

## Articles written for the Blue Moon Organics Newsletter Series 3

### A Peak at the Leek

Leeks, like garlic and onions, belong to a family called the *Allium* vegetables. Since leeks are related to garlic and onions, they contain many of the same beneficial compounds found in these well-researched, health-promoting vegetables.

A high intake of *Allium* vegetables has been shown to reduce total cholesterol and LDL, or "bad" cholesterol levels, while at the same time raising HDL, or "good" cholesterol levels. This can be very important in preventing the development or progression of the blood vessel plaques that occur in atherosclerosis and diabetic heart disease.

Regular consumption of *Allium* vegetables, as little as two or more times a week, is associated with a reduced risk of prostate and colon cancer. The research focused on colon cancer suggests that several of the compounds found in these foods are able to protect colon cells from cancer-causing toxins, while also stopping the growth and spread of any cancer cells.

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### Cauliflower Power

For about 20 years, we've known that many phytonutrients work as antioxidants to disarm free radicals before they can damage DNA, cell membranes and fat-containing molecules such as cholesterol. Now, new research is revealing that the phytonutrients in cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower work at a much deeper level. These compounds actually signal our genes to increase productions of enzymes involved in detoxification, the cleansing process through which our bodies eliminate harmful compounds.

Recent studies also show that those eating the most cruciferous vegetables have a much lower risk of prostate, colorectal and lung cancer-even when compared to those who regularly eat other vegetables.

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### How could you not eat broccoli?

Like other cruciferous vegetables, broccoli contains phytonutrients which have significant anti-cancer effects, namely indole-3-carbinol. Research on indole-3-carbinol shows this compound helps to deactivate cancer causing cells, while at the same time increasing cancer protective cells.

Indole-3-carbinol has been shown to suppress not only breast tumor cell growth, but also cancer cell metastasis (the movement of cancerous cells to other parts of the body).

All of this is done by a potent detoxification process that occurs as the enzymes of our bodies come into balance and can then disarm free radicals and toxins including cancer causing cells. Knowing this, how could you not eat broccoli?

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### **Yamalicious**

Yams' complex carbohydrates and fiber deliver the goods gradually, slowing the rate at which their sugars are released and absorbed into the bloodstream. In addition, because they're rich in fiber, yams fill you up without filling out your hips and waistline. Yams are also a good source of manganese, a trace mineral that helps with carbohydrate metabolism and is a cofactor in a number of enzymes important in energy production and antioxidant defenses.

Packed with all of this and they taste great prepared many different ways, they can only be called Yamalicious!

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### **More Avocado, please.**

Although they are fruits, avocados have a fat content of between 71 to 88% of their total calories - about 20 times the average for other fruits. A typical avocado contains 30 grams of fat, but 20 of these fat grams are health-promoting monounsaturated fats, the kind that doesn't turn to fat in our bodies but rather helps to burn unwanted "bad fats".

This monounsaturated fat also helps to lower cholesterol. In one study of people with moderately high cholesterol levels, individuals who ate a diet high in avocados showed clear health improvements. After seven days on the diet that included avocados, they had significant decreases in total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol, along with an 11% increase in health promoting HDL cholesterol.

Enjoying a few slices of avocado in your tossed salad, or mixing some chopped avocado into your favorite salsa will not only add a rich, creamy flavor, but will greatly increase your body's ability to absorb the health-encouraging carotenoids that your salad vegetables provide.

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## Squash out Smoke

If you or someone you love is a smoker, or if you are frequently exposed to secondhand smoke, then making winter squash a part of your healthy way of eating may just save your life, suggests the latest research conducted at Kansas State University.

These recent studies have revealed that a common carcinogen found in cigarette smoke called benzo (a) pyrene causes Vitamin A deficiency. This deficiency contributes to lung disease.

A diet rich in Vitamin A containing foods such as winter squash can help to reduce the development of emphysema, lung cancer and smoking related lung conditions. Varieties of Winter Squash include acorn, pumpkin and butternut.