

Home

Newsletter

Archive

Tell-a-Friend

Expert

Friends

Features

Testimonials

Survey

Results

Health

References

Favorite

Pets

Order Now



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IN THIS ISSUE

- [Member questions: lutein, testing, & CODEX](#)
- [Good news on chocolate - "food of the gods"](#)
- [Health in the news](#)
- [Favorite pet pictures](#)

FREQUENT MEMBER QUESTIONS

Members of the Co-op are always trying to stump this kat with tough questions on all sorts of subjects. Sometimes, I have to pull in our experts to answer them. Sheesh. The many "inquiring minds" out there!

Take a look at what your fellow members have been asking:

LUTEIN AND FATTY FOODS

Q: I read that lutein is an oil-soluble compound. Is it beneficial to take lutein with fatty foods to help in its absorption?

A: Yes, lutein is indeed a fat-soluble antioxidant, so it makes sense to take it with fatty foods as to increase its absorption.

Lutein supplements are usually esterified (lutein esters) by attaching fatty acids to the lutein molecule to enhance absorbability. However, it is still beneficial to take lutein with some fat in the diet.

With lutein in foods (like spinach, eggs, OJ, etc.), it is better absorbed with other fatty foods taken at the same time. However, word to the wise, fair members - moderation on those fats!

FYI - Lutein is an important ingredient in our [Eye Protection Formula](#). And, lutein has been linked to promoting healthy eyes and healthy skin.

[Click here to check out our products!](#)

QUALITY TESTING RAW INGREDIENTS

Q: Does the Co-op test the "raw" ingredients before the final products are manufactured?

A: We work with only a few manufacturers, all of whom are carefully screened and who understand our testing process. Our manufacturers have excellent track records in buying and delivering top-quality raw materials for our products.

For example, when we were waiting for a production run of [Arthro 3](#), we got a call from our NNFA GMP manufacturer, who noticed that the color was off for the curcumin. He wanted permission to delay the manufacturing run until he could replace the raw material (he knew there was short supply of this material at the time). This meant a temporary out-of-stock situation; however, there was no question that we wanted to ensure that the final production run would pass independent lab testing.

At Our Health Co-op, we usually test completed products for the principle ingredients and often test for the smallest ingredient (those materials that are included in micrograms instead of milligrams), which is a good test for the blending process.

However, we do have one important exception at this time. For our [Guggul Plus](#) product, we test the guggul and the policosanol before blending, since once blended we cannot get accurate test results. After formulation, we check the blending by testing the amount of hawthorne berry.

It is important to note that we test every production run. We like to remind people that this is rare in our industry, and unbelievably rare given our discount prices! You can see the results of our quality tests for our products [here!](#)

CODEX SUPPLEMENT REGULATIONS AND U.S. LAWS

Q: I have read that the Codex Alimentarius Commission is setting the supplement standards for all countries that are part of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Will these guidelines change the availability of dietary supplements here in the U.S.?

A: The answer is "no." According to the National Nutritional Foods Association (NNFA,) the FDA Modernization Act passed in 1997 forbids U.S. adoption of any Codex regulations that undo the freedoms established by the 1994 Dietary Supplements Health Education Act (DSHEA).

DSHEA is the federal statute that has direct bearing on the production, distribution and labeling of dietary supplements here in the United States. The Codex guidelines will not have any practical impact on sales of dietary supplements in the United States, by either suppliers or retailers. DSHEA will continue to govern domestic sales.

A lot of the noise on this issue is coming from vendors, whose international sales may suffer. We empathize but

with our primary focus on U.S. market, we are confident that our members will be protected by DSHEA.

I encourage our members to read the Q&A from NNFA below to learn more about Codex and the EU Directive:

http://www.nnfa.org/services/government/EUdir_Codex_QA.htm

In general, we are very optimistic about the power of the American consumer and the ability humans have to lobby for action. For members who want to voice their support for DSHEA, contact your legislators now (and often!). It's easy - just go to www.saveoursupplements.org.

HERE'S TO CHOCOLATE, AND TO YOUR HEALTH!

Everyone seems to be talking about the health benefits of chocolate! Even though this magical confection has been around for centuries, more and more scientific researchers are rediscovering what the Aztecs knew long ago: chocolate contains a rich source of healthy vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

I know, I know, your heart is beating faster. Some good news, finally!

Fast Factoid: Annual chocolate sales are flat; however, gourmet or "luxury" dark chocolate sales have increased in the last few years as a result of tantalizing health news trumpeting the benefits of dark chocolate. More and more people are reaching for the higher-end, organic dark chocolate bar that contains more cocoa and fewer additives.

Even M&M Brand Candies are going to the dark side with new dark chocolate M&Ms! Betcha didn't know that! ^..^

At the Nutrition and Health Conference in Tucson in March, a few experts (including a bona fide M.D.) presented a session titled "Chocolate: Health Food of the Gods." Read on to learn what they shared in this session.

CHOCOLATE: A RICH, DELICIOUS HISTORY

The cacao bean (the source of chocolate) was a prized possession of ancient South American cultures. Both Mayan and Aztec civilizations transformed the fruit of the cacao plant into a rich, bitter chocolate beverage that was consumed during traditional rituals and honored by royalty and priests.

The cacao beverage was a common offering to the gods. Even the botanical name for cacao is "Theobroma cacao," meaning "food of the gods." This beverage was quite different from the hot chocolate that humans consume these days. The drink was typically a mixture of cacao, water, vanilla, chili and other spices.

