

# Superhero **CITRUS** Superfruits



**W**hat makes a superhero? Well, most superheroes fight bad guys and protect us from demise – often without getting the credit they deserve. The more you learn about citrus fruits, the more you’ll agree that these incredible fruits may just be the unsung heroes the American diet needs to save the day.

When it comes to fruit, there aren’t many that can compete with the citrus family, which includes popular fruits such as oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits. They’re tangy, delicious superfruits that provide a wealth of health benefits, an explosion of flavor, great aroma, and beautiful colors. Here, we’ll explore all the incredible health benefits of citrus and how to incorporate them into your daily diet and routine. After all, we could all use a few more superheroes in our lives.

## Seven Super (Hero) Benefits of Citrus Fruits

These sweet, juicy fruits not only delight the senses, but they offer incredible benefits for your body. Here are just a few of the ways citrus fruits can support your health and well-being.

**1 They support your immune system.** Unlike most mammals, the human body doesn't produce vitamin C on its own, so we really need to get this important nutrient from our diet. Fortunately, citrus fruits are known for being high in vitamin C, which means they can help your body resist infection, heal wounds, produce collagen, and support the absorption of iron. Research shows that routinely getting your recommended daily value of vitamin C may help shorten the duration and severity of the common cold. Just one juicy orange offers 70 milligrams of vitamin C, which is above and beyond the daily recommended intake of 60 milligrams for adults and kids over the age of 4.

**2 They're super high in fiber.** Fiber is one of the most natural ways to support healthy digestion and most Americans don't get as much fiber as they should. Women need approximately 25 grams per day and men need 38, but the average person only gets about 15 grams. Snacking on citrus fruit can add more fiber than most calorie-dense



processed snack foods and will keep you feeling full for longer. One cup of orange segments has approximately 4 grams of fiber – most of which is soluble, the kind that helps lower cholesterol and control blood glucose.

**3 They are anti-cancer agents.** A comprehensive analysis of 22 citrus fruit studies published in the June 2017 issue of *Frontiers in Pharmacology* corroborated the role of citrus fruit as a potential resource against cancer. Individual studies have shown grapefruit juice can reduce the risk of lung cancer, while others have suggested citrus fruits may protect against pancreatic, esophageal, stomach, and breast cancers. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), high doses of vitamin C have shown promise in treating

difficult tumors in mice. Other research indicates that vitamin C (in high doses) could be toxic to cancer cells. Give these fruits a cape, please!

**4 They pack numerous heart healthy benefits.** Citrus fruits are chock-full of flavonoids which is the plant compound responsible for these juicy fruits' beautiful color. More importantly, flavonoids can help lower blood pressure and fight against bad cholesterol. According to a major research project presented at a 2018 American Heart Association meeting, people who ate around 500 milligrams or more of flavonoids per day had a lower risk of developing stroke, peripheral artery disease and ischemic heart disease (narrowing of the heart vessels). Finally, research

has demonstrated citrus fruit's impact on reducing the risk of death from cardiovascular disease. One research study published in the European Journal of Epidemiology found women who reported high citrus fruit and citrus juice intake were far less likely to develop fatal cardiovascular disease or suffer from stroke than those who didn't eat citrus fruits. The only exception to note – grapefruit juice has been shown to negatively interact with certain medications, including some statins, blood pressure medications, and some used to treat heart rhythm problems.

**5 They can help you hydrate.** On average, 20% of most people's daily water intake comes from food. Citrus fruits contain about 90% water, which means snacking on oranges or other citrus fruits throughout the day can help you stay hydrated (while also loading up on all these superfruits' other benefits). Similarly, if you're not a huge fan

of unflavored water and have trouble staying hydrated, adding a variety of citrus fruits to your water can help you get your recommended daily intake.

**6 They protect against dementia.** A comprehensive study published in the British Journal of Nutrition examined data from more than 13,000 older adults in Japan. Researchers looked specifically at their consumption rate of citrus fruits and concluded that there was a direct link between frequent citrus fruit consumption and significant improvements in memory and brain health. Those who ate lemons, limes, and oranges daily decreased their odds of developing dementia by at least 23 percent when compared to those who ate citrus less than twice a week. Oranges and lemons contain a flavonoid called nobiletin, which has been studied and shown to reverse memory loss and age-related cognitive impairment.

Sounds like we should eat a little more of this noble little compound!

**7 They can prevent wrinkles.** Vitamin C isn't just good for your immune function, it can also support your body's ability to produce collagen – which is the protein tasked with keeping your skin young and smooth. While collagen levels decline with age, a diet rich in collagen can help preserve this important protein. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition published a study in 2007 that confirms women who eat more vitamin C are less likely to have wrinkles.

### Sprucing Up Your Diet

Now that everyone is convinced of the heroic benefits of citrus fruits, how can you work to incorporate them into your daily diet? We're glad you asked! Whether you eat them straight off the produce shelf, juice them, or work them into your meal plan, citrus fruits can spice up your diet in a number of ways.



