

A surprise superfruit

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Q Do apples have any real nutritional value and can they compete with superfruits such as blueberries?

A With an average medium-size (100g) apple costing 20p to 40p, they are certainly less expensive than blueberries, which work out at about £1.10 for a similar-size portion.

And, despite their slightly mundane image, they are surprisingly good for us.

You can get about 6mg of vitamin C from an average-size apple; we need 40mg daily to help to maintain strong immunity. The flesh of an apple also provides soluble fibre in the form of pectin, which is thought to help to lower blood cholesterol.

A study by Florida State University found that women aged 46 to 65, who ate 75g of dried apples daily for a year, reduced their "bad" cholesterol levels by 23 per cent and increased their "good" cholesterol by 4 per cent. The study also found that the women lost, on average, 3.3lb, probably because the soluble pectin fibre makes one feel fuller.

Fresh red-skinnaec apples contain anthocyanins, the antioxidant pigments that are found in blueberries, as well as plant compounds, such as D-glucuric acid, which have been linked with lowering bad cholesterol, and quercetin, which has been shown to kill viruses.

Indeed, apples are known to contain more than a hundred super nutrients — all that, and only 47 calories per fruit.

That said, they have their critics. For

Pecking order Salad dressings

A lovely dressing brings a salad to life. You can find these in your local deli or supermarket — just remember, take care when you sprinkle.



1 Lucy's Balsamic Dressing
£4.99 for a 250ml bottle; 87 calories, 9g fat per 15ml tbsps
Made with extra virgin olive oil, Modena balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, Suffolk Muc mustard and honey, this is one of the "cleanest" labels of all dressings with as few ingredients as you would use at home. No additives, no extras and delicious. Check lucydressings.co.uk for retailers.



2 Farrington's Classic Vinaigrette
£3.19 per 250ml; 92 calories, 10g fat per 15ml
Another dressing with a simple list of ingredients, this time headed up by cold-pressed rapeseed oil, which provides some healthy short-chain omega-3s. Made at a Northampton farm, this dressing contains, as well as the oil, white wine vinegar, mustard, unrefined sugar, sea salt, garlic and herbs. Very tasty.



3 Heston from Waitrose Mustard & Shallot Dressing
£1.99 per 200ml; 75 calories and 7.5g fat per 15ml
As you would expect from Heston, this is a dressing with a twist (provided by punchy shallots and capers along with aromatic mustard). It is based on grapeseed oil, which has a clean, light taste and contains beta sitosterol, a super nutrient known to help to lower bad cholesterol.



4 English Provender Co Honey and Mustard Dressing
£1.26 per 250ml; 17 calories, 0.2g fat per 15ml
A dressing that has less than 2 per cent fat per 100ml. Made with water, honey, white wine vinegar and Dijon mustard, it gets its texture from xanthan gum, a vegetable-based thickener. Better tasting than most low-fat dressings.



5 Daylesford Organic French Dressing
£3.99 per 220ml; 85 calories, 9g fat per 15ml
A sunflower oil-based dressing — other ingredients include white wine vinegar, water, Dijon mustard, salt and pepper. It also contains sulphites, a preservative. Sunflower oil is rich in omega-6 but watch your intake as too much can impede the body's ability to absorb omega-3s.

“ Apples contain compounds that can help to lower cholesterol

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SPIN PEAK

Buxton Natural England Estate drops of Buxton from London