



Fit Business Tips of the Month

DECEMBER

The winter season is here! There's lots of great ways to keep yourself healthy and active this holiday season. In this issue of the California Fit Business Tips, you'll get some great ideas for incorporating physical activity and healthy eating into your holiday festivities. December's fruit and vegetable of the month- dates and cauliflower- are both packed with vitamins and minerals to keep you in tip-top shape so that you don't miss a day of the holiday cheer.

QUICK AND SIMPLE TIPS

The Perfect Gift: Learning whether diabetes runs in your family may help you take important steps to protect your health. Physical activity, such as walking, is one way to control your weight and may reduce your chances of developing diabetes. While shopping for holiday goodies, try parking the car a little further away from the entrance or take a few extra laps inside the mall. Making the decision to fit physical activity into your lifestyle is the best gift you can give to yourself and your family this holiday season.

Healthy Holiday Fare: From office parties to community potlucks, sugary, high-fat foods, and beverages seem to be everywhere this time of year. But if you stick to a few simple rules, you'll be able to start the New Year off healthier than before.

- Eat a healthy snack or small meal before you head out the door for a party or event to avoid feeling tempted to try all of the goodies.
- If you are bringing food to share, make sure that you bring a healthy option, like a fruit or vegetable platter, wholegrain crackers with a low-fat spread or a bowl of mixed nuts.
- Try making baked apples or fruit parfaits for dessert instead of other sugary treats.
- Invite friends and neighbors out for a long evening walk through your neighborhood to enjoy the holiday lights and decorations. Be sure to dress in light colors and take a flashlight along for safety.





December's Fruit of the Month

DATES

Fun Fact

The date palm tree is considered to be the oldest fruit tree in the world, and its fruit was a staple in the diets of many ancient cultures. To the Hebrew's, the date palm tree was the "tree of life," as it offered over 360 different uses, including needles, thread, lumber, mattresses, rope, baskets, and other household items, as well as food and beverage.

Health Benefits

California dates are loaded with essential vitamins and minerals, including potassium, magnesium and iron. Potassium is an important mineral that helps to lower blood pressure, maintain the nervous system, and balance the body's metabolism. This hearty little fruit has three times the amount of potassium as bananas! Including dates in your low-fat diet along with a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables will help you strengthen your immune system and help to lower your risk of heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

Selection

Many people commonly mistake the date as a dried fruit, however it never undergoes an artificial drying process. Once harvested, dates go through four stages of ripening in which their sugar content increases and their skin becomes more wrinkled, giving it a "dried" appearance. Dates are grouped into three varieties- soft, semi-soft, and dry. The semi-soft variety accounts for 90 percent of the dates grown in California. It's easy to spot a ripe date, just choose ones that range in color from deep brown to jet black.

Storage

Dates are famous for their longevity. Although the harvest season in California lasts from September to December, dates are available year round. The semi-soft date can be stored in the refrigerator for 6 to 12 months.

Preparation Ideas

Dates are most commonly eaten out-of-hand as a snack. They can also be stuffed with sweet fillings or chopped and added to soups, breads, and cakes.

FEATURED DATE RECIPE: ALMOND STUFFED DATES

Ingredients

- 12 whole dates
- 12 blanched almonds
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- pinch of black pepper

Preparation

1. Carefully remove the pits from the dates, replacing each one with a whole almond.
2. Pour the honey into a heavy saucepan and place it on low heat.
3. When the honey has thinned, add the cinnamon and black pepper; stir well.
4. Carefully add the stuffed dates to the honey and stir gently to coat. Leave on very low heat for 5 minutes until the dates are hot.
5. Serve warm, or let cool and eat.

Makes 12 servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving

Calories 60, Carbohydrate 14g, Protein 0g, Total Fat 1g, Saturated Fat 0g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 0mg, Dietary Fiber 1g

Recipe courtesy of Recipe Zaar.





December's Vegetable of the Month

CAULIFLOWER

Fun Fact

Do you know why cauliflower is white? As it grows, the head is surrounded by heavy green leaves that shield it from sunlight. The lack of exposure to sunlight does not allow chlorophyll to develop. Therefore, color is not produced, and the head remains a white color.

Health Benefits

Just one cup of cauliflower provides over 90 percent of the daily recommended value of vitamin C. Not only is cauliflower great for boosting your immune system, but it may also help to lower high cholesterol and control high blood pressure. Including cauliflower in your low-fat diet along with a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables may help to reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease, and infection.

Selection

Cauliflower is generally available year round, but it is usually more plentiful in autumn and early winter. When selecting cauliflower, look for heads that are white or creamy white, firm, compact, and heavy for their size. There should not be any speckling of discoloration on the head or leaves. Avoid cauliflower with brown patches.

Storage

Cauliflower will keep for up to five days if stored in the crisper section of the refrigerator. If the head is not purchased wrapped, store it in an open or perforated plastic bag. Keep the head stem-side up to prevent moisture from collecting on it. For the best flavor, cauliflower should be eaten as soon as possible. Pre-cut florets do not keep well, and are best when eaten within a day of purchase.

Preparation Ideas

Cauliflower can be served cooked or raw. The easiest way to cut a cauliflower is to peel off the stem leaves, turn the cauliflower upside down and cut the stem just above where the florets join together. Separate the florets into equal sized pieces, and if necessary, cut into smaller pieces. Steaming or microwaving cauliflower is the best way to preserve its vitamin content. Boiling cauliflower not only strips it of its nutrient content, but also reduces its color and crispness. For a healthy side dish, sauté cauliflower with garlic, minced ginger and low-sodium soy sauce. Or to make a warm winter soup, puree cooked cauliflower and add your favorite herbs and spices.

FEATURED CAULIFLOWER RECIPE: CAULIFLOWER WITH PARSLEY-MUSTARD DRESSING

Ingredients

- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 head cauliflower (1 ¼ pounds), cut into florets
- 1 large red bell pepper, cut into slivers
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley

Preparation

1. In a small saucepan of boiling water, blanch garlic for 2 minutes; drain.
2. When cool enough to handle, mince the garlic and then transfer to large mixing bowl.
3. Add vinegar and mustard; mix well to combine. Whisk in olive oil.
4. In a covered vegetable steamer, steam cauliflower three to five minutes or until crisp-tender.
5. Add steamed cauliflower to garlic-olive oil mixture, along with bell pepper and parsley. Mix well.
6. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.

Makes 4 servings. ¼ recipe per serving.

Nutrition Information Per Serving

Calories 60, Carbohydrate 10g, Protein 3g, Total Fat 2g, Saturated Fat 0g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 60mg, Dietary Fiber 5g

Recipe courtesy of the *National 5 a Day Program*.

