

Nutrition 101 With the Almighty Professor

I hope y'all enjoyed a wonderful weekend of rest, relaxation and delicious, nutritious food!

Speaking of food, today I'd like to share a few fascinating things I discovered about the stuff back when I was writing my book *Fit for Faith*—namely, that creation truly does testify about its Creator. Romans 1:20 tells us that just about anything in nature can move us to worship if we regard its splendor long enough and thoughtfully consider its intricacies—even something as plain as a parsnip or common as a kidney bean.

During my last semester of college, I took a nutrition course that taught all about the vital nutrients found in fruits and vegetables as well as which diseases those nutrients help prevent and which bodily functions they facilitate. While studying for my first exam, I tried to cleverly devise an easy way to memorize which food did what. If only I'd known that many of the answers can be found in the food themselves!

If looking up at the night sky isn't enough to make you marvel at our Maker's handiwork, maybe you should try slicing open a tomato. It turns out that a food's mere appearance indicates its importance to our bodies. The following chart illustrates a few examples:

Food	Appearance	Function
Tomato	Red, 4 chambers (like the human heart)	Contains lycopene, an inhibitor of heart disease.

Walnut	Looks like a brain with a left and right side and upper cerebrum and lower cerebellum. Even the wrinkles on the nut resemble the brain's neo-cortex.	Helps develop over three dozen neurotransmitters for brain function.
Celery, Bok Choy, Rhubarb	Look like bones	These vegetables are 23 percent sodium, just like bones. A lack of sodium in the diet forces the body to pull it from the bones, weakening them. These foods replenish the body's skeletal needs.
Grapes	Hang in a heart-shaped cluster, and each grape resembles a blood cell.	Contain flavonoids and phytonutrients that decrease risk of heart disease.
Kidney Beans	A no-brainer—these look like kidneys!	Heal and help maintain kidney function.
Sweet Potatoes	Look like the pancreas.	Balance the glycemic index within diabetics.
Eggplant, Pears, Avocados	Look like a woman's cervix and womb.	Balance hormones, help shed unwanted birth weight and prevent cervical cancer. It takes nine months to grow an avocado from blossom to ripened fruit!
Olives	Look like ovaries.	Assist the health and function of the ovaries.

Oranges, Grapefruits, Other Citrus Fruits	Resemble the mammary glands of females.	Assist breast health and the movement of lymph in and out of the breasts.
Carrots	A sliced carrot looks like the human eye.	Greatly enhance blood flow to the eyes.

Pretty amazing, isn't it? This knowledge gives us even more motivation to eat salads chock-full of garden goodness and to enjoy the sweetness of citrus on sweltering summer days. And how fun to know exactly what your pre-workout orange or post-workout sweet potato is doing for your body, besides providing energy and revving up your metabolism.

A Color-Coded Cornucopia

Not only can foods' looks give us a clue as to their function, but their colors advertise which vitamins and minerals they feature. I was definitely thankful to know this much while taking my nutrition class.

Color	Nutrients	Functions	Examples
Green	Chlorophyll, calcium, folate, vitamin C, lutein, zeaxanthin	Reduce cancer risks, lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels, normalize digestion time, fight harmful free radicals, boost immune system activity	Green apples, arugula, asparagus, broccoli, lettuce, limes, avocados, zucchini, kiwifruit, green pears, leafy greens, green grapes, okra, peas, artichokes

Red	Lycopene, ellagic acid, Quercetin, Hesperidin	Lower blood pressure, reduce risk of prostate cancer, reduce tumor growth and LDL cholesterol levels, scavenge free radicals, support joint tissue in arthritis cases	Cherries, red apples, red bell peppers, guavas, red onions, red pears, strawberries, watermelons, tomatoes, red grapes, raspberries, radishes
Orange/Yellow	Beta-carotene, zeaxanthin, lycopene, potassium, flavonoids, vitamin C	Reduce age-related macular degeneration and the risk of prostate cancer, lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels, promote collagen formation and healthy joints, encourage alkaline balance, work with magnesium and calcium to build healthy bones, fight harmful free radicals	Sweet potatoes, pumpkin, oranges, carrots, cantaloupe, papayas, peaches, mangos, pineapples, yellow beets, yellow peppers, yellow summer squash, yellow tomatoes, sweet corn, tangerines, yellow apples, rutabagas

Blue/Purple	Zeaxanthin, lutein, vitamin C, fiber, flavonoids, Quercetin, ellagic acid	Support retinal health, lower LDL cholesterol levels, boost immune system activity, support healthy digestion, improve calcium and other mineral absorption, fight inflammation, reduce tumor growth, limit the activity of cancer cells, act as anticarcinogens in the digestive tract	Blueberries, blackberries, eggplant, purple grapes, pomegranates, prunes, raisins, purple figs
White	Beta-glucans, EGCG, lignans	Provide powerful immune-boosting activity, activate natural killer B and T cells, reduce the risk of colon, breast, and prostate cancers, balance hormone levels, reduce risk of hormone-related cancers	Cauliflowers, dates, jicama, bananas, parsnips, potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, shallots, white corn, white peaches, white nectarines

So next time you're in doubt in the buffet line, pretend your plate is an artist's palette and load on the colors! After all, God said you were a masterpiece (Ps. 139:14)!

Fit Fact: To save money, buy foods that are in season and grown locally.

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