How to get the most out of fruit

The best way to eat fruit

Although it is common to eat fruit for dessert and to drink fruit juice with meals, scientists point out that fruit tends to ferment when it comes into contact with other types of food. It is therefore recommended to leave a gap of a few hours between eating fruit and other foods. The best times to eat fruit are first thing in the morning, before lunch, and between meals. Eating fruit on an empty stomach 30 minutes before a meal helps one to lose weight and also allows the body to absorb the maximum quantity of vitamins. Raw fruit is healthiest, as any form of cooking destroys most of the vitamins.

The benefits of fruit

**Apples**
A valuable source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre, apples also contain lots of water and few calories, making them helpful for dieters. Apples also contain important natural acids (malic, tartaric and citric). Tannins help to prevent these acids from decaying and fermenting in the stomach. Apples also contain substances that stop the growth of cancer cells in the intestine and liver.

**Pears**
Fresh or dried, pears are useful in diets aimed at combating obesity and diabetes. They contain essential oils and active substances that help the body to ward off infection. They also have anti-inflammatory attributes and can even relieve depression. Pears contain many macro- and micronutrients such as iron, which is essential for healthy blood cells. Eating pears is recommended to counter fatigue, dizziness, palpitations arising from heavy physical activity, loss of appetite, cracked skin at the corners of the mouth, poor healing of tissues and sensitivity to cold, all of which are symptoms of iron deficiency.

**Peaches**
Peaches contain pectins (which absorb harmful substances) and malic acid (which catalyses the pectins). Eating one peach per day can help to normalise the gastrointestinal tract and cardiovascular system.

**Grapes**
Eaten in ancient times to treat sore throats, mouth ulcers and hemoptysis, grapes are also a powerful diuretic (the juice contains 70 to 80 percent dissolved sugars, acids, vitamins and salt) and laxative. Their glucose content makes them an effective tonic and expectorant. Grapes contain large amounts of easily digestible trace minerals (zinc, calcium, iron, copper, manganese and magnesium). They are recommended for people suffering from anaemia and heart problems.
Cherries
Cherries are a source of many useful substances, including vitamins A, C and E, B group vitamins, pectin, organic acids, starch, natural sugars and carbohydrates. They contain a broad range of minerals such as calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, phosphorus, chlorine, sulphur, iron, zinc, iodine, copper, manganese, chromium, fluoride, molybdenum, boron, vanadium, cobalt, nickel and rubidium, without which we are more prone to illness and age more rapidly. Cherries also contain lots of folic acid, which is essential for women during pregnancy. Due to their antioxidant properties, cherries strengthen the capillaries, prevent the premature ageing of cells, reduce high blood pressure and help prevent cancer. Their vitamins and minerals contribute to the process of hematopoiesis, which improves the activity of the central nervous system and brain. The presence of coumarin, a decoagulant, helps to prevent thrombosis, strokes and heart attacks.

Apricots
The beta-carotene in apricots protects the skin and is beneficial for eyesight. Dried apricots are rich in iron and magnesium (providing energy for the body), and they also have a beneficial effect on the nervous system.

Lemons
Lemon pulp contains organic acids, pectins, sugars, nitrogen, mineral salts, vitamins (C, A, B group and P), essential oils, sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, iron and silicon. The rind and leaves are rich in essential oils. The fruit’s benefits have been known since antiquity. Sailors once travelled with large supplies to prevent disease. Chinese doctors used lemons to treat wounds, lung diseases and scurvy, while the Italians cured fevers with a lemon decoction. Yoga practitioners recommend eating a lemon a day. Lemons have strong antimicrobial properties and the juice boosts the metabolism. Lemons help fight urolithiasis, metabolic disorders, haemorrhoids, fevers and fungal diseases. They can be used to treat gastritis with low acidity, chronic hepatitis, acute and chronic cholecystitis, nosebleeds, bleeding gums, sore throats and tuberculosis.

