

LEAN GREENS

GETTING MUCH OUT OF ALMOST NOTHING

Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low-calorie nutrient-dense foods that when consumed regularly contribute to good health. According to the United States Food and Drug Administration, a low-calorie food is any food that is 40 calories or less per serving.



Chayote, a tender Mexican squash, is called the vegetable pear for its shape. It belongs to a gourd family with a mild sweet flavour. It is a good source of folate that helps in cell division and DNA synthesis. It is also a good source of fibre, phosphorus, potassium, vitamin B and vitamin C. Chayote is a low-calorie vegetable that provides 16 calories for 100 grams. This light green squash can be sauteed with garlic. Chayote and yellow bean stew goes great with rice. Chayote, with avocado, bell pepper, jalapenos and cilantro, also makes a great salad. (see recipe on Page 20)



Romaine lettuce is high in fibre and low in calories, 16 calories per 100 grams. Though it is low in calories, it consists of minerals such as calcium, potassium, phosphorous and magnesium. It is also packed with vitamin C, vitamin K and folate. Romaine hearts, the middle leaves of the lettuce are smaller and sweeter.



Celery stalks make great snacks at only 14 calories per 100 grams. Celery stalks contain minerals such as calcium, sodium, potassium, magnesium, copper, iron, zinc that help detoxify the body. It contains all the fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, K and water soluble vitamins B and C. Butylphthalide compound, found in celery, stimulates the bile juices that lower cholesterol levels. Potassium, an essential electrolyte, is a vasodilator, and helps to regulate the blood pressure. Vitamin C in celery helps prevent free radical damage and reduces the risk of inflammatory conditions like asthma. Celery leaves make a great addition to soups. The darker the colour, the stronger the flavour! Tomato chicken soup with carrots and celery sounds delicious for lunch!



Cucumbers belong to the family as squash and pumpkin. Like watermelon, cucumbers are made up of 95% water and yield only 12 calories per 100 grams. Water-rich, cucumber is hydrating and helps to suppress the appetite. Cucumbers are rich in vitamin B, vitamin C and vitamin K. They are also loaded with copper, potassium, and manganese. Polyphenols compounds, called lignans, in cucumber help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Lignan helps to lower the risk of breast, uterine, ovarian cancers. Quercetin, an antioxidant in cucumber, along with vitamin C and beta-carotene, helps to lower the risk of heart diseases.

About the author: Kohila Govindaraju is an accredited nutritionist and director of THE BERRIES Nutrition Consulting, an avid blogger (kohilag.wordpress.com) and prolific author of magazine articles on food and nutrition, including a book titled How to Lose Weight Without Hunger published by PatientsEngage.