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5 Ingredients from the Chinese Menu that Measure Up the Nutrition Scale

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Chinese New Year is a whole week filled with cultural festivities and tasty Asian morsels. It's a good thing Chinese cuisine offers more than just lemon chicken or spring rolls. In fact, you can easily prepare tasty Chinese cuisine at home that is heart-healthy as well.

5 Ingredients from the Chinese Menu that Measure Up the Nutrition Scale

1. Citrus

Citrus fruits are good sources of Vitamin C and flavonoids. They have a long history in the Chinese culture. Not surprisingly, citrus fruits are consumed in higher quantities during the Chinese New Year celebration period than at any other time of the year. According to celebrity chef Martin Yan, fruits like oranges, pummelos, and tangerines are traditional symbols of happiness, prosperity, and good fortune. Simply toss orange or tangerine wedges into your stir-fry to add tanginess to your dishes. Or, use fresh citrus juice instead of salad dressing in your salad to cut down on calories.

2. Brown Rice

Rice is a staple food in the Chinese culture, but not all rice is the same. Choose whole-grain brown rice to reap the health benefits of numerous nutrients and fiber. If you have a rice cooker at home, cooking brown rice is not difficult. But if you don't and are not interested in preparing whole brown rice, you may want to try Uncle Ben's Ready Whole Grain rice. You can have delicious, healthy whole-grain brown rice in just 90 seconds!

3. Tofu

The cholesterol-lowering effect of soy and its role in preventing heart disease was widely recognized in the mid 1990s when the results of a meta-analysis of 38 clinical studies were published. The results demonstrated that a diet with significant soy protein reduces total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol (the "Bad" cholesterol) and triglycerides. To increase soy in your diet, use tofu to replace meat in your cooking. For instance, instead of stir frying a beef and broccoli dish with black bean sauce, use firm tofu.

4. Bok Choy

Bok choy is packed with Vitamins A and C, iron, calcium and phytonutrients. Plus, it's very filling, high in fiber, and low in calories. Personally, I like eating bok choy cooked, so I usually stir fry it in a non-stick pan - but it is absolutely fine to eat it raw as well, so go ahead and toss it into your salad and reap the nutritional benefits!

5. Fish

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish have been shown in epidemiological and clinical trials to reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol. Cod and sea bass are more prevalent on the Chinese menu, but that shouldn't limit your selection. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least 2 servings of fish (any fish) a week. If the fish odor is something you don't look forward to, learn from the Chinese way of cooking fish - steam with ginger! That definitely works. If you need more punch, try black bean sauce.

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