

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only; and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool, or to be used in place of a qualified medical expert's opinion.

This is part 2 of a 4-part series on the power of color. This week we look at the color of food and what it means.

We eat food with our senses. While taste and smell of food plays an important role, most of us also prefer food of certain colors. Doctors recommend that we eat different colored foods, especially fruits and vegetables, to get different nutrients. In fact, for better health, we need to eat fruits and veggies of at least 5 different colors daily. We have already covered the color meaning of fruits and vegetables in another article. You can check it out here. Today we will discuss color of foods in general and what they symbolize across various nations. Apart from health, does the color of food signify anything? Let us find out....

Ever wondered why spinach is so green and blueberries are so blue? The answer is phytochemicals. These substances only occur in nature in plants and they provide us with numerous health benefits. Scientists also believe that phytochemicals provide the color to various fruits and vegetables while also interacting with vitamins, minerals, and other health nutrients to provide the human body with several benefits. This is the main reason why colored fruits and vegetables can provide heart healthy benefits and reduce risk of several lifestyle diseases.

So, what do different colors of fruits and vegetables mean?

- **Blue/Purple**– This color is due to the fruit's anthocyanin content. Anthocyanins are antioxidants that provide numerous heart healthy benefits. The darker the blue color, the higher the concentration of phytochemicals in it. Go in for blueberries, eggplants etc. for getting Anthocyanins. Blueberries are especially known for their very high antioxidant levels. Other fruits containing Anthocyanins include pomegranates, blackberries, plums, prunes etc.
- **Green**– Green leafy vegetables are rich in chlorophyll as well as isothiocyanates. These reduce carcinogenic agents from the liver. Green vegetables like broccoli, cabbage etc. also contain several other anticancer compounds. Apart from these antioxidants, the green cruciferous vegetables are rich in Vitamin K, folic acid, potassium etc. So, go on and eat plenty of Bok Choy, Brussel sprouts, Broccoli, dark green leafy vegetables etc.
- **Green/Yellow**– These vegetables and fruits are rich in lutein which is very important for eye health. Lutein is especially necessary for the elderly people to prevent age related macular degeneration. Some of these green-yellow fruits and vegetables are also rich in vitamin C. Examples are avocado, Kiwi, spinach, pistachio nuts, etc.
- **Red**– The main pigment that gives the red color to fruits and vegetables is Lycopene. It is a powerful antioxidant that is being researched for preventing cancer as well as heart attacks. Lycopene is also useful for protecting prostate health and maintaining the breast

tissue. Red fruits and vegetables are also rich in flavonoids, resveratrol, and vitamin C as well as folates. Resveratrol is abundant in the skin of red grapes and is an antioxidant which is being investigated for its cancer preventive properties. Examples: grapes, cranberries, tomatoes, watermelons, guava, pink grapefruit etc.

- Yellow/Orange– Carotenoids or beta carotene is responsible for imparting the yellow-orange-red pigment color to certain fruits and vegetables. These are extremely rich in vitamin A and retinol-which is needed for acne and wrinkle prevention. Vitamin A is needed for strong immune function and healthy vision. Research is showing that certain beta carotenes are also useful in preventing cancers of the stomach, esophagus etc. Examples: Mangoes, apricots, carrots, pumpkins, squashes, etc.
- No color– Some vegetables have no color on their inside (eggplant). That does not mean they are deficient in nutrients or phytochemicals. In fact, many types of flavonoids are colorless, and they still help the body counter the free radical formation.

Experts recommend that our diet should consist of rainbow-colored fruits and vegetables to get all their health benefits. So, the next time you shop, take a look at your cart. If you see all green colored items from the produce section- like spinach, Green apples, Kiwis etc., go back and swap one of the items for oranges, strawberries, or blueberries. There are nearly 4000 phytochemicals available in nature and to get their wonderful health benefits, we need to eat more colored fruits and vegetables daily.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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