Foods That Extend Your Life
by Gordon Botting

How old are you really? The fact is, your “health” or “energetic” age can be much higher or lower than your chronological age. By making changes in your lifestyle, such as daily exercise, healthful nutrition, regular rest, stress reduction, etc., you can prevent most chronic diseases. Current research indicates that over 70 percent of colon cancer, over 70 percent of heart disease, and over 90 percent of diabetes are avoidable if one is willing to make healthful changes.1 One of the best ways to keep your body not only healthy, but if you are sick, make it well again, is by using God-given, God-designed, nutritious, disease fighting foods. Here are a few examples of natural foods that will help make us better stewards of our health.

Become full of beans – and other legumes

Beans are one of the most underrated nutritional powerhouses and among the best food buys. Not only are they one of the most inexpensive sources of protein but they also include the B vitamins, zinc, iron, potassium, and magnesium, and they have very little fat. A half cup of beans includes about 25 percent of your daily fiber needs.2 Current data from the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey researchers found that those individuals who included beans in their diet weighed nearly 7 pounds less on the average and were over 20 percent less likely to be obese than those who didn’t.3

In a study reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in November 2005, it was found that a healthy diet rich in lean protein, with approximately half from plant sources such as beans, lowered blood pressure, cut LDL (‘bad’) cholesterol, and cut the risk of heart disease by 21 percent. Other research indicates that people who eat beans more than twice a week are nearly 50 percent less likely to develop colon cancer. In addition, eating beans as part

References:
1. Steven G Aldana, PhD, How to Add 20 Wonderful Years to Your Life, Bottom Line
   Personal, August 1, 2005
8. Berry Good for You, Loma Linda University Nutrition & Health Letter
   June/July 2003.

"Let food be thy medicine,
and medicine be thy food."
— Hippocrates (Father of Medicine)
of your meal helps prevent peaks in the blood glucose, an important part of diabetic management. So go ahead and include garbanzo, kidney, pinto, soy, black, and white beans, and a host of other legumes in your daily fare.

Give yourself a berry boost

There is just nothing like fresh berries! We love those raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, and also the less well-known mulberries, gooseberries, boysenberries, and elderberries. They are not only a summer favorite but also are high on the nutritionist’s list of preventive and healthful foods. Berries are generally low in calories, provide a fair amount of folate and potassium, and are high in vitamin C and fiber. One berry is actually a cluster of many tiny fruits, each with its own seed that provides fiber, the same stuff that’s in bran cereals. The fiber in berries also slows down the rate at which glucose is released into the blood system, which is important in the management of diabetes.

According to a recent study from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, blueberries ranked among the highest in antioxidant capacity out of 100 different foods tested. They may also improve both cognitive and motor function. James Joseph, PhD, a USDA scientist at Tufts University, showed that as they aged, laboratory rats forgot how to make their way through mazes they had previously navigated skillfully. When Dr. Joseph supplemented their diet with a blueberry extract for 60 days, they showed improved navigational skills as well as better balance and coordination. This may suggest that berries enhance the way brain cells communicate with one another.

In the country of Japan, blueberries are called “the vision fruit” because of their potential benefit to help relieve eyestrain. Research in Europe seems to indicate that European blueberries (bilberries) can improve night vision. In other studies, such as one published in JAMA (March 2003), it was shown that a group of elderly females with high levels of bacteria in their urine, who drank 10 ounces of cranberry juice cocktail per day, significantly reduced infection rates over a six-month period. Other laboratory research at the University of Mississippi demonstrated that fresh-dried strawberries and blueberries have the ability to inhibit the growth of both breast and cervical cancer.

Savor the nutritional benefits of tomatoes

Besides the fact that tomatoes are enjoyed for their fresh taste, there is another reason to love them — they are loaded with lycopene, a plant chemical that gives them their red color. Research suggests that dietary lycopene may lower both heart disease and prostate cancer.

In a study of over 1,300 men who consumed foods high in lycopene, these men had half the risk for a heart attack as males who consumed less. Researchers at the University of Illinois found that when they fed one serving of tomato sauce with pasta daily for three weeks to 32 men who were scheduled for prostate surgery, their PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) dropped by nearly 20 percent. Other studies suggest that lycopene may play a role in reducing the risk of colon and rectal cancers.

Enjoy the amazing power of whole grains

For years health scientists have been encouraging the public to eat fruits and vegetables because they protect against major chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. Now there is good evidence that whole grains can provide the same benefits. A recent study from the University of Minnesota found that eating three servings of whole grains each day reduced the risk of heart disease by as much as 36 percent, stroke by 37 percent, and type 2 diabetes by up to 27 percent.

In a study by Tufts University in 2004, researchers found that those individuals who ate three or more servings daily of whole grains, especially cereals, were less likely to develop metabolic syndrome, which is a precursor of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The same results were found in a 1999 Harvard University Nurses’ Study, which reported a lower incidence of heart disease among women who regularly ate a higher intake of whole grains. Yet it is estimated that the majority of people eat only 30 percent of the recommended amount of whole grains, and forty percent never eat them at all. It certainly is time for us to enjoy the benefit of whole grains.

“To get rich never risk your health. For it is the truth that health is the wealth of wealth.”
— Richard Baker