Oranges
Full of vitamins, trace elements, minerals, amino acids and other substances, a single orange contains the daily recommended amount of vitamin C. Oranges also contain comparatively large amounts of iron, manganese, iodine, cobalt, copper, fluorine, zinc, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium and phosphorus. Drinking orange juice prevents the development of cancer, lowers blood pressure, supports cardiovascular function, strengthens the immune system, lowers cholesterol, prevents the formation of ulcers, relieves constipation, prevents kidney stones, protects against infections, supports healthy bones and teeth, helps ease arthritis, promotes weight loss and brain development, produces healthy sperm and supports skin health.
**Mandarins**
Rich in vitamins C, D (which has antirachitic properties) and K (which improves the elasticity of blood vessels), mandarins are said not to contain nitrates due to their high citric acid content. Despite their therapeutic properties, they can be harmful. They can irritate the kidneys, stomach lining and intestines, and are not recommended for people with stomach or duodenal ulcers, gastritis, enteritis, colitis or inflammatory bowel disease, cholecystitis, hepatitis or acute nephritis.

**Grapefruits**
Grapefruits improve the digestion and have the beneficial effect of speeding up the body’s metabolic processes. A moderate diet that includes grapefruits can help people lose between 5 and 7 kilograms in just a few months.

**Bananas**
With their convenient natural packaging, bananas satisfy hunger while supplying the body with energy and nutrients. Few people are allergic to bananas, which is why they are often used as baby food. Adults who are not highly intolerant of sugar can also enjoy eating bananas. Banana fibres facilitate the workings of the intestinal tract and aid the digestion of fats and sugars. Bananas have a balanced vitamin composition: they contain large amounts of vitamins E and C, and more than 25 percent of the recommended daily dose of vitamin B6. Bananas are also a great source of trace elements, such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, iron and phosphorus.

**Pineapples**
The inner part of this juicy, sour-sweet, fragrant fruit contains digestible carbohydrates, dominated by sucrose. Pineapple pulp contains approximately 1 percent citric acid and other organic acids, significant amounts of vitamin C, and bromelain, which has anti-inflammatory properties and enhances enzymatic activity. Pineapples are particularly rich in potassium and copper. Pineapple juice is recommended for fighting gastrointestinal disease and improving digestion. However, due to the fact that pineapple juice increases the acidity of gastric juices, those suffering from gastric or duodenal ulcers, or gastritis with high acidity, should limit their intake.

**Kiwis**
Effective in cleaning the blood vessels and preventing thrombosis, their high potassium content makes kiwis ideal for preventing high blood pressure. Several kiwis eaten after a heavy lunch can help lighten the stomach and ease heartburn. The daily consumption of kiwis reduces the level of fatty acids in the blood, as well as the risk of blood clots.
**Pomegranate**
The juice of this fruit contains 15 amino acids, while most meat products contain no more than six, so vegetarians should always keep this fruit close at hand. Pomegranates are rich in vitamins C (which strengthens the immune system), E (which strengthens blood vessels), B6 (which benefits the nervous system) and B12 (which improves blood cell formation). Pomegranate juice is also an effective disinfectant and can be used as an antiseptic to protect against infection. The rind of the fruit and the bark of the pomegranate tree are powerful weapons against tuberculosis, dysentery and intestinal parasites. The small red seeds are a great way to stimulate lazy bowels and a valuable source of pomegranate oil that nourishes the skin. Pomegranates protect against cancer, and the fat-soluble vitamins E and F they contain have a rejuvenating effect. Pomegranate juice also contains powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins, which improve the metabolism and blood circulation. By strengthening the walls of blood vessels, they also reduce the risk of strokes, heart attacks and retinal detachment.

