

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 9

Super Foods: My friend Bean:

Last week we identified 12 Super Foods with the Baker's dozen being Garlic. As you may recall those 12 are: Black Beans, Blueberries, Broccoli, Chocolate, Oats, Onions, Salmon, Soy, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes and Walnuts.

For the next few columns or until we go off tangent with a side story, we will take a closer look at the health benefits of those twelve super foods. We'll begin with black beans, also known as legumes. Beans are tops on my list for several reasons. Firstly, they are economical and available in almost all parts of the world. For those vegetarians and raw foodies, they are a fantastic meat substitute because they are filled with protein. Secondly, Black beans, like most beans, are a great source of insoluble fiber, which helps to speed food through the digestive track. This prevents constipation and can be of assistance in averting colon cancer. Third, all legumes are packed with protease inhibitors which in layman's terms are those happy enzymes that fight cancer at the cellular level. And finally, beans also raise blood sugar very slowly, so this means those folks demonstrating disharmony in the diabetic realm can look to beans to be of assistance in regulating insulin. But why black beans? For me, simply because of taste and they seem to cook faster.

Here we go again talking about Bio-Individuality. What works for you, may not work for someone else, so get a bean you and your body LIKE. One simple rule of thumb when it comes to good nutrition – you are more likely to eat the right food and benefit from it if you really do LIKE it.

Remember the old commercial with the brothers contemplating eating something healthy? "Let's get Mikey to try it. He hates everything."? So Mikey tries the cereal and proceeds to eat the whole bowl much to the amusement of his cautious siblings. So case in point, if you're not sure what bean you might like, get yourself a Mikey, or heck, make the kids try it first. It's nothing harmful and seems like a fair trade after having to pay for college tuition.

Bear in mind, different cultures embrace different beans, so when travelling, try for yourself a local treat. My fave, black beans, are big in Brazil. Adzuki beans are a favorite in China, our Southern friends love their black eyed peas. Our Eastern friends, especially those who park the car in Harvard yard, favor navy beans while our Italian friends savor Fava beans (don't even make me say it, with a nice chianti) as our friends from Mexico love re-frying those pintos. You don't have to physically visit all these locations to treat yourself to a bit of geographic culture and try a bean that suits you.

And, here's a newsflash, in 2011, we have reached the time in our society where a Fava and a Navy can live together in harmony under the same roof. Remember, what bean suits you may not be anyone else's favorite. Try theirs, they may try yours. Experiment with recipes that suit all parties. A bean salad with a light olive oil dressing makes for a cornucopia.

Well, let's discuss the one potential drawback to our friend Bean that we have left hanging in the air.

If you are not accustomed to eating beans as a staple, the first few experiences can be enlightening to more than one of the senses. One way to help cut down on the intestinal gas that bothers many people is simply to soak beans before cooking. I usually suggest soaking beans overnight, discarding that water and then cook in fresh water. This helps to remove some of the gas producing sugars that cause the gas issue in the first place. Also, introducing beans gradually, yet persistently into the diet helps folks to assimilate with ease those complex sugars and no discomfort occurs. And, seriously, don't the health benefits far outweigh the shall we say, "scentimental" beginning of your relationship with your new friend Bean?

Here's a quick party favorite recipe: Pico De Gallo

2 cups cooked black beans

4 medium tomatoes, diced

½ cup red onion, diced

½ cup green onion, chopped

½ cup fresh cilantro, chopped

2 Tbsp. lemon juice

1 Tbsp. chili powder

½ tsp. Sea Salt

Combine all ingredients. Eat with baked tortilla chips or eat as a side dish with shrimp.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments.

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