



Food Bites



December 2015



Fruit of the Month

Pears

Pears are a pome fruit relative of the apple. One of the earliest written histories or records comes from Homer's reference to them as "Gifts from the Gods." The first pears arrived in the United States by European settlers in the 1700s. Pears rank second to the apple as the most popular US fruit. They can be eaten and used in a lot of the same ways as the apple. One distinct feature of the pear besides the shape is the soft texture. This soft texture is the result of the starch converting to sugar after being picked from a tree to ripen.

Fresh Pears are a Healthy Choice! They have no cholesterol, sodium, or saturated fat. They offer a natural, quick source of energy, due largely to high amounts of two monosacharides: fructose and glucose, plus Levulose, the sweetest of known natural sugars, found to a greater extent in fresh pears than in any other fruit. A pear is a nutrient dense food, providing more nutrients per calorie, than calories per nutrient. Carbohydrates make up 98% of the energy provided by a pear, and carbohydrates are helpful in weight reduction diets because they contain half as many calories as fat.



Vegetable of the Month

Brussels Sprouts

The origin of the cultivar Brussels Sprouts is not exact, but the French coined the name in the 18th century. It was common to put a landmark on a food. Whether they actually were developed in Brussels in Belgium is not certain. There are records of Brussels Sprouts around where Brussels is as far back as the 13th century.

Brussels Sprouts are a member of the cabbage family, Brassica. Another name you hear is Cruciferous. There are hundreds of varieties in this family including mustard and horseradish. One interesting characteristic of Brussels Sprouts is the way they grow. Although they resemble the structure of a head of cabbage, the sprouts grow on and are produced in the leaf axils, starting at the base of the stem and working upward.

Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C. It also contains significant amounts of glutamine, an amino acid that has anti-inflammatory properties. Cabbage can also be included in dieting programs, as it is a low calorie food.



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Pear Facts

December is Pear Month, so today I want to celebrate with a fact sheet about pears!

Pears are members of the family rosaceae. There are many varieties of these tasty fruits, which are known for their sweet and honeyed flavor. Let's take a closer look at some of the most common types of pears...



Bartlett pears are some of the most common pears that you'll find for sale in the U.S. These large fruits have thin skins and a sweet flavor, along with a soft and juicy texture. They're great in baked goods and make up most of the canned and processed pear varieties that you'll find in the grocery store. When it comes to bartlett pears, you can get either green or red varieties.

Anjou pears also come in red or green versions. Another popular pear, these tasty specimens are generally squat and plump, with firm and juicy flesh. Their smooth skin is relatively thin, which makes them wonderful for eating raw.

Bosc pears are taller than most other varieties, with brown skin that is similar in color to cinnamon. Their firm and sweet inner flesh makes them great pears for eating out of hand. They also hold up quite well when poached.

Comice pears can be many colors, from deep red to pale green. One of the juiciest varieties of pears, comice pears are soft, tender, and creamy. A common holiday gift, comice pears pair well with a variety of cheeses and are also perfect to eat all on their own. Since they are so popular during the holidays, many people call them Christmas pears.



Forelle pears are some of the smallest types of common pears. They're oval, with yellow-green speckled skin that turns red as it ripens. The inner flesh is white and crisp, though it softens slightly as it gets riper.

Asian pears are very different than most other kinds of pears. With a round, apple-like shape and firm, pebbly flesh, these pears are downright crunchy. Use them when crispness really matters, like in salads or slaws.



Let's move on to their impact on health.

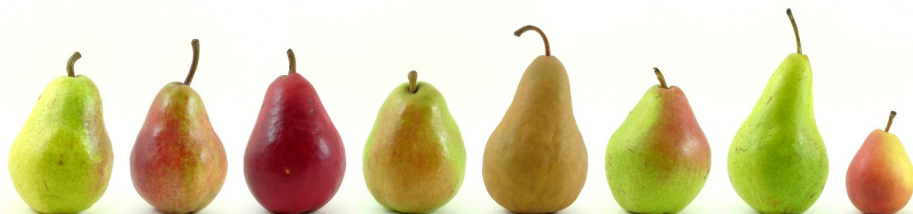
Pears are a good source of fiber. In fact, a medium pear contains 22% of the fiber you need in a day. This is great news for your health, since MyPlate asserts "Diets rich in foods containing fiber, such as some vegetables and fruits, may reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes." Plus, research indicates that fiber is key to healthy digestion, reducing constipation and diverticulosis.