**Coconuts**
Coconut milk helps to regenerate the skin and makes a perfect moisturiser. It is good for skin tone and restores elasticity.
Vegetable varieties

Vegetables are divided into the following groups:

- **legumes**
  peas, beans

- **stem vegetables**
  artichoke, asparagus, rhubarb

- **grains**
  sweet corn

- **brassicas**
  cabbage, Savoy cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kohlrabi, broccoli

- **tubers**
  Jerusalem artichokes, potatoes

- **alliums**
  onions, garlic, leeks, shallots, chives

- **salad greens**
  lettuce, endives, chicory

- **nightshade vegetables**
  tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, potatoes

- **herbs**
  dill, tarragon, savory, basil, marjoram

- **gourds**
  pumpkins, melons, squashes, cucumbers, courgettes

- **root vegetables**
  carrots, beets, turnips, radishes, parsnips, celery

**Did you know?**

The classification of tomatoes as either fruits or vegetables has long been the subject of debate, but the controversy is mostly between scientists and cooks. According to the Oxford Dictionary, scientifically speaking the tomato is most definitely a fruit, as "true fruits develop from the ovary in the base of the flower and contain the seeds of the plant." In 1893, the US Supreme Court unanimously held that, for the levying of customs duties, tomatoes should be considered as vegetables, although the court noted that, from a botanical point of view, tomatoes are in fact fruits. In 2001, the EU decided that tomatoes are not vegetables but fruits. In Russian agricultural literature, as well as in everyday language, tomatoes are regarded as vegetables, since they are mostly used in the preparation of savoury rather than sweet dishes.
What do we know about chicken eggs?

People of all ages can eat and appreciate eggs. Boiled, scrambled or fried, eggs form the basis of an ideal breakfast. Eggs can be prepared quickly, are relatively affordable, and are always available in stores.

### Egg composition

Eggs contain lots of nutrients and a complete set of easy-to-digest proteins. They are a useful source of folic acid, biotin and choline. Eggs also contain selenium (a powerful antioxidant), amino acids (useful in building new human tissue), large quantities of vitamins (A, E, D, B12, B3), minerals and trace elements (magnesium, potassium, phosphorus and calcium), all of which are essential for normal body function.

### Benefits and health risks

Eggs contain cholesterol, which frightens many people away from their other benefits. While it is true that too much cholesterol can lead to blocked blood vessels, heart attacks and strokes, limited amounts are required for cardiovascular health.

Despite the differences of opinion about optimal egg consumption, the following facts should be borne in mind:

- a very high percentage (almost 98 percent) of an egg is assimilated into the body after being eaten;
- vitamin E inhibits the development of tumours and strengthens blood vessels and the heart;
- vitamin D, in combination with phosphorous, is good for bones and teeth;
- egg yolks contain lutein, the strongest antioxidant;
- eggs help to prevent the onset of vision problems, especially cataracts;
- eggs are especially good for pregnant women, as they supply most of the substances necessary for the proper development of the foetus; and
- eggs are low in calories, and the lecithin and choline they contain help the body to eliminate fats and cholesterol, making them useful for those who are watching their weight.
Don’t forget!

- Eggs must be eaten fresh.
- Eggs are best kept in a refrigerator at a temperature of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius. They should be consumed within a month, while hard-boiled eggs should be eaten within a week.
- Eggs can be stored without the aid of refrigeration. First coat them in oil, then wrap in paper and place inside a cardboard box or basket. Store the packed eggs in a dark place.
- Cooking eggs over the lowest possible heat preserves most of their nutritional properties.
- The recommended daily intake of cholesterol is 300 milligrams. An average medium-sized egg contains 185 milligrams.
- People who have high levels of cholesterol should eat no more than two or three eggs per week.
- Eating raw eggs carries the risk of contracting salmonellosis, a severe intestinal infection. Although it can usually be treated successfully with strong antibiotics, the infection can be fatal.
- In rare cases, children may have allergic reactions after eating eggs.
Health in a nutshell

The best-known nuts are walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, pistachios, pecans and peanuts. Although they are all commonly referred to as nuts, they are not all true nuts botanically speaking. In this list, only hazelnuts and pecans are true botanical nuts. However, despite the confusion in terminology, all those fruits, seeds and legumes that we know as nuts are very useful for humans.

