "Because it has a high antioxidant value, it has a lot of value to your body." What are antioxidants? Simply put, antioxidants are nutrients in our food that protect our cells from damage, which can lead to heart disease, cancer, diabetes and all sorts of bad things. "Antioxidant" is actually the umbrella term under which many nutrients fall, like lycopene, beta-carotene and polyphenols. Many fruits and vegetables are high in antioxidants, but the acai berry has a pretty impressive score. Get it in a capsule, shot, powder or pre-made drink.

- **RED WINE:** The benefits here are two-fold: resveratrol and, believe it or not, alcohol. "Resveratrol has gotten a lot of hype and is very promising in terms of what it can do inside your body with aging," says Dalton. "Some people have come in and said it's really helped with their joints and that they have a lot more energy." Resveratrol has been shown in studies to protect against artery damage and increase good cholesterol. The Mayo Clinic reports the alcohol is heart-healthy too. There's no conclusive evidence, however, that the alcohol in red wine is any better than that in wine, beer or liquor. So imbibe, but in moderation; otherwise you'll be doing more harm than good. But you knew that.

“Imbibe, but in moderation; otherwise you'll be doing more harm than good.”

- **CINNAMON:** Helps stabilize blood sugar. "Some studies are showing that taking a half-teaspoon or teaspoon after meals can help keep your blood sugar stable," says Dalton. Try a little in your coffee or on top of oatmeal.

- **GREEN TEA:** Sip away. Polyphenols (also under the antioxidant umbrella) in green tea have been shown to prevent the oxidative stress that causes the cell damage that leads to Alzheimer's Disease, as well as breast cancer. Green tea is the most popular tea in China and Japan, which has among the lowest breast cancer rates in the world.

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“Don’t go

• **TURMERIC:** Indian food anyone? If you have psoriasis, Crohn’s Disease, heartburn, or reflux, consider foods with turmeric. “Turmeric is an herb that’s a spice,” says Dalton. “There’s an active ingredient in turmeric called curcumin and the curcuminoids are what help inflammation.” You can also try mustard.

• **BIGGEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK: FISH OIL** “Fish oil is wonderful,” says Dalton. “It’s great for inflammation and great for things having to do with the brain and the eyes.” The omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil (and in mackerel, salmon, tuna and halibut) have been proven time and time again to reduce pain and inflammation, improve heart health, decrease depression, reduce cancer risk and improve memory, recall, focus and reasoning.

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crazy. Just because something is good for you doesn't mean you should binge on it.”

Myth busters

Don't believe everything you hear. Dalton says some product claims are just hype. There are two she's always trying to shed more light on with customers.

• **DIET PILLS:** "People see the commercials and think, "I'm going to take this pill and I'm not going to eat and I'll lose a bunch of weight and I don't have to exercise," says Dalton. Don't fall for it. "It always comes down to the fact that these things can help a little. They can suppress your appetite or give you natural energy. But if you don't eat for six hours, I don't care what you take; you're going to be hungry and your body needs food." The best thing you can do? Eat breakfast. "If you skip breakfast your metabolism is going to

slow down." Don't forget the exercise. Weight loss is simple math. Calories "out" should exceed calories "in."

• **COLON CLEANSING:** Likely not necessary. "If you're eating well and you're not eating tons of processed foods and you're not on a lot of prescription medicines, your body is probably doing a pretty good job of it already," says Dalton.

Remember

Getting any of these nutrients in your diet is a great way to go, but a lot of folks prefer taking a capsule form, as it gives a more significant amount and the dose is the same every day. Dalton cautions people to check with their doctors before adding any supplements via

pill form as some can interact with prescription medications or thin the blood, making surgery dangerous.

And although it should go without saying, don't go crazy. Just because something is good for you doesn't mean you should binge on it. "That's some of the problem with all of us is we just start loading ourselves up on one thing and sometimes it can deplete certain minerals," says Dalton.

Finally, if you choose to go the supplement route, know where the products are coming from. The Internet is dicey at best and you may not be getting what you think you're getting. Find a place you trust with reputable people to answer your questions.

Then, eat, drink and be merry – and healthy! ♦

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