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'Super Fruits' Like Tart Cherries may Provide Anti-Aging Benefits

Science Suggests Cherries Contain Powerful Antioxidant Profile That May Protect Against Signs of Aging

The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)

LANSING, Mich., Aug. 27 -- A growing body of science suggests antioxidant-rich fruits can be a natural way to protect against the signs and conditions of aging.

September is Healthy Aging Month, and experts suggest stocking up on "Super Fruits" such as cherries, which are one of the few known, researched sources of melatonin, a powerful antioxidant that has been shown to play a role in delaying the effects of aging.

A 2007 study conducted at the University of Granada in Spain and published in the journal Free Radical Research found that melatonin neutralizes the oxidative and inflammation process caused by aging (1). In fact, researchers suggest that daily melatonin intake in humans from the age of 30 or 40 on could potentially help delay illnesses related to aging.

Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D, a nutrition researcher at the University of Texas Health Science Center and co-author of the Granada study, recommends eating just a handful of cherries a day to reap the melatonin benefits.

"Studies have shown melatonin can provide many potential health benefits that would be important to people as they age, including helping to protect the vascular system and improving sleep," said Reiter. "As people look for natural ways to promote longevity, including cherries in their daily diet may be helpful."

A growing body of evidence also shows cherries may help reduce risk factors of age-related conditions such as inflammation and heart disease. According to registered dietitian Cheryl Forberg, author of Positively Ageless (Rodale 2008) and nutritionist for NBC's "The Biggest Loser," the antioxidant compounds that make up cherries' rich red color are the key to their naturally protective benefits.

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"Most people don't know the truth about this powerful fruit," said Forberg. "But tart cherries have just as many antioxidants as blueberries. As a dietitian, I look first to foods and beverages with health-promoting properties to help people optimize their health."

Aging Boomers Are Harnessing the Stay-Young Power of Foods

Aging Boomers, who account for nearly one third of the U.S. population, are increasingly turning to foods to help promote their health and longevity. A recent survey conducted by research group Packaged Facts(2) revealed Boomers "particularly demand" products that may help to lower cholesterol and improve heart health - such as cherries.

"Boomers are looking at functional foods as a delicious way to help delay the effects of aging," said Forberg. "And what's especially great about cherries is that they're available year-round as dried, frozen and juice. They're an easy, convenient and colorful addition to the daily diet, from whipping into a smoothie to mixing into a rice pilaf or folding into a sweet dessert such as gingerbread." Forberg shares two cherry-infused recipes in her new book -Wild Rice with Radicchio and Dried Cherries and Gingerbread with Dried Cherries and Toasted Pecans.



Alana Stein of The Cherry Marketing Institute [CMI], +1-312-988-2078, press@choosecherries.com,

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