Walnuts
Walnut trees can live up to 1,000 years and begin to bear fruit after 10 or 12 years. The highest yields are produced by trees between 100 and 180 years old. Depending on the circumstances, one tree can yield between 10 and 300 kilograms of fruit. Walnuts contain many nutrients and vitamins. They contain twice the amount of energy as the equivalent weight of white bread. They are recommended for the prevention and treatment of atherosclerosis, which results in a deficiency of vitamins, cobalt salts and iron in the body. They are high in fibre and oils that can boost intestinal function. They contribute to the normalisation of gastric secretion and can help to ease nervous tension. Walnuts are useful for those whose jobs require a high level of physical exertion, as well as for those suffering from illness or awaiting operations. Walnuts are dense in calories but good for weight management as the protein and fibre help provide satiety. Walnuts also support brain health, especially when consumed with raisins and figs. They are also useful in preventing anemia and are recommended for those with thyroid disease.

Hazelnuts
The glycerides of oleic, stearic and palmitic acids in hazelnuts inhibit the formation of blood cholesterol, protect against diseases of the blood vessels, and are essential for growing bodies. Hazelnuts contain high levels of protein, vitamin E, and minerals such as potassium, iron and cobalt. Vitamin E is powerful in preventing cancer and diseases of the heart and muscular system. The calcium in hazelnuts helps to strengthen bones and teeth, iron is needed for healthy blood, zinc for the production of sex hormones, and potassium for the nervous and muscular systems. Hazelnuts contain more energy than their equivalent weight of bread, milk or chocolate. Their regular consumption can help to prevent diseases of the circulatory system and anemia, prostate problems, varicose veins, phlebitis, venous ulcers and capillary hemorrhages. They can be eaten by people with diabetes and, thanks to their relatively low carbohydrate content, can be enjoyed even by those on strict diets. The consumption of hazelnuts can also help to detoxify the body and strengthen the immune system.
Almonds
Almonds contain protein, calcium, iron, phosphorus and vitamins B2 and B3, which facilitate the absorption of substances essential for maintaining healthy teeth, hair and skin. They are ideal for cleansing the blood, maintaining the function of the kidney, liver and spleen, and eliminating gallstones. Eating almonds in combination with sugar or honey promotes their rapid absorption and enhances their benefits. Sweet almonds help to cleanse the internal organs, improve vision, stimulate brain activity, soothe the throat and prevent asthma and intestinal ulcers.

Peanuts
Although in fact a legume, peanuts are also known as groundnuts, as they mature underground. Peanuts and peanut oil contain vitamins B1, B2, B3 and D, phosphorus and potassium trace elements, and unsaturated fats that help to lower blood cholesterol. With their optimal ratio of essential and non-essential amino acids, peanuts are relatively well absorbed by the human body. Regular consumption, as part of a healthy diet, can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Peanuts are a good source of folic acid, which promotes the growth and regeneration of cells. They can have a beneficial effect on sexual potency, improve memory and attention, raise the threshold of auditory sensitivity, and help overcome severe exhaustion and illness. Peanuts are rich in substances necessary for the normal functioning of the nervous system, heart, liver and other organs. However, raw peanuts are hard to digest and the skin is a common allergen.

