



HEALTH

Eating Green on the Go for Diving

By Gretchen M. Ashton Apr 12, 2016

So, you don't want to eat your vegetables? If we told you that the nutritional benefits of green foods extend your diving pursuits, you just might learn to appreciate the color green in a whole new way.

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With brilliant shades such as emerald, lime, jade, olive and aqua — just to name a few — green is the most dominant color on our planet. A potent symbol of life, the presence of green indicates perhaps the most biologically productive portions of the Earth's surface. Green symbolizes the coming of spring and a love of nature, and, as divers, we especially appreciate the beauty of the green outdoors in our land and water environments. Guess what — green is good for divers on the inside, too. The nutrients found in green foods, such as vegetables, fruits and algae, help maintain good health, prevent disease, help prepare the body to deal with the physiological stresses and effects of pressure at depth, and improve diver performance. Have we changed your mind about eating green yet?

The Big Three: Celery, Cucumbers, and Broccoli

Let's start with a few green vegetables from a standard veggie tray that might be served on a dive boat. If not, these are easy to take with you. Celery, cucumber and broccoli can be enjoyed raw; they are easy to wash and package for snacks on the go; and they support your body during diving. And all three of these low-calorie veggies help divers stay hydrated. Cucumber has the highest water content of any solid food at almost 97 percent; celery follows at 95 percent; and broccoli is almost 91 percent water, along with plenty of fiber to help you feel full. Celery has only six calories per stalk; cucumber has 16 calories per cup; and broccoli has 11 calories per spear.

When it comes to nutrition, these three are powerhouses as well. Celery contains more than a dozen antioxidant nutrients and is a natural anti-inflammatory, especially in the digestive tract. It also protects the body from oxidative damage to its cells, blood vessels and organ systems. It is best to consume fresh celery within five to seven days of purchase and to cut it just before eating.

Cucumbers are known to contain nutritional properties that may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, Parkinson's disease, and breast, uterine, ovarian and prostate cancers. Cucumbers have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, contain vitamin C, beta-carotene and manganese. Cucumbers are best when refrigerated during storage. The skin and seeds can be enjoyed, but avoid the wax found on some cucumbers by scrubbing or peeling.

Finally, properties in broccoli help prevent cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis and allergies, and help enzymes in your liver eliminate toxins from the body. Broccoli may be enjoyed raw or steamed, but avoid microwaving it to retain nutrients. Better yet, broccoli sprouts contain 20 times more beneficial nutrients than broccoli. They taste better, are easy to add to salads, and help reduce inflammation in the upper airways.

Don't Skip the Salad

Speaking of salads, divers can almost always find a wide variety of salads at dive resorts, on restaurant menus, and — in southern California — even on dive boats. To boost your intake of healthy greens, skip the iceberg lettuce and choose salads made with romaine, leaf lettuces, kale and spinach. These leafy greens have much more flavor and are packed with nutrients that support detoxification of the body, enzymes that aid in digesting protein foods, and loads of calcium and potassium. But don't stop here — get creative with your salads and try watercress, avocado, sunflower, bean and other sprouts, snap peas and cabbage.

Steaming is the best way to prepare most kinds of cooked green vegetables. Artichokes, Brussels sprouts, asparagus and green beans are particularly delicious when steamed. Adding greens to soups and stews is another way to eat your vegetables with the benefit of flavor from other ingredients such as proteins, beans and potatoes. Juices or smoothies are another great way to get your greens on the go, since most are made with a combination of green vegetables and apple, carrot or beet juice to sweeten and improve taste. Juices can be purchased ready-made or prepared fresh at home and carried in an insulated lunch box.

Last but not least, superfood powders that blend nutrient-rich spirulina, wheatgrass, alfalfa and more can be added to juices. And, if you are ready to go hard core, try fresh seaweed in sushi or seaweed salad. Bon Appetit, and enjoy your greens!



Contributor

[Gretchen M. Ashton](#)
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Gretchen brings her passion for diving and fitness together as the founder of ScubaFit® the only fitness for diving certification which is also approved by both diving and fitness agencies. She is an advanced diver, NBF and ISSA Elite Personal Trainer, Specialist in Fitness Therapy and Nutrition, an AAU World Champion Hall-of-Fame athlete, and a mentor for Water Women, Inc. She shares her message with divers by visiting dive clubs, presenting at scuba shows, as a radio guest, as the publisher of FitDiver® Magazine, and with FitDiver® mobile apps. She widely published with more than 125 articles for diving publications and blogs. For more information or to contact Gretchen, visit www.scubafit.com.

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