



10 Anti-Inflammatory FOODS

Flavorful Ways to Lower Disease Risk

by Judith Fertig

Any time our bodies sense an “invader”—a microbe, virus, plant pollen or unwelcome chemical—they go into high alert, producing white blood cells to fight it off. Once the danger has been thwarted, normal functioning returns.

If we continue to expose ourselves to these threats, then the high-alert process, known as inflammation, becomes chronic. This disturbance of natural equilibrium can lead to cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, arthritis, depression and pain. It can also mask or worsen autoimmune diseases. Eating foods with natural anti-inflammatory properties can help the body function better.

Physician Support

“Many experimental studies have shown that components of foods or beverages may have anti-inflammatory effects,” says Dr. Frank Hu, also a Ph.D. and professor of nutrition and epidemiology in the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “A healthy diet is beneficial not only for reducing the risk of chronic diseases, but also for improving mood and overall quality of life.”

Hu, Josh Axe, a chiropractor and doctor of natural medicine, in Nashville, Tennessee, and Dr. Andrew Weil, director of the Arizona Center for Integrative

Medicine at the University of Arizona, in Tucson, promote anti-inflammatory foods, backed by recent studies, on their websites.

“Small, gradual changes are typically more sustainable and easier for the body to adapt to,” writes Axe. “So rather than emptying your pantry and sailing off to the Mediterranean, you can pursue an anti-inflammatory diet one step at a time.”

That’s what Andrea Adams Britt did. A professional wedding cake baker from Lee’s Summit, Missouri, Britt experienced bewildering symptoms, including digestion issues, depression, migraines, weight gain and skin irritation. In 2015, she eliminated flour and sugar from her diet, and then added more organic leafy green vegetables, coconut oil and wild-caught salmon. Her symptoms went away one at a time, and by last January, she had also lost 100 pounds. The solution for her was to create flavorful dishes that she enjoyed eating, so she did not feel deprived.

Weil advises, “The best foods are those that offer disease-preventive benefits such as anti-inflammatory effects and delectable flavor. When I eat such foods, I feel as though I’ve hit a grand slam homerun—the sensory pleasure is heightened by the fact that each bite contributes to my overall well-being.”

His take on an Anti-Inflammatory Food Pyramid at Tinyurl.com/Andrew-Weil-Food-Pyramid offers a broad sample of these foods in an easy, downloadable graphic.

Reducing inflammation in her body has also led to better mental and emotional health for Britt. “I am a happier person,” Britt says. “I can control my emotions, focus my thoughts and am more at peace.”

Inflammation Food Fixes

1 Green leafy vegetables such as Swiss chard contain natural anti-inflammatory properties such as vitamins K, D and C, says Axe.

2 Beets have a natural antioxidant, betalain, an anti-inflammatory compound that inhibits the activity of enzymes the body uses to trigger inflammation, advises Axe.

3 **Sea buckthorn berry juice** (known as olivello juice) is one of the most concentrated natural sources of vitamin C, says Weil.

4 **Ginger** is a potent anti-inflammatory food that also helps reduce intestinal gas and prevent nausea, advises Weil.

5 **Green tea** is best enjoyed hot with a little squeeze of lemon; it may reduce cholesterol levels, ultimately assisting in lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease, per Weil.

6 **Virgin coconut oil** has anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties, according to a study published in *Pharmaceutical Biology*. Britt eats a total of one-and-a-half tablespoons a day in hot drinks, salads or soups.

7 **Tomatoes** are an easy-to-use and a tasty anti-inflammatory food, says Axe. He notes, “They are a rich source of lycopene, betacarotene, folate,

potassium, vitamin C, flavonoids and vitamin E.”



8 **Bok choy** has potent anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer effects, as well as a higher concentration of betacarotene and vitamin A, than any other variety of cabbage, according to Weil.

9 **Black cod**, also known as butterfish or sablefish, has even more omega-3 fatty acids than salmon, notes Weil.

10 **Walnuts**, rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids, help protect against metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes, says Axe.

Judith Fertig writes award-winning cookbooks plus foodie fiction from Overland Park, KS (JudithFertig.com).

Inflammation-Causing Foods

Dr. Frank Hu, of the Harvard School of Public Health, suggests limiting these foods that inflame, all found in a typical fast food meal.

1. Refined carbs, such as bread, buns and sugars
2. Sodas
3. Red meat and processed meat
4. French fries and other fried foods
5. Margarine

Never be a food snob. Learn from everyone you meet — the fish guy at your market, the lady at the local diner, farmers, cheese makers. Ask questions, try everything and eat up!

—Rachael Ray