A medium pear also has 12% of the daily value for vitamin C and 10% of the daily value of vitamin K. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that is key to good health. Aiding iron absorption, boosting the immune system, and blocking free radical damage are just a few of its many functions. Vitamin K is also important for good health, helping blood to clot effectively. It may also boost bone health in the elderly.

Now that you know about their many health benefits, let's move on to ways to incorporate pears into your eating habits.

First of all, did you know that pears actually ripen off the tree and from the inside out? Store pears at room temperature, moving them to the fridge only once they're ripe enough to eat. Pears brown quickly when sliced, but you can dip sliced pears in a mixture of water and lemon juice to prevent browning if you really want to prep them ahead of time. Be sure to rinse whole pears in cold running water before you slice or eat them.

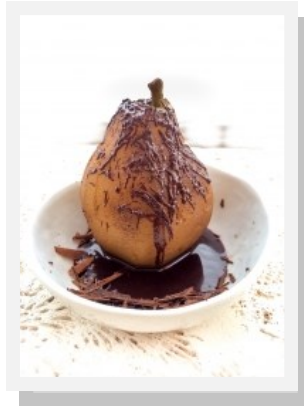
Most pears are perfect to eat as soon as they ripen. They don't need a lot of fuss or effort in order to be a fun and healthful snack. That said, pears also lend themselves well to cooking projects.



Chocolate Pears

Ingredients:

- 2 pears
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons cocoa
- 2 tablespoons Hershey's Chocolate Sauce
- 4 tsp shaved chocolate



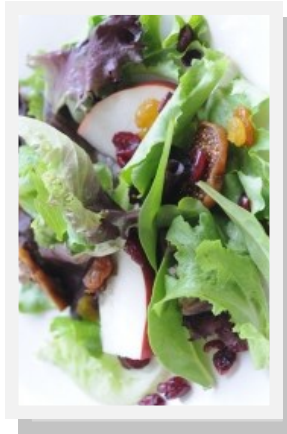
Directions:

1. Place water, sugar, and cocoa in a small pan. Peel pears and remove the core from the bottom of them. Place them in the sauce pan and top with foil. Simmer over low heat for 40 minutes.
2. Remove from poaching liquid. Set each pear in 1 tablespoon of chocolate sauce. Top each one with 2 teaspoons of shaved chocolate.

Holiday Spinach Salad

Ingredients:

- 8 cups ready-to-serve fresh spinach leaves
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries and/or sliced figs
- 1 cup sliced pears
- 1 lemon, juice
- 1/4 cup minced red onion
- 1/4 cup chopped pistachios (or almonds)
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Black pepper to taste



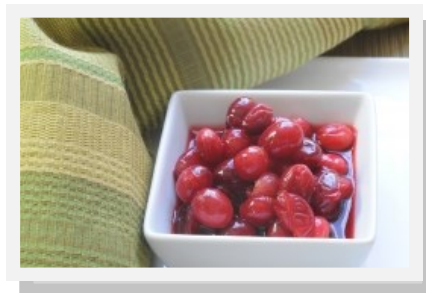
Directions:

1. Place spinach leaves in large decorative salad bowl. Sprinkle with cranberries.
2. Slice pears and coat with lemon juice and then place them in top of the spinach. Sprinkle with minced red onion. Cover and chill until service time.
3. Roast the pistachios in the oven or toaster oven until crunchy. Sprinkle them on top of the salad along with the vinegar, oil and pepper.
4. Toss and serve immediately.

Ingredients:

- 1 bag fresh cranberries
- 1 cup water
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup diced pear
- 1 pinch apple pie spice
- 1 orange, zest and juice

Cranberry Pear Relish



Directions:

1. Place all items in a medium-sized saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce to simmer and cook on low heat, covered, for 10 minutes.
2. Serve warm or chill for later use.

Holiday Healthful Drinks

Holiday Drinks Matter:

Perhaps the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute said it best. “**Many people don’t realize just how much sugar and calories we drink in a day.**” When the holidays roll around, the calories skyrocket and the portions get more generous.

