

Include Dry Fruits in your Menu

Dried fruits provide immediate nutrition and energy. Those fruits, such as apricots, nectarines and peaches, also provide you with a rich source of beta-carotene. This antioxidant is helpful in safeguarding your vision as well as providing protection from the harmful effects of free radicals. Typically, dried fruits supply more nutritional value as the vitamins and mineral content is intensified when the fruit is dehydrated. Low in fat and high in carbs and vitamins, all dried fruits should be included in your daily menu planning.

Economical and Healthful Supplementation

For example, you may want to add fruits, such as apricots or peaches, to whole grain cereals. Or, include dried nectarines in salsas or fruit salads. Snack on dried black sweet/semi-sweet plums with a slice of cheese. The fruits are also well-received in wheat pancake mixes and are a flavorful and nutritional complement. You may also want to include the dried fruits with meats such as braised pork. By using these kinds of fruits in your menu planning, you can make healthful contributions more economically.

Dried Fruits Stay “Fresh” Longer

That's because dried fruits stay on the shelf longer than fresh fruits. Therefore, you always have a ready supply of fruit to add to sauces, salads and dinner entrees. They are simply the ideal way to stretch your food budget and add to your family's health and nutrition.

Sun-dried Tomatoes

One of the best dried fruits to include in meal planning are sun-dried tomatoes. This fruit is a rich source of lycopene, which is a carotenoid that also provides antioxidant properties. The substance is a known preventative of cancers of the colon, stomach and bladder as well. Therefore, sun-dried tomatoes are not only an affordable dried fruit to incorporate into your diet, they are also an ultra-healthy fruit to choose as well. Use the fruit in sauces or include it in soups, sprinkle it on pasta salads or on top of pizza. The fruit is also delicious when added to sandwiches or used for a topping for scrambled eggs. Eat it with parmesan or mozzarella cheese.

Eat Half the Portion

With respect to calories, ½ cup of dried fruit equates to a cup of fresh fruit, so merely eat half a portion to maintain your weight. That's why dried fruit is a good food to add to dishes or salads. You don't have to eat a lot of it but you still fulfill your nutritional requirements nonetheless. Don't forget to include natural preserves in your meals as well. Choose from such favorites as apricot, black cherry, pumpkin, apple, grape, plum or quince.

Some Flavorful Suggestions

Basically, though, for optimum nutrition, dried fruits are the ideal way to meet your requirement of four to nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day. For inclusion in meals, some of the best dried fruits include:

- **Black sour plums (use in sauces)**
- **Black sweet or semi-sweet plums (include, as mentioned, in pancakes or with meats, such as pork)**
- **Peaches (use them in trail mix or incorporate them into marinades for poultry dishes)**
- **Nectarines (use them in fruit salads for a bit of interest and texture)**

- **Cherries (add them to fruit compotes, fresh fruit or green salads).**

A Premium Nutritional Choice

Dried fruits are an economical and tasty choice for menu planning. Make use them in your diet for optimum health and nutrition.

*Fruitrade supplies dried fruits, such as black, yellow and morelo cherries, which can be paired with brie cheese, camembert cheese and blue cheese, respectively.