

What's New in the Healthy Food Scene?

by Nancy Clark MS RD CSSD

Here I am, walking through the American Dietetic Association (ADA) Food and Nutrition Expo that is held in conjunction with ADA's Annual Convention. ADA, the nation's largest group of nutrition professionals, has over 70,000 members and this huge expo hall is filled with registered dietitians sampling new food products. Booth after booth of vendors are inviting me to sample their goodies. Mind you, no one leaves this expo hungry!

Here's a peek at a few new healthful foods (well, some are new and some are forgotten treasures) that taste good, are good-for-you, and can add variety to your daily sports diet. Look for them in your local grocery store, natural foods store, or on the internet.

Frozen Fruit Bars. The “Power of Fruit Frozen Fruit™ Bar” will be a welcomed and refreshing snack after a long run or other sweaty workout! They are made with 100% whole frozen fruit, with no added sugar, color or preservatives. The frozen fruit bar looks like a hefty freeze-pop, but you can actually see bits of real fruit—banana, pineapple, mango, berries. <http://www.poweroffruit.com/>

KIND Fruit & Nut Bars. I know why KIND can claim to be the fastest growing brand of energy / nutrition bars. They taste great! They contain only wholesome natural ingredients—whole nuts, chunks of fruit, and honey. While they might be a bit sticky if you snack on them while on the run, at least they taste finger-licking good! Five percent of profits from sales of the KIND bars are used to fund programs that foster tolerance and coexistence in the world. Hence, the name of their website is www.peaceworks.com, and their slogan is “Be KIND to your body, your taste buds and the world.”

Omega Cookies. Touting “pure science baked into a yummy treat,” Omega Cookies offer a whole day's worth of omega-3 fats (500 mg EPA and 1200 mg DHA, equal in potency to a salmon filet or 8 fish-oil capsules). With 270 calories, the cookie can be a tasty pre- or post-workout snack, or even part of a breakfast on the run. Being rich in fiber, calcium and vitamin D, the cookies are preferable to a donut or cake-like muffin, that's for sure! Keep them in your freezer, and take one or two out for a quick thaw, when needed. omegacookie.com

Welch's Grape Juice: Not a new kid on the block, but promoting a new message, Welch's reports their grape juice (either purple or white) is antioxidant rich. Grape juice is also a local alternative to “tropical superfruits” such as acai berries that get flown in from the Amazon and leave a huge carbon footprint. Other antioxidant-rich juices include tart cherry juice (CherryPharm) and pomegranate juice (POM Wonderful). All promote heart-health and a strong immune system. Drink them straight-up, or as the base for a fruit smoothie, blended with other colorful fruits.

Blueberries. A potent source of antioxidants, (frozen) blueberries claim to have the highest antioxidant capacity per serving, compared with more than 20 other fruits. Wild blueberries rank even higher than cultivated blueberries, but all blueberries are a good addition to your sports diet. Blueberries may help reverse the short-term memory loss that comes with aging, reduce inflammation that is associated with cancer and heart disease, and like cranberries, can reduce urinary tract infections. Sprinkle a handful of frozen berries on top of your breakfast cereal, zap in the microwave for 30 seconds, then douse with milk. Voila—you'll think you are eating blueberry cobbler for breakfast. Yum!

Oikos Organic Greek Yogurt (by Stonyfield Farms). If you haven't tried Greek yogurt yet, you are missing a treat! Available in 5-ounce single servings, Oikos is incredibly smooth, creamy and indulgent.

It's hard to believe this healthful yogurt is really fat-free and has only about 80 calories per serving. Greek yogurt offers twice the protein of regular yogurt, and can be easily enjoyed mixed with fruit.

Eggs. Yes, remember the whole egg, yolk and all? Research has failed to even suggest that healthy people who eat egg yolks have a higher rate of heart disease, so why not eat the whole egg. Enjoying one or two eggs for breakfast is unlikely to give you a heart attack! (1) Half of an egg's protein is in the yolk, along with a myriad of health-promoting nutrients that help athletes thrive, including iron, folate, vitamin D, zinc, B-12, and riboflavin (plus more). Enjoying eggs for breakfast can be a good weight-reduction strategy because eggs are more satiating than just a carb-based breakfast (toast, bagel). You'll tend to stay "full" for longer after breakfast (2).

Barramundi. Not a fan of salmon or strong-tasting fish? Try Barramundi (means "fish with big scales" in an Australian aboriginal dialect). Barramundi are a sweet, mild-tasting white fish (similar to cod) that have the omega-3 content of wild Coho salmon. Barramundi have the rare ability to make omega-3's from plants (unlike salmon that eat small fish). This means Barramundi have no mercury and are eco-friendly, with a small environmental footprint. They are raised using sustainable aquaculture and were crowned the 2009 "Seafood Champion" for ocean-friendly production practices. Definitely worth seeking out (either fresh or frozen) at Whole Foods, Costco, Legal Seafoods, and likely your local supermarket. A good catch!

Chicken and Beef Strips. This isn't just ordinary jerky; this is good stuff that has great flavor and texture! Silver Creek has created a variety of moist, tender and very tasty strips, such as dried chicken breast with black bean salsa and cheddar, and dried beef sirloin with cranberries and blueberries. Each strip has about 50 calories, 10-12 grams of protein and 1-2 grams of fat. They are a handy pre-wrapped, not-messy snack for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing—a welcomed protein alternative to keep you from getting "sugared out" from too many gels and sports drinks. Or just keep them filed under "emergency food" for a satiating afternoon snack at the office. www.silvercreekspecialtymeats.com

The bottom line: The more variety in your daily diet, the more likely you are to enhance your intake of a wider variety of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other health protective compounds. Instead of eating the "same ol' stuff," find a few new menu items that are convenient, taste good, and support your goals for good health and high energy.

Nancy Clark, MS, RD, CSSD (Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics) counsels both casual and competitive athletes in her practice at Healthworks, the premier fitness center in Chestnut Hill MA (617-383-6100). Her *Sports Nutrition Guidebook* and food guides for new runners, marathoners and cyclists are available via www.nancyclarkrd.com. See also sportsnutritionworkshop.com.

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