

Super foods

More than one person in three in the UK will be diagnosed with a cancer at some point in their lives. The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) says that eating healthily, maintaining a healthy weight and staying active should reduce the risk of cancer by 30-40 per cent. After not smoking, eating more vegetables and fruits is the second most effective way to reduce your risk of cancer. Super foods stand out above other foods. Super foods earn their title because they contain health-enhancing qualities and are all naturally rich in a range of phytonutrients (natural plant ingredients) which act as antioxidants that have been shown as beneficial to our health and longevity.

The World Cancer Research Fund claims that there are 20 super foods. Each of these foods has been chosen because it is believed to help the immune system, thereby keeping it strong and resistant to serious illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. They are: Red and orange peppers; Kiwi Fruit, Brazil Nuts, Tomatoes, Broccoli, Onions, Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Mangoes, Strawberries, Watercress, Sunflower Seeds, Salmon, Brussels sprouts, Virgin Olive Oil, Cabbage, Wholegrain bread, Garlic, Oranges and Spinach.

Let's look at 5 of these super foods and how to incorporate them in a week's menu plan.

Red and Orange Peppers

Peppers are an excellent source of Vitamin C. Half of one pepper provides all the Vitamin C we need in one day. Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant.

For a different lunch box idea roast red and orange peppers and fill a tortilla wrap with the roasted peppers, houmous and baby spinach leaves.

Brazil Nuts

Brazil nuts are rich in the mineral selenium, another antioxidant. Most of us generally have a low selenium intake. So a brazil nut snack is ideal to meet selenium requirements.

Instead of reaching for a packet of crisps as a snack, keep some brazil nuts handy and have a handful as a healthy snack.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are red because they contain the pigment lycopene, which is also an antioxidant. Tomatoes also contain Vitamins C, E, flavonoids and potassium that may help to regulate blood pressure.

It is so easy to incorporate tomatoes into the diet regularly. Add slices of tomatoes to your pizza or simply make your tomato sauce as a base for pasta dishes.

Onions

Who would have thought onions are super foods? Yes, they are. Onions specifically contain allium compounds that have been linked to a reduced risk of some cancers. Red onions contain a chemical called quercetin, which is a strong antioxidant.

Instead of buying chutney, make your own red onion marmalade/chutney, which is as easy as pie. Peel at least 7-8 red onions and let them soften in an olive based spread on a low heat. Once soft, add a couple of tablespoons of brown sugar and balsamic vinegar. Keep on a low heat until the mixture looks sticky and thicker.

Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are orange in colour because they contain carotenoids alpha and beta-carotene. These carotenoids are antioxidants and together with Vitamin E make sweet potatoes a super super food. The cooking process helps the body to absorb more of the carotenoids.

Sweet potatoes are versatile and can be eaten boiled, mashed, roasted, in casseroles and in soups.