Pistachios
Pistachios have a high calorific value and contain essential vitamins, amino acids, minerals and trace elements (copper, manganese, phosphorus, potassium and magnesium) in forms that are easily digestible by the human body. They are rich in proteins and low in cholesterol and saturated fat, making them an excellent substitute for animal products among vegetarians and those on weight-loss diets. The consumption of pistachios is recommended for those suffering from high levels of physical and mental stress. They can raise the levels of antioxidants in the blood. They are beneficial for the brain and heart and can be useful in overcoming nausea, vomiting and liver disease. Pistachios are beneficial for convalescents and are useful in overcoming jaundice. Their consumption can help improve sight and reduces the risk of age-related macular degeneration of the retina, which leads to irreversible blindness in the elderly. They are claimed to be seven times more effective against cholesterol than common cholesterol-lowering drugs. It is also believed that constantly chewing pistachio resin can cure bad breath and cleanse and strengthen the teeth and gums.
Apian products

Beeswax

Beeswax is secreted from the wax glands of worker bees and carpenter bees. It is the basic substance from which honeycombs are made. Beeswax has been used in candle making for hundreds of years, and it is also used today to protect, polish and restore wooden furniture, as well as in the restoration of paintings.

Honey

Honey can be either monoflorous (single blossom) or polyflorous (combined or multi-blossom). Buckwheat, rapeseed and acacia are examples of monoflorous varieties of honey. Blossom nectar is not the only raw material from which honey is produced. Bees make a very precious kind of honey from honeydew — a sugar-rich liquid secreted by aphids and other insects as they feed on sap from leaves or other tender parts of plants. Biblical manna is thought to have been crystallised honeydew, which is considered a delicacy in the Middle East. Beekeepers may also feed their bees on sugar syrup and various herbal brews. The type and quality of the honey produced depends on the kind of flowers visited by the bees. To preserve its flavour and nutritional value, honey should not be heated above 55 degrees Celsius. When added to hot drinks, honey loses many of its vitamins and enzymes and functions merely as a sweetener.
Propolis

Propolis (also known as bee glue) is a soluble resinous mass, usually yellowish green or brown in colour. It is used by bees to repair the inside of the hive. If an invader such as a mouse or frog is killed inside a hive, the bees will coat its carcass with propolis before the body decays. This wards off unpleasant smells and prevents the spread of bacteria among the bee population (“propolis” comes from the Greek words meaning “for the protection of the city”). If you place a few drops of propolis on a piece of glass or paper and leave to dry, after some time the surface will appear to be covered with a thin film of yellow-brown varnish. Try to wash it with water. What happens to the propolis film? Humans can use propolis as a natural antibiotic: it is insoluble in water, but if dissolved in strong alcohol it can be used as a “liquid bandage” by rubbing directly around surface wounds, bruises, burns, insect bites etc. It should not be used by people allergic to bee products.

Bee powder

Bee powder is formed from the specks of pollen that stick to the body and legs of bees. The bees moisten this pollen dust with honey and nectar, then, using the pollen combs on their front legs, they press the mixture into the corbiculae (pollen baskets) on their hind legs. Pollen is rich in proteins and vitamins, but its medicinal benefits for humans are still subject to discussion.

Royal jelly

Royal jelly is a secretion released from the upper jaw (mandible) glands of nurse bees (non-flying bees aged between five and 15 days). It has great nutritional value and contains vitamins and enzymes. The nurse bees feed the worker bee larvae and drones during the first few days of their lives and the larva of the queen bee during the first five days. Feeding continues, even while she is laying eggs. Royal jelly is collected and used as a dietary supplement for humans.
Bread and grains

The staff of life

Bread, the world’s most popular food, exists in one form or another in every culture and on every continent. The history of bread dates back 12,000 years. It is assumed that, in ancient times, people who began to lead a settled way of life learned how to grow cereal plants, producing grain for food and storage. The grain was ground between oval stones into something similar in substance to today’s wheat bran. The ground grain was then mixed with water and kneaded; the dough was formed into a flat loaf and baked on pre-heated stones. This method of baking bread in the form of hard, flat, unleavened loaves can still be observed today in many countries in Asia and Africa. The flour used to prepare this bread is made mainly from barley, millet, maize and buckwheat — all of which contain no gluten.

