

Plant Slant

SEE THAT YOUR DIET IS 95 PERCENT PLANT BASED

People in the Blue Zones eat an impressive variety of garden vegetables when they are in season, and then they pickle or dry the surplus to enjoy during the off-season. The best-of-the-best longevity foods are leafy greens such as spinach, kale, beet and turnip tops, chard, and collards. In Ikaria more than 75

varieties of edible greens grow like weeds; many contain 10 times the polyphenols found in red wine. Studies have found that middle-aged people who consumed the equivalent of a cup of cooked greens daily were half as likely to die in the next four years as those who ate no greens. Researchers have also found that people who consumed a quarter pound



Greens add healthy nutrients to meals.



HOW YOU CAN DO IT

- Keep favorite fruits and vegetables on hand. If you don't have access to fresh, affordable vegetables, frozen veggies are just fine.
- Use olive oil like butter. Drizzle it over steamed or boiled vegetables.
- Stock up on whole grains like oats, barley, brown rice, and ground corn. Grains used in the Blue Zones contained less gluten than modern wheat strains.
- Use leftover veggies to make vegetable soup, or freeze them to serve later.



Use beets instead of meat.

of fruit daily (about an apple) were 60 percent less likely to die during the next four years than those who didn't. Combined with seasonal fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans dominate Blue Zones meals all year long.

Many oils derive from plants, and they are all preferable to animal-based fats. We cannot say that olive oil is the only healthy plant-based oil, but it is the one most often used in the Blue Zones. Evidence shows that olive oil consumption increases good cholesterol and lowers bad cholesterol. In Ikaria, we found that for middle-aged people, about six tablespoons of olive oil daily seemed to cut the risk of dying in half.

People in four of the five Blue Zones consume meat, but they do so sparingly, using it as a celebratory food, a small side, or a way to flavor dishes. Research suggests that 30-year-old vegetarian Adventists will likely outlive their meat-eating counterparts by as many as eight years. At the same time, increasing the amount of plant-based



PROTEIN PAIRINGS

- 1 1/2 cups cooked edamame sprinkled with soy sauce
- 1/4 cup walnuts plus 1 1/2 cups cooked edamame
- 1 1/3 cups chopped red peppers plus 3 cups cooked cauliflower
- 2 cups cooked carrots plus 1 cup lima beans
- 1 1/2 cups cooked broccoli rabe plus 1 1/3 cups cooked wild rice
- 1/2 cup firm tofu plus 1 1/4 cups cooked soba noodles

foods in your meals has many salutary effects.

Beans, greens, yams and sweet potatoes, fruits, nuts, and seeds should all be favored. Whole grains are OK too. Try a variety of fruits and vegetables; know which ones you like, and keep your kitchen stocked with them.

Four Always, Four to Avoid

START WITH SIMPLE FOOD GUIDELINES

When we started working with new Blue Zone communities, we wanted simple guidelines to make kitchens healthier. If we could identify the four best foods to always have on hand and the four worst foods to avoid—and create a nudge—we might be able to get people to eat better. The “always” foods had to be readily available, affordable, taste good, and be versatile enough to include in most meals. The “avoid” foods were those highly correlated with obesity, heart disease, or cancer, as well as being constant temptations in the average American diet. Here’s what we came up with:

✓ **FOUR ALWAYS**

100 percent whole wheat bread: As toast or for sandwiches

Nuts: A handful a day

Beans: Either dry or canned

Fruits: Keep in a bowl in your kitchen

✗ **FOUR TO AVOID**

Sugar-sweetened beverages: Empty calories

Salty snacks: Too much salt and preservatives

Processed meats: Linked to cancer and heart disease

Packaged sweets: Cookies, candies banned from pantry



Always keep beans, dried or canned, in your home, as they are a daily part of most Blue Zone diets.