

superfood short cuts

DID YOU KNOW THAT A QUARTER OF THE MOST ANTIOXIDANT-RICH FOODS ARE SPICES? **GURPAREET BAINS** ON THE QUICK WAYS TO UP YOUR DOSE

For some, being healthy means, “trying to eat like the thinnest person I know”, as one perennial dieter puts it. Unsurprisingly, you are better off gorging on vegetables, fruits, low-fat proteins and nuts – they are called superfoods, after all. The antioxidants they provide are linked with preventing – even fighting – diseases such as cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer’s. The good news is that nearly one quarter of the most antioxidant-rich foods are spices. In other words, by adding a few more flavours to what you are already eating, you can boost its nutritional value.

DARK CHOCOLATE Cocoa is rich in polyphenols, which are also found in berries, grapes and tea. Blitz together 170g Bournville dark chocolate pieces, 1 tsp instant coffee, 1 tsp ground cardamom and a pinch of chilli powder until it resembles breadcrumbs. Pour in 2 egg yolks and 160ml boiling milk and blend until smooth. Pour the mixture into 6 shot glasses and refrigerate for 6 hours before serving – each pot contains more than 150% of your daily antioxidant requirements.

EGGS Eggs contain iodine, which we need to regulate our metabolism. Make a super-omelette by mixing 2 eggs, some fresh coriander and chopped prawns, 1 tsp fresh chilli, 1 tsp freshly grated ginger, and ½ tsp curry powder. The spices contain the same amount of antioxidants as a large bunch of grapes.

BAKED BEANS A rich source of fibre, beans help lower high blood-sugar levels and regulate cholesterol; 3 tbsp baked beans counts as one of the five portions of fruit and vegetables you should eat daily. However, if you cook ½ tsp each of cumin and mustard seeds in a drop of olive oil until they pop, add 1 tsp curry powder and a 400g tin of beans, the spices will more than double the antioxidant value of the beans.

BASMATI RICE A great source of carbohydrate energy, basmati keeps you feeling fuller for longer. Place 200g basmati rice, 1 rounded tsp cumin seeds, a knob of butter, 1 tsp salt and 400ml boiling water into a microwave-safe bowl and mix with a fork. Microwave on high for 12 minutes, stirring every 4 minutes, then leave to stand, covered, for 10 minutes. Fluff the rice and serve. The cumin seeds add nearly as many antioxidants as are found in 1kg tomatoes.

GREEN TEA Green tea raises the metabolism and the rate at which you burn calories. Add a cinnamon stick, 2 cardamom pods, a pinch each of saffron and ginger, and a glug of honey to 1 green tea bag simmering in a pan with 3 mugs of water. This will double its power to mop up free radicals.

MANGOS India’s national fruit contains antioxidants and flavonoids, which aid the immune system and are believed to reduce the incidence of cancer. Blend 175g mango flesh with 1 tsp finely grated, peeled, fresh root ginger, 300ml natural yogurt and lots of ice. Shared between two, this has the same amount of antioxidants as 500g courgettes.

POTATOES Bizarrely, potatoes have almost twice the amount of antioxidants as peas. Roast them unpeeled, then mix through a medley of turmeric, sea salad (or kelp) and cumin seeds fried lightly in olive oil, doubling the antioxidant value.

SALMON Research shows that if a person eats one portion of omega 3-rich salmon a week, they can decrease the likelihood of a heart attack. For a healthy take on battered fish, combine 1 tbsp tandoori masala powder with 1 tbsp cold water, and use to coat a 150g salmon fillet. Sprinkle with low-salt steak seasoning, and cook in an oiled frying pan, turning until you have a golden crust on each side. Transfer to a hot oven and bake for 5-10 minutes, until cooked. Serve with lemon wedges, salad and oven chips. Each serving has the antioxidants of 22 servings of spinach.

WHOLEMEAL BREAD People who eat wholemeal bread are less likely to have heart disease than those who do not. When baking it at home, add a small handful of pumpkin seeds and 1 tsp each of caraway and cumin seeds to the dough. Research suggests cumin oil is an effective antibiotic.

YOGHURT Yoghurt balances the stomach’s pH level, aids digestion and prevents the formation of ulcers. Adding just ¼ tsp ground ginger to a bowl of natural yoghurt will add as many antioxidants as found in one helping of fresh cucumber. Serve with fruit and honey. ●

Indian Superfood by Gurpareet Bains (Absolute Press, £12.99) is out now. Order it for £11.69 (incl p&p) from the Sunday Times Bookshop on 0845 271 2135 or visit thesundaytimes.co.uk/bookshop