The reason holiday drinks matter is **threefold**:

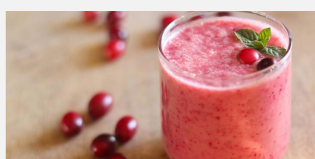
- One, drinks often contain a surprising number of calories. Studies indicate that **beverage calories do not help people feel full.**
- Two, **weight gain goes up around the holidays.** Every calorie counts when people want to maintain their weight.
- Three, holiday beverages tend to be very **high in sugar, fat, and calories.** And if they are high in alcohol, then people often lose track of what they are eating too.

Healthful Alternatives:

Instead of reaching for that big glass of eggnog, try these festive holiday alternatives...

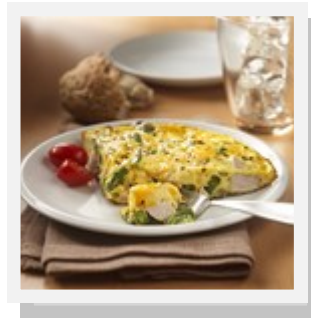
- **Flavored waters.** Pep up your water with slices of fresh fruit, some berries, or a few sprigs of mint or basil. This works well with sparkling water too!
- **Tea.** Warm up with tasty hot tea — just skip the sugar. You can add fruits or herbs to teas as well. Try black, herbal, and green teas to find a flavor profile that works for you.
- **Cocoa.** Make your cocoa with skim milk and nonfat cream. Garnish with cocoa powder, cinnamon, and/or nutmeg.

Fresh fruit smoothies. Combine ice and fresh fruit, then blend it up!



- ♦ 1 carton Egg Beaters
- ♦ 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- ♦ 1/4 tsp dried oregano
- ♦ Dash black pepper
- ♦ No-Stick Cooking Spray
- ♦ 1 cup leftover green bean casserole
- ♦ 1 cup chopped cooked turkey breast

Leftover Turkey Frittata



1. Combine Egg Beaters, cheese, oregano and pepper in small bowl; set aside.
2. Spray 10 inch nonstick saute pan with cooking spray; heat over medium-high heat. Add green beans; cook and stir 2 minutes or until hot. Add turkey; cook 1 minute more.
3. Pour Egg Beaters mixture over turkey and green beans; stir gently. Cover and reduce heat to medium-low; cook 15 minutes or until set.

- ♦ Mayonnaise
- ♦ Freshly baked sourdough bread slices
- ♦ Salt and Pepper to taste
- ♦ Sliced turkey
- ♦ Apple slices
- ♦ Thin red onion slices
- ♦ Spicy cranberry salsa
- ♦ Cooked bacon
- ♦ Crisp lettuce

Best Leftover Turkey Sandwich Ever



1. Spread mayonnaise on 1 slice of bread, and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
2. Layer turkey, apple slices, and red onion on bread.
3. Spoon on cranberry salsa.
4. Top with bacon and lettuce, and crown with another slice of bread.

- ♦ 3 cups shredded skinned cooked turkey
- ♦ 2 cups sour cream
- ♦ 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- ♦ 1 tsp salt
- ♦ 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- ♦ 12 corn tortillas
- ♦ 1 jar salsa

Turkey Enchiladas with Sour Cream



1. In a bowl, mix turkey, sour cream, cheese, and salt.
2. Heat oil in an 8-10 inch frying pan over low heat. Dip the tortillas, one at a time, in the hot oil just until limp, about 5 seconds.
3. Fill tortillas equally with turkey mixture, roll up, and arrange side by side, seam down, in a 9-13 inch baking dish. Pour salsa evenly over the top.
4. Bake in a 350 degree oven until heated through, about 20 minutes. If desired, sprinkle more cheese over the hot enchiladas before serving.



