

Vitamin C and Iron - A Match Made in Heaven

Food is a delicious necessity in life. After all, it is from the food we eat that we receive all the life giving nutrients needed to sustain us and keep us healthy and strong. As the old saying goes 'You are what you eat', without the right nutrients our bodies become unhealthy and weak. But it is not just about making sure our tummies are full, choosing the right types of food, and eating a healthy and balanced diet, is essential if we want to live long and healthy lives.

Iron is one of these essential nutrients that is needed by the body to survive. Not only does it play a leading role in transporting oxygen via the blood, but it also helps the muscles store and use oxygen for energy production. Without enough iron in the body, you will become iron anemic. This can have a dramatic impact on both infant and teen development, as well as leaving adults feeling extremely fatigued, both physically and mentally.

When reviewing your iron intake, it is important to firstly consider that there are two different types of iron, heme iron and nonheme iron. Heme iron is found in animal products including seafood, poultry, red meats (especially liver) and egg yolks. Nonheme iron is found in plant based products such as beans, lentils, tofu and green leafy veggies (especially spinach).

What many people aren't aware of is that it isn't good enough just to simply increase your iron intake, because there is another vitamin that your body requires in order to properly process iron. In steps vitamin C, another vital nutrient that is needed for the growth and repair of most body tissues.

Though all iron absorption is aided by vitamin C, nonheme iron in particular requires it's assistance. In order for the vitamin C to help though, it needs to be consumed in the same meal.

Fortunately for us, Mother Nature has been kind enough to ensure that there are many different food combinations, that provide both iron and vitamin C in the one meal, and taste amazing!

Try some of these delicious combinations to get the most out of your iron absorption:

***Lamb, pineapple and bell pepper shish kabobs** - Both pineapple and peppers are high in vitamin C.

***Hummus** - Made from iron rich chickpeas and tahini and vitamin C rich lemon juice.

***Mix greens** - Spinach, swiss chard and beet greens are high in iron, while watercress, chicory, and dandelion greens are high in vitamin C.

***Roast beef, with broccoli and potatoes** - That's right, broccoli and potatoes are good sources of vitamin C!

***Dried fruit, nuts and seeds** - This delicious snack conveniently packs a high nonheme iron and vitamin C hit with each mouthful.

***Tofu and tomato relish** - This can be used as a snack, or as a sauce for pasta or rice.

There are many other delicious food combinations that will ensure you are receiving all the required nutrients to get the most out of your diet, so get down to your local farmers market and get creative!

Lemon & Cilantro Hummus Recipe



This delicious hummus is both easy to prepare and high in nonheme iron and vitamin C.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked chickpeas
- Large bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 1tbsp tahini
- 3tbsp olive oil
- Salt for flavour

Preparations:

Mix all the ingredients, together in a food processor and blend to a consistency you like. Then add tomatoes and mix with a spoon. Place in a bowl and garnish with some extra cilantro. This hummus can be kept in a sealed container in the fridge for up to three days.

Serve:

Great on sandwiches, crackers or as a dip with vegetable sticks.

Tips:

- This recipe can be adjusted to suit your taste by adding more or less garlic, lemon and tahini.
- Using dried chickpeas that you have cooked yourself will provide you with a nicer texture and taste, however tinned chickpeas are quick and easy, just remember to drain and rinse them before use!
- If cilantro isn't your herb of choice, mix it up and try chives, basil, or parsley (another great source of iron).
- Just before serving add 1 small vine ripened tomato, finely chopped, for extra flavor and vitamin C!