



FOOD SYNERGY

POWERFUL FOOD PAIRINGS TO KEEP YOU HEALTHY!

LINDSEY PINE | nutrition X USC

Protein, carbs, fat, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytonutrients: Do you think nutrients work best by themselves or in combination with others?

With others of course! Every time you add olive oil to your tomato salad, red bell peppers to your spinach and marinate your grilled steak with an herb marinade, you are taking simple steps to improve your health!

Nutrients working together in our meals is called **FOOD SYNERGY** and it's a great example of the idea that the whole works greater than the sum of its parts. Whether the nutrient combinations increase absorption rates, help to keep us more satisfied, or decrease the risk of carcinogens, whole foods are a powerful tool to prevent illness and disease.

FOOD SYNERGY IN ACTION

PLANT BASED SOURCES OF IRON + VITAMIN C

Popeye might have been even stronger than he was if he had added a vitamin C source to his spinach! Plant based sources of iron aren't as well absorbed by the body as animal sources. You can improve the absorption rate by pairing iron containing plant based foods, such as spinach, beans, tofu, nuts & seeds, and whole grains, with vitamin C sources like citrus, red bell peppers, strawberries, and even brussel sprouts.

GRILLED MEATS + HERBS

With grilling and BBQ season here, many pounds of meat will get cooked over an open flame. Doing so can increase your consumption of carcinogens, which may be cancer causing. Reduce these carcinogens by marinating meat with potent herbs like rosemary or oregano. Also, try not to char your meat.

FIBER + PROTEIN + HEALTHY FATS

This is the trifecta of nutrients to satisfy hunger and keep you fuller longer. Instead of eating just apple, add some nut butter and whole grain crackers to the mix. If you're eating a fiber rich salad, add some chicken and pumpkin seeds for added protein and fat.

TUMERIC + BLACK PEPPER

Turmeric is a fantastic anti-inflammatory compound due to its active ingredient curcumin; however it's even more fantastic when paired with black pepper containing piperine. When cooking anything with turmeric, such as a curry or stir fry, be sure to add a dose of freshly ground black pepper as well.

CAROTENOIDS + HEALTHY FATS

Fat makes carotenoids, a type of phytonutrient, more bioavailable in the body. Probably the most well-known carotenoid is lycopene, known for its role in the prevention of prostate cancer. Lycopene is found in tomatoes and other red colored fruits and veggies. When you cook with tomatoes, pair them with a healthy fat such as olive oil or avocados. This makes a great case to add tomatoes to your guacamole! Lutein is another important carotenoid and is essential for eye health. Be sure to saute lutein rich foods, such as leafy greens in a fat such as olive oil, or even give steamed greens a drizzle with a flavorful nut oil.

VITAMIN D + CALCIUM

Vitamin D and calcium don't work alone! Calcium needs Vitamin D for optimal absorption. Next time you eat salmon, tuna, or whole eggs, pair with calcium containing foods such as yogurt, leafy greens, almonds, white beans, oranges, or even seaweed.

 If you have questions about eating on campus please contact the USC Hospitality Registered Dietitian, Lindsey Pine at lpine@usc.edu