Fiesta Turkey *Soup*

- ♦ 1 medium onion, diced
 - ♦ 1 tsp vegetable oil
 - ♦ 1 garlic clove, minced
 - ♦ 3 cups chopped cooked turkey
 - ♦ 1 can chili beans
 - ♦ 3 1/2 cups chicken or turkey broth
 - ♦ 1 can corn with peppers, drained
 - ♦ 1 can tomatoes & green chilies
 - ♦ 1/2 tsp chili powder
 - ♦ 1/2 tsp ground cumin
 - ♦ 1/8 tsp pepper
 - ♦ 1/8 tsp salt
- Toppings: Sour cream, shredded cheese

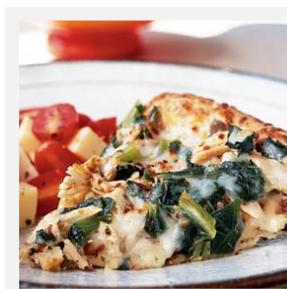


1. Sauté onion in hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat for 7 minutes or until tender.
2. Add garlic, and sauté 1 minute.
3. Stir in turkey and next 8 ingredients. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally; reduce heat, and simmer 15 minutes.
4. Serve with desired toppings.



Turkey Alfredo *Pizza*

- ♦ 1 cup shredded cooked turkey breast
- ♦ 1 cup collard greens or spinach
- ♦ 2 tsp lemon juice
- ♦ 1/2 tsp salt
- ♦ 1/4 tsp pepper
- ♦ 1 garlic clove, halved
- ♦ 1 thin pizza crust
- ♦ 1/2 cup Alfredo sauce
- ♦ 3/4 cup shredded fontina cheese
- ♦ 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper



1. Combine the first 5 ingredients; toss well.
2. Rub cut sides of garlic over crust; discard garlic.
3. Spread Alfredo sauce evenly over crust, top with turkey mixture.
4. Sprinkle with cheese and red pepper.
5. Bake at 450 degrees for 12 minutes or until crust is crisp.
6. Cut into 6 wedges.



Jack Quesadillas *with Cranberry* *Salsa*

Salsa:

- ♦ 1 cup whole-berry cranberry sauce
- ♦ 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- ♦ 2 Tbsp lime juice
- ♦ 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- ♦ 1 Anjou pear, cored & diced
- ♦ 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded & minced

Quesadillas:

- ♦ cooking spray
- ♦ 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- ♦ 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- ♦ 8 flour tortillas
- ♦ 2 cups chopped cooked turkey
- ♦ 1/2 cup sour cream



1. To prepare salsa, combine all salsa ingredients. Cover & chill.
2. To prepare quesadillas, heat a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add sliced onions to pan; sauté 3 minutes or until tender. Remove onions from pan; reduce heat to medium. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp cheese over each each of 4 tortillas. Top each with one-fourth of onions, 1/2 cup turkey, 2 Tbsp cheese, and 1 tortilla.
3. Recoat pan with cooking spray. Add 1 quesadilla to pan; cook 2 minutes on each side or until lightly browned and cheese melts. Repeat with remaining quesadillas. Cut each quesadilla into 6 wedges. Serve with cranberry salsa and sour cream.



- ♦ 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ♦ 2/3 cup milk
- ♦ 1 jar Alfredo sauce
- ♦ 3 1/2 cups chopped cooked turkey
- ♦ 12 oz thin spaghetti, cooked
- ♦ 1 package frozen peas, thawed
- ♦ 1 package sliced mushrooms
- ♦ 1 1/2 cups Swiss cheese
- ♦ 1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, divided
- ♦ 1/2 cup crushed garlic seasoned croutons
- ♦ 1/4 tsp paprika

Turkey Tetrazzini



1. Whisk together soup and milk in large mixing bowl; whisk in Alfredo sauce. Stir in chopped turkey, next 4 ingredients, and 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese. Pour into a lightly greased 15- x 10-inch baking dish.
2. Stir together remaining Parmesan cheese, crushed croutons, and paprika; sprinkle evenly over casserole.
3. Bake, covered, at 375° for 30 minutes. Uncover, and bake 15 more minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

- ♦ 1 lb ground beef
- ♦ 1 cup Southwest mixed vegetables
- ♦ 1 tsp ground cumin
- ♦ 1/2 tsp salt
- ♦ 1 1/4 cups water
- ♦ 1 can RoTel tomatoes with Green Chilies
- ♦ 1 can tomato sauce
- ♦ 8 oz dry bow-tie pasta, uncooked
- ♦ 1 cup shredded Mexican blend cheese

Mexican Pasta Skillet



1. Heat large skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef, frozen vegetables, cumin and salt; cook 7 minutes or until beef is crumbled and no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Drain.
2. Stir in water, undrained tomatoes, tomato sauce and uncooked pasta. Bring to a boil.
3. Cover; reduce heat and cook 15 minutes or until pasta is tender, stirring once halfway. Sprinkle with cheese.

