

Enjoy Apples for Good Health

Apples often are used as the symbol of good health for a very good reason. Eating more apples as part of an overall healthful diet may lower our risk for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer and even asthma, according to some studies.

In the U. S., we often have many types of apples to choose from in grocery stores. Apples are the “on-the-go” snack with less than 100 calories per medium apple. One apple also contains about 5 grams of fiber. The skin provides the majority of the fiber content. Eating a fresh apple with the peel intact will give you the maximum health benefit. They also provide vitamins A and C.

Do you have a favorite type of apple? My favorite is the Galas as they are not too hard and have a good sweetness.

Apples can be sweet, tart, crisp, soft, smooth or crunchy, depending on the variety. However, you can't go wrong with most any apple.

There are apples grown in Texas, but the most success has come with apples grown in the Davis Mountains and High Plains near Lubbock. Some of the apples grown in Texas include Fujis, Galas, Crispins and Jonathans. Most apples are grown in the United States come from the Northwest, the Great Lakes are and New England areas.

I just this year learned of the Kincaid apple now called the Holland apple that originated in Parker County just south of Weatherford. There are still some grown, but they can be hard to find.

You can purchase fresh, canned, dried or frozen apples and make a variety of baked goods with them, including pie and cobbler. You also can cook and eat apples by themselves, and you can preserve them or make them into applesauce, cider or juice. Tart apples are better for cooking, while sweeter apples are better for fresh eating.

Here are some tips for enjoying apples:

- Add apples to your recipes. Rinse apples under cool, running water. Slice into prepared oatmeal, over lettuce salads or blend into smoothies. Grate some apple into your favorite muffins or quick breads.
- Bake apples as a quick dessert (with fewer calories than apple pie). Remove the core to create a “well” in each medium-sized apple. For each apple, mix 1 tablespoon brown sugar, 1 tablespoon rolled oats, and a sprinkle of cinnamon and nutmeg. Pack mixture into the apple “well” and add 2 to 3 tsp. of butter or margarine to the top of the stuffed apple. Place apples in baking dish. Add a small amount of hot water in an 8- by 8-inch baking dish (1 cup for four apples). Cover the top of pan with aluminum foil and bake at 375 F for 40 to 50 minutes (until apples are tender).
- Make homemade applesauce. Select full-flavored apples. Wash apples, peel if desired, core and slice. To each quart of apple slices, add a cup of water; cook until tender. Mash or puree (in blender) and add ½ cup sugar, if desired, for each quart of hot puree, stirring until dissolved. Cool and package in freezer containers or bags. Seal and freeze. For easy stacking, freeze the bags of applesauce on a tray.
- Freeze apple slices. Select firm, crisp, full-flavored apples. Wash, peel and core. Slice medium apples into twelfths and large sizes into sixteenths. To prevent apples from darkening during preparation,

dissolve ½ teaspoon ascorbic acid (found in the canning section of grocery stores) in 3 tablespoons water. Sprinkle over the fruit. Place treated slices in a single layer in a steamer basket; steam 1½ to two minutes, depending on thickness of the slices. Cool in ice cold water; drain. Pack apples into freezer bags or containers. Press fruit down and leave about ½ inch at the top to allow for expansion during freezing. Seal and freeze.

Apple Nachos

1/3 c. dried, unsweetened cranberries or raisins
1/4 c. sliced almonds, unsalted
2 Tbsp. hulled, unsalted sunflower seeds
3 medium apples (red or green), cored and thinly sliced (about 12 pieces per apple)
1 to 2 tsp. lemon juice
2 Tbsp. hot water
1/4 c. reduced-fat, smooth peanut butter
1 Tbsp. honey

In a small bowl, combine dried cranberries/raisins, almonds and sunflower seeds. Core each apple and thinly slice into about 12 pieces each. Layer half of the apples onto a large plate or platter. If the apple slices will be sitting out for a while, sprinkle with lemon juice to prevent browning. Using a microwave oven or teapot, bring 2 tablespoons of water to a boil. In a small bowl, combine hot water, peanut butter and honey. Use a spoon and stir until mixture is smooth. Use a spoon to drizzle the peanut butter mixture over the plated apple slices; sprinkle with half the cranberry mixture. Layer the remaining apples on top and repeat with remaining peanut butter and cranberry mixture. Serve.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 167 calories, 7.4 grams (g) fat, 4 g protein, 22 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber and 66 milligrams sodium.