Fast Factoid: It was not until the 1500's, in Spain, that sugar was added to this chocolate beverage and then heated to make the first "hot chocolate."

Cacao potions or elixirs are linked to Aztec medical practices, but mainly used as a flavoring for certain medicines.

Between the 16th and early 20th centuries, the most common medicinal practices of cacao included improvements in digestive functions, invigoration of the nervous system, and treatment of burns, cuts and skin irritations.

In case you are interested, [click here](#) to read a very in-depth look at the history and medicinal use of chocolate.

CHOCOLATE: TODAY'S HEALTH BENEFITS

Polyphenol antioxidants (or flavonoids) are found in the cacao bean. Among many fruits and vegetables, the cacao bean has the highest antioxidant content.

In 1999, the University of Scranton determined that 40 grams of milk chocolate contains 300 mg of polyphenols. That is an antioxidant equivalent of 5 servings of fruits and vegetables or 5 oz of a glass of red wine!

If it was 40 grams of dark chocolate, it would have twice the amount of antioxidants!

In fact, dark chocolate antioxidants rate high in their ability to subdue oxidation, which is measured in ORAC: oxygen radical absorbance capacity per 100 grams. The higher the ORAC is in a food, the more protection from oxygen radicals.

To compare, dark chocolate has 13,120 ORAC units while blueberries have 2,400 ORAC units! Who knew?!?! Any members doing cartwheels yet?

CARDIOVASCULAR PROTECTION OF CHOCOLATE

What makes the cacao polyphenol antioxidants so valuable is their protective effects on cardiovascular health. Research has shown that cocoa is anti-lipidemic, anti-platelet and anti-hypertensive. What does that mean?

- Anti-lipidemic effects: A study published in 2002 by researchers at [Pennsylvania State University](#) found that giving people 22 grams of cocoa plus 16 grams of dark chocolate reduced LDL cholesterol oxidation susceptibility and increased HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol).
- Anti-platelet effects: In 1996, researchers at University of California at Davis found that cocoa consumption reduced platelet aggregation (blood clotting inside arteries). This is the same cardio-protection effect as aspirin.
- Anti-hypertensive effects: In 2003, JAMA published a study showing that individuals who were given 100 grams of dark chocolate for 14 days showed a decrease in their systolic blood pressure 10 days after starting on chocolate.

MIND ALTERING EFFECTS OF CHOCOLATE

There are over 300 compounds in chocolate - and many of these positively affect the brain, producing a sense of euphoria, alertness and reduction of depression.

Phenylethylamine is naturally present in our brains, and also a key ingredient in chocolate. Similar to amphetamine, phenylethylamine releases dopamine into the pleasure centers of the brain, causing exhilaration and general sense of well-being.

Methylxanthines compounds found in chocolate create a state of alertness. Methylxanthine (caffeine), theobromine and theophylline are all compounds in chocolate that stimulate chemical activity, giving humans a jolt of energy when they eat chocolate.

Lastly, there is the compound anandamide. Actually, this compound is not found in chocolate but similar compounds in chocolate block enzymes that destroy the human brain's natural anandamide. This gives way to a buildup of anandamide and then a sense of mild euphoria. So, ladies and gents who crave chocolate - it's not "all in your head." It's biochemistry, after all!

EATING CHOCOLATE? HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

With all the good health news mentioned above, it would be hard to believe that eating chocolate could be anything but positive. But chocolate, even the dark stuff, contains lots of fat and calories! For each 100 grams (3.5 oz) of dark chocolate, you are looking at roughly 500 calories.

In addition, not all chocolate has the same health benefits as dark chocolate. The milk in milk chocolate has the potential to interfere with the absorption of antioxidants from chocolate. And white chocolate, which has zero antioxidants (it is made without cocoa solids, which contain the polyphenols), does not provide the same cardiovascular benefits as dark chocolate.

Roberta Lee MD, from the Center for Health in Healing in New York City, recommends eating an occasional, small amount (like 2 to 3 oz) of the finest quality dark chocolate, which will most likely do more good than harm.

Dr. Lee's warning: No chocolate for those who are diabetic, overweight or hyperlipidemic.

Nevertheless, with abundant scientific evidence on the health benefits of chocolate, our fair members can enjoy this "food of the gods" and not feel so guilty! Certainly this information merits a little passing around, don't you think?!

HEALTH IN THE NEWS

- Older hearts may benefit from fish, soy oil: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/510909/?sc=mwtn>
- Animal study shows that antioxidant-rich diets may limit brain damage from strokes: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/511058/?sc=mwtn>
- Herbal supplements and arthritis drug interactions can be risky: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/511072/?sc=mwtn>
- Cranberries help relax blood vessels: <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=46517>
- Mediterranean diet makes for long life: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/510942/?sc=mwtn>
- Processed meats ups pancreas cancer risk: <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=46804>
- Vitamin D and sunshine improve lung cancer survival: <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=46760>

FAVORITE PETS

We've got a new edition of Favorite Pets posted. [Take a look!](#)

And to all our members, send in your favorite not-yet-famous pets (solicit from your kids or grandkids if need be - they'll be thrilled to see their pets on this kat's site, promise!).

And, for those of you who like to occasionally browse the archives of Favorite Pets, hang tight, we'll get those posted to our new web site before too long.

Enough for now! Time to scat!

Still purringly yours,

Guido

Guido Housemouser (The Enforcer) ^..^
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Making Health Affordable Together
