

Health Benefits of Apricots



Apricots are a member of the stone fruit or drupe family which includes peaches, plums, cherries, nectarines and olives. These fruits each have a large stone or pit inside. Apricots have a soft, velvety skin, with sweet flesh that is not overly juicy. Most apricots in the US come from California orchards.

WHAT MAKES APRICOTS GREAT?

Nutrition

2 fresh or 2 dried halves of apricots provides 34 Calories, 1 gm protein, 2 gm fiber, no fat, no cholesterol.

As with other dried fruits, dried apricots are a more concentrated source of calories, nutrients and fiber. A 1/2 cup serving of dried apricots provides 157 Calories and nearly 5 grams of fiber.

Vitamins

Apricots are rich in antioxidants, which include beta-carotene, vitamins C, E, K and polyphenols. They also have many other antioxidant compounds like quercetin, catechins and epicatechins, and gallic acid.

Beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin help protect eyesight against age-related damage and blindness. Catechins, like those found in green tea, have anti-inflammatory properties and may help to control high blood pressure.

Minerals

Apricots are one of the best sources of potassium which is important for nerve transmission and lowering blood pressure. It is also essential for muscle contraction, including the heart muscle, and for maintaining kidney function. One half cup of dried apricots has 679 more grams of potassium than one banana.

Fiber

A serving of apricots provides 2 grams of fiber, which contributes to the minimum recommendation of 25-38 gm/day. Apricots contain soluble fiber, known to modulate blood sugars and lower cholesterol. Soluble fiber also feeds our healthy gut bacteria and improves our immune system.

Insoluble fiber in apricots helps to move food through the digestive tract and may prevent some forms of cancer.

BUYING & USING APRICOTS

Apricot season in the US runs May through August. Winter apricots are often imported from southern countries. Ripe apricots are dark orange and slightly soft with a fragrant aroma. Since the skins are edible, it is recommended to select apricots displaying the USDA organic label when possible. If unable to use fresh apricots right away, they can be frozen.

Store ripe apricots in the refrigerator unwashed. Wash just before slicing around the seam of the apricot and twist halves to remove the stone.

Add to smoothies and salads, fill halves with yogurt and nuts, or just enjoy plain. Try fresh or frozen in margaritas.

Dried apricots are often packaged with added sugars and sulfur dioxide to preserve color, which can cause allergic reactions. Select unsulfured dried fruit with no added sugars. Toss in cereal, yogurt or salads or chop into trail mix. Rehydrate dried apricots by pouring boiling water over them and letting them sit for 5 minutes. Then add to stir fry vegetables or mashed potatoes.

Winter apricots can be less sweet and are often used in making jams, jellies and syrups. Use fresh or frozen apricots for these preparations. You can also add these to soups and stews.



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Apricot Crisp

Plantbasedonabudget.com

Ingredients:

2 pounds fresh apricots, pitted and quartered
 1/4 cup granulated sugar (coconut sugar works)
 1 tsp dried culinary lavender buds (optional)
 Pinch of salt

1 cup rolled oats
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1/3 cup brown or coconut sugar
 1/4 tsp salt
 1/4 c canola oil

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 355°F.
2. In 8x8" baking dish or pan, combine apricots, and first set of ingredients.
3. In a medium mixing bowl, combine oats and second set of ingredients except oil. Drizzle the oil into dry ingredients and mix until crumbly.
4. Sprinkle oat topping on the apricot mixture.
5. Bake uncovered 25 minutes or until fruit is bubbly and topping is golden brown.
6. Serve warm, room temperature or cold.

Apricot Spinach Salad

ToriAvey.com

Ingredients:

12 oz baby spinach, cleaned
 3/4 c unsalted raw walnuts
 5 whole ripe apricots, sliced

Dressing:

1 c ripe avocado, diced
 1 c fresh basil leaves
 1/4 c fresh lemon juice
 1 tsp honey
 1 Tbsp olive oil
 3/4 c cold water
 1/2 tsp salt

Directions:

1. Toast walnuts in dry skillet over medium heat until they begin to brown and smell toasty.
2. Combine spinach, walnuts and apricot slices and toss gently.
3. Add dressing ingredients to blender and process until smooth and creamy. Add 1 Tbsp at a time until mixture is creamy enough to pour.
4. Drizzle dressing over salad and serve.

Apricot Bars

Wholesomelicious.com

Ingredients:

Crust:

2 c almond flour
 2 Tbsp coconut oil
 1 Tbsp vanilla
 1 Tbsp water
 1/4 tsp salt

Filling:

1 1/2 c dried apricots
 3 c boiling water
 1 Tbsp lemon juice
 1 Tbsp maple syrup

Crumb topping:

1 tsp cinnamon
 2 Tbsp coconut sugar
 1/2 Tbsp coconut oil
 1/4 tsp salt

Directions:

1. Place dried apricots in medium bowl and pour boiling water over them and let sit 20 minutes. Drain and add to food processor. Add lemon juice and maple syrup and pulse until thick and mostly smooth with a few chunks.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F and line 8x8" pan with parchment paper.
3. Combine crust ingredients in food processor and pulse until crumbly. Distribute evenly around pan. With another piece of parchment paper or wooden spoon, press mixture firmly into the pan.
4. Bake 13 min or until golden brown and allow to cool. Keep oven on for next step.
5. Make the crumb topping by pulsing in food processor until crumbly, about 10 seconds.
6. Spread apricot filling over cooled crust. Top with crumb mixture.
7. Bake 15-18 minutes or until top is golden brown. Cool and cut into squares.

REFERENCES

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 Organicfacts.net