- ♦ no-stick cooking spray
- ♦ 1 can refried beans
- ♦ 3 Tbsp taco seasoning mix, divided
- ♦ 1/2 lb ground beef
- ♦ 1 can RoTel tomatoes with Green chilies, drained
- ♦ 6 Tbsp water
- ♦ 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- ♦ 3 cups shredded lettuce

Mini Bean Burrito Cups



1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 12 medium nonstick muffin cups with cooking spray; set aside. Combine refried beans and 1 tablespoon seasoning mix in small bowl; set aside.
2. Cook beef in large skillet over medium-high heat 3 to 5 minutes or until crumbled and no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Drain. Add remaining 2 tablespoons seasoning mix, drained tomatoes and water; mix well. Simmer 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, cut each tortilla into three rounds using a 4-1/2-inch cookie cutter. Cover rounds with damp paper towel; microwave 30 seconds or until warm and pliable. Carefully place rounds into muffin cups. Spoon refried bean mixture evenly into tortilla-lined muffin cups. Top evenly with meat mixture.
4. Bake 10 to 15 minutes or until tortillas are crisp. Sprinkle with cheese. Serve with lettuce.

- ♦ 1 lb ground beef
- ♦ 1/2 cup chopped onion
- ♦ 1/2 tsp garlic salt
- ♦ 1 can tomato sauce
- ♦ 2 cups dry medium pasta shells, uncooked
- ♦ 1 1/4 cups water
- ♦ 1/4 cup tomato ketchup
- ♦ 1 cup shredded Cheddar & Monterey Jack cheese blend

Cheeseburger Pasta Skillet



1. Heat large skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef, onion and garlic salt; cook 7 minutes or until beef is crumbled and no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Drain.
2. Add tomato sauce, pasta and water; stir to combine. Bring to a boil. Cover; reduce heat and cook 12 minutes or until pasta is tender.
3. Stir in ketchup. Top with cheese and let stand until cheese melts.

- ♦ no-stick cooking spray
- ♦ 6 oz dry egg noodles, uncooked
- ♦ 1 lb ground beef
- ♦ 2 cups Southwest mixed vegetables
- ♦ 1 can RoTel tomatoes with Green chilies
- ♦ 1 can red enchilada sauce
- ♦ 1 1/4 cups shredded Mexican blend cheese
- ♦ 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- ♦ Sour cream

Beef Taco Noodle Casserole



1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Spray 13x9-inch glass baking dish with cooking spray. Place uncooked noodles in baking dish.
2. Heat large skillet over medium-high heat. Add beef; cook 5 to 7 minutes or until crumbled and no longer pink. Drain. Add vegetables, undrained tomatoes, enchilada sauce and water to skillet; stir. Bring to a boil. Pour mixture over noodles.
3. Cover dish tightly with foil; bake 15 minutes. Stir; sprinkle with cheese and cover with foil. Bake 10 minutes more or until noodles are tender. Sprinkle with green onions. Serve with sour cream, if desired.

- ♦ 1 lb deer or elk round steak or stew meat
 - ♦ 1/4 cup flour
 - ♦ 1/4 cup canola oil or peanut oil
 - ♦ 1/2 cup boiling water
 - ♦ 1 tsp salt
 - ♦ 2 or 3 green peppers, sliced
 - ♦ 1/2 cup pineapple chunks
- Sauce:
- ♦ 2 1/2 Tbsp cornstarch
 - ♦ 1/2 cup pineapple juice
 - ♦ 1/4 cup vinegar
 - ♦ 1/4 cup sugar
 - ♦ 2 1/2 Tbsp soy sauce

Crockpot Hawaiian Venison



1. Cut the round steak in 1 inch cubes and dredge with flour.
2. Heat the butter in a skillet. When the oil is hot, brown the meat, turning to brown all sides.
3. Place in crock pot add the boiling water and salt. Cover and cook on HIGH for 1 hour. Turn to LOW and cook for another 6 hours. Add green peppers and pineapple chunks to meat. Cook one hour longer on LOW.
4. On stove top combine sauce ingredients. Cook until sauce is clear and thick.



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