**Go Red for Women!**

**Top 5 RED foods to eat for a healthy heart**

****

It’s Heart Health Month meaning this month is ablaze with the color red! The purpose of the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women movement is to call attention to the fact that heart disease is the #1 killer of women (and men). Take care of your heart and tap into the heart-healthy power of eating red to garner the healing power of this fabulous group of nutrition powerhouse foods. Red is the new green, at least as far as heart-healthy eating goes. The bright hue of red foods (and no, I don’t mean the **Red Hots** candy you ate as a kid!) is a sure sign the food is packed with a lot of disease-fighting antioxidant plant chemicals. The specific phytochemicals include some names you may have heard before: lycopene, carotenoids and resveratrol. Here is a list of the **top 5 RED foods** you should be eating on a regular basis to keep your ticker strong:

1. **Tomatoes:** Tomatoes and cooked tomato products (such as tomato sauce and tomato paste) are high in the powerful antioxidant, lycopene. Lycopene is a plant pigment responsible for the deep red color of tomatoes. Lycopene has numerous health benefits, most notably its ability to ward off prostate cancer in men. When it comes to heart health, lycopene stops LDL or “bad” cholesterol form becoming oxidized by free radicals hence prevents the formation of arterial plaque. Cooking tomatoes has been shown to increase the amount of lycopene that the body can absorb by breaking down plant cells that trap the substance, so eat that tomato sauce! Try the Nutrition Together Shrimp Fra Diavololycopene-rich recipe (attached). Serve with a dark leafy green salad and wash it down with a nice glass of pinot noir for a perfect heart-healthy dinner.
2. **Red Bell Peppers:** Who knew? One red bell pepper has three times the vitamin C as an orange! Red bell peppers are also packed with other antioxidants as well as fiber which functions to keep your intestines in good shape as well as lower your cholesterol. Try snacking on red pepper with a hummus dip. Try the Nutrition Together hummus recipe—delicious and simple to make.
3. **Beets:**Reddish purplebeets are chock full of plant chemicals called anthocyanins which give them such a deep red color. Anthocyanin pigments and the associated flavonoid polyphenols have demonstrated the ability to protect against a myriad of human diseases, and anthocyanins are also powerful antioxidants that can protect the heart. Try the Nutrition together roasted beets recipe to really bring out the natural sweetness of these purple gems.
4. **Apples:** An apple a day truly does keep the doctor (cardiologist) away! Sometimes the best heart medicine is the kind you can get from your produce section. In this case, apples contain a large amount of pectin, a soluble fiber, which blocks cholesterol absorption in the gut and encourages the body to excrete the cholesterol. Apple peels are also packed with polyphenols -- antioxidants that prevent cellular damage from free radicals. So whatever you do, don’t toss the peel.
5. **Red wine:** Red wine is liquid heart medicine. Studies have shown that drinking one glass a day with a meal promotes clear, healthy arteries. Make sure to go red and not white when you choose your color of wine as red contains the powerful antioxidant resveratrol as well as flavonoids which partner together to ease arterial inflammation. Your best bet for maximum antioxidant power is to drink either pinot noir or cabernet sauvignon. Remember, one glass a day is all you need, any more could cause health problems. Don’t drink? Try a small glass of 100% Concord grape juice instead.

Do your heart a favor and "Go Red!" this month by including these heart-healthy red foods into your daily diet. Add some of these foods to your day and with the support of Fitness Together you’ll surely be giving your heart the gift of health this Heart Health Month. Let a Fitness Together trainer work with you to develop a heart-healthy exercise program to accompany your heart-healthy diet, a program designed to meet your specific goals. You’ll also receive nutritional counseling through the Nutrition Together program, which will complement your workouts. To find the Fitness Together studio nearest you, please visit fitnesstogether.com.

Let Fitness Together help you Go Red for Heart Health Month!