## Citrus Flavor Combinations & Pairings

If you're looking for ways to incorporate citrus fruits into your cooking, here are some common pairings that work well for your favorite citrus fruits.

### Oranges



Offering natural sweetness and a burst of flavor, oranges are often used in oriental dishes such as stir fry or Caribbean-style recipes. Great for both sweet and savory, here are some of our favorite ways to work this super fruit into your everyday diet:

- **Suggested Meat Pairings:** *pork, chicken or salmon*
- **Suggested Spice Pairings:** *cinnamon, clove, ginger, basil, cilantro, mint, cumin*
- **Suggested Sweet Pairings:** *chocolate, vanilla, honey, almonds, other citrus fruits*
- **Suggested Drink Pairings:** *tea, spritzers*
- **Suggested Produce Pairings:** *carrots, salads (and salad dressings!)*

### Lemons



A common staple of the Mediterranean diet and the perfect pair for seafood, lemons offer a tangy flavor that complements a variety of foods. Some of our top choices include:

- **Suggested Meat Pairings:** *chicken, seafood*
- **Suggested Spice Pairings:** *thyme, rosemary, marjoram, oregano, dill, pepper, poppyseeds, basil (pesto)*
- **Suggested Sweet Pairings:** *coconut, dark chocolate, honey, cheese*
- **Suggested Drink Pairings:** *tea, lemonade*
- **Suggested Produce Pairings:** *salad, squash, zucchini, asparagus, strawberry, blueberry*
- **Suggested Dairy Pairings:** *parmesan, asiago, or mild dairy (ricotta cheese, cream cheese)*

### Limes



One of the tangiest of the citrus fruits, limes are a great complement to Mexican cuisine. While just a quick squeeze can elevate the flavor of nearly any dish, some of the most common lime pairings include:

- **Suggested Meat Pairings:** *pork, chicken, shrimp, beef*
- **Suggested Spice Pairings:** *cilantro, cayenne pepper, chili powder, cumin*
- **Suggested Sweet Pairings:** *coconut, pineapple*
- **Suggested Drink Pairings:** *tea, lemonade*
- **Suggested Produce Pairings:** *cucumber, pineapple, cabbage, jalapeño, avocado*
- **Suggested Dairy Pairings:** *mild dairy (sour cream, yogurt)*

### Grapefruit



This citrus fruit takes the prize for the most bitter, but that doesn't mean it can't add a great flavor to your menu. When used properly, grapefruit can add a unique profile that will spruce up your meal. Here are some great ways to incorporate this tangy fruit into your day:

- **Suggested Meat Pairings:** *ham, seafood (scallops, salmon, lobster)*
- **Suggested Spice Pairings:** *mint, cardamom, nutmeg, tarragon, cloves, salt, ginger*
- **Suggested Drink Pairings:** *tea, lemonade*
- **Suggested Produce Pairings:** *avocado, pomegranate, kale, spinach*
- **Suggested Dairy Pairings:** *feta cheese, yogurt, mascarpone cheese*

## Kick It Up with Citrus Juice

If you're not much of a chef or you're short on time – not to worry, you can always drink your citrus. Citrus juice is a common choice, with orange juice arguably being America's sweetheart of all juices. What you may not know, however, is that many processed citrus juices you may find in grocery stores lack some of the benefits you can get by juicing your own fruit at home. Here are the top three reasons to stock up on citrus fruits and a quality juicer so you can do it yourself.

### 1. Get All the Benefits.

First, if you drink juice within approximately 20 minutes of the juicing process, you get ALL the benefits this nutrient-rich drink has to offer. That's because oxidation begins shortly after juicing, which can reduce the vitamin and enzyme content, thereby eliminating some of the greatest benefits of drinking citrus juice.

### 2. Control What's in Your Juice.

Juicing your citrus at home will allow you to not only ensure you're getting all these benefits, but also to control what's *in* your juice. Unfortunately, all juice is NOT created equal. In fact, to ensure year-round supply of seasonal fruit juices like orange juice, manufacturers often store it in gigantic tanks where juice may be stripped of oxygen (deaeration). This process allows it to be stored for up to a year, but also reduces the flavor and fragrance of the juice. The solution? Juice



makers add “flavor packs” made by fragrance companies to add scent and flavor back in and to ensure consistent taste. We don't really know what's in these flavor packs, but it's definitely not how nature intended it.

**3. Keep it Interesting.** Variety is the spice of life and when you juice your own citrus fruit, you can be as creative as you'd like. Tired of plain old orange juice? Add some grapefruit or lime for the perfect citrus blend. Better yet, throw in some nutrient-rich vegetables and you can incorporate the health benefits you get from a wide range of fresh produce that you might not have time to cook.

Now that you know the superhuman strength of citrus fruits, take the time to incorporate them into your daily routine. Stop by your local farmers market on a regular basis to stock up on these tangy superfruits. Your body and taste buds will thank you!

## Sources

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