



# Summer nutrition

Love your body with the right foods this summer season.

*By Elizabeth Montgomery*

**T**he early summer season corresponds with the fire element in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The long hot summer days are associated with yang, or masculine energy, which has bright, expansive and warming qualities. In mother nature, yang is always balanced out by yin, or feminine energy, which is provided by the abundance of foods that grow above the ground at this time. These watery and cooling vegetables and fruits are often a distinctive bright red colour which belongs to the fire element (think strawberries,

tomatoes and radishes).

TCM acknowledges that this early summer time of year activates the heart centre of the body. The emotional states associated with this centre are joy and happiness. Care must be taken to nourish and rejuvenate the body, as it can easily go out of balance at this time. The good news is there are many things we can do to ensure a healthy and happy summer season, as long as we incorporate foods and practices that will help bring our hearts, and bodies, into harmony with this glorious time of the year.

## Get leafy greens

Leafy green vegetables are a great summertime addition to salads and juices. Not only are they high in chlorophyll, which is both blood building and healing to the body, but they also contain vital nutrients, including: iron, amino acids and alkaline trace minerals calcium and magnesium – critical for healthy heart function. A good source of cellulose fibre, they act like a brush throughout the digestive tract, increasing the food transit time. They also assist in cooling down and cleansing the system. While there are many green leaves

available for salads, the ideal ones to include into the diet, especially during summer, are of a dark green variety. The darker the leaf, the greater the amount of key nutrients, which lead to greatly improved health. There are a multitude of dark leafy greens available to enjoy. Experiment with kale, watercress, spinach, parsley or dark endive with a tinge of red around the edge, characterised by the fire element time of year.

## Go nuts

New research has discovered that almonds may help to reduce the risk of heart disease. When taken regularly, they increase the amount of antioxidants in the bloodstream, help reduce blood pressure and improve blood flow. They are also alkalising and contain healthy fats, magnesium and vitamin E. Walnuts are another heart healthy nut. They contain the amino acid L-arginine which offers multiple vascular benefits. They are a good source of omega 3 essential fats which is anti-inflammatory, and help to prevent the formation of blood clots. Regular consumption also supports healthful cholesterol levels.

## Flower power

Flowers are plentiful during summer and many are known to assist in soothing and healing the heart. In ancient cultures, roses were commonly associated with love and were thought to assist in healing heart break. Try planting roses in the garden, or use calming rose essential oil in the bath. Alternatively experiment with using delicious rose petals in desserts. Another lesser known flower traditionally used for heart health is the carnation. Its energy is known to resonate with the heart centre and can be soothing in times of grief, or heartache. Simply bring carnations into your home, or plant in the garden for a heart enhancing splash of fragrance and colour. And here's a simple heart centre



## SUMMER SMOOTHIE

Try this joy-full summer smoothie idea: Place into a blender three handfuls of each: blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, add coconut water, ice cubes and blend. Serve with a sprig of mint and enjoy the sunshine (serves two).

“Care must be taken to nourish and rejuvenate this area of the body, as it can easily go out of balance at this time.”

affirmation: “I bring joy to the centre of my heart” (place both hands on the heart centre and repeat three times).

## Cleansing foods

The body requires foods with diuretic properties especially in the early summer heat. One such early summer vegetable is asparagus. It contains the amino acid asparagine that helps the kidneys to excrete toxic waste and oxalic acid. It also helps to breakdown fat and thereby assists in weight loss. Another popular vegetable with diuretic properties is celery. It's high water content and bio available calcium helps to breakup accumulated fat and cleanse the system. Other vegetables in this category include: cabbage, beets, cucumbers and fennel.

## Luscious berries

When berries begin to appear the summer season is well and truly here. There are

myriad delicious berries to choose from such as raspberries, cherries, blueberries, and cranberries. Luscious strawberries are a classic early summer favourite with numerous health properties. The high flavonoid content benefits heart health by counteracting the effect of LDL (bad cholesterol) in the blood. The presence of ellagic acid means they also contain anti-cancer properties. And they are one of the richest fruit sources of vitamin C – the great immune system booster.

## Hydrate

Adequate hydration is paramount during the warmer summer months. Bear in mind that during summer, the requirements for water tend to increase due to the amount of perspiration lost during the higher temperatures.

Another important aspect to hydration is the type of water consumed since all water is not the same. Sadly, tap water is increasingly contaminated with chlorine, heavy metals, synthetic estrogens, and other toxins which wreak havoc on the body. Fortunately, pure water can now be achieved through the filtration process of reverse osmosis, or distillation. If investment in a water filtration system is not possible, then purchasing pure low mineral content mineral water is the next best option. ॐ

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## JOYFUL LIVING

NOURISH YOUR HEART CENTRE THIS SUMMER SEASON

1. Follow your heart: listen to your inner guidance
2. Crystal clear: rose quartz activates the heart chakra
3. Laughter: medicine for the heart
4. Singing: opens the heart and lifts the spirits
5. Love: opens and heals the heart
6. Music: universal language of the heart and soul
7. Dance: joy-full self expression
8. Poetry: the language of the heart