The prototype of modern bread was first made by adding brewer’s yeast or bread yeast (leaven) to wheat or rye flours that contain gluten, and leaving the dough to ferment or rise. We owe this technique to the ancient Egyptians, who began baking such bread 4,500 years ago, although their bread was prepared from less mature grains and the flour was not ground as finely as ours. The ancient Egyptians were also the first to build ovens, and archaeological excavations show that they produced about 50 types of pastry with different flavourings. In some countries, bread cereals constitute one-half of a person’s daily food intake. Latin American corn tortillas, Arabic round loaves, Indian chapattis and various Asian and African flat loaves are all types of bread, while leavened bread in all its varieties — from dark rye to crusty white — is of Egyptian origin. Regardless of the time and place, however, breads and grains have always been, and still are, symbols of life and prosperity. For the ancient Mediterranean civilisations, bread was a staple food and, at the same time, a synonym for food.

Muslims have the saying: “You can step on the Koran to reach the bread, but you mustn’t step on the bread to reach the Koran.”

Christian culture has given bread a symbolic meaning. Bread was long deemed to be sacred, and it was forbidden to feed it to animals. The tradition that bread should be broken rather than cut with a knife then emerged, although in many places this tradition is now only observed on Christmas Eve. In Bulgaria, the ritual Christmas bread is called bogovitsa (God’s bread). It is usually round and decorated with dough in the form of a cross. In France, the head of the household would traditionally break the bread and hand it to everyone at the table before a meal.

Whole grains are a staple food in many cultures, including rice in the Far East, and roasted maize. In many countries grains are processed and cooked to make traditional foods. Oats are used to make porridge, buckwheat is typically cooked as kasha in Polish cuisine or grechka in Russian. The Italians make hominy from maize, and the Spanish make polenta from corn flour. North Africans use couscous or bulgur wheat to make tabbouleh; and the Turkish cook rice in butter to make pilaf. Raw grains are used for Alpine meusli.

Grains have many useful qualities:

- After drying, they can be stored for long periods of time in the form of cereals or flour.
- Whole grains contain many essential nutrients and cellulose, thus only small amounts of wholemeal cereals or flour are needed to prepare nutritious food.
People have long benefited from the good qualities of cereals, but unfortunately many attempts have been made to “improve” them. Experience has shown that the mass production of any food, aimed at making certain products affordable to everybody, is achieved at the expense of quality. The bread we buy today, despite the huge variety to choose from, bears little resemblance to the bread eaten by earlier generations.

Many bread products and pastries are made from flour so finely ground that there is practically nothing left of the grain apart from the gluten. Such foods are low in nutrition, as the essential nutrients, such as cellulose and vitamins, have been lost in the process of refining the flour. The more finely ground the flour, and the whiter in appearance, the fewer valuable ingredients it contains. According to some surveys, the dramatic increase in the number of cases of intestinal cancer among Europe’s rural population in the second half of the 20th century can be attributed to a change in eating habits and the availability of pastries and breads made from highly refined flour. In poorer countries, bread constitutes nearly 50 percent of the daily diet, and white-flour breads and baked products have long been seen as a symbol of prosperity and wellbeing. People are now getting much less cellulose in their diets, as they rarely eat any other source of cellulose than brown bread.

### Typical breads and baked goods from different countries

- **Korovai** (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus)
- **Bagel** (USA)
- **Brezel** (Germany)
- **Brioche** (France)
- **Baguette** (France)
- **Naan** (India)
- **Tandoor bread** (Central Asia)
- **Lavash** (Caucasus)
- **Yukha** (Azerbaijan)
- **Matzo** (Israel)
- **Pita** (Middle East)
- **Pizza** (Italy)
- **Tortilla** (Mexico)
- **Folar** (Portugal)
- **Biscuit**/**Biscotto** (Western Europe)
- **Ciabatta** (Italy)
- **Matnakash** (Armenia)
- **Pumpernickel** (Germany)