

## **Strawberries are SUPER! Let Me Count the Ways**

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You may have seen the term “superfruit” associated with various fruits in the marketplace. It certainly has become a popular term tossed around quite a bit in the media lately. It prompted me to think, “What exactly qualifies a fruit to be ‘super’?”

When writing *101 Foods That Could Save Your Life*, I researched the term “superfruit” and found that there wasn’t a legal definition for it. But as a registered dietitian, I knew that certain fruits had unique qualities and health attributes that made them different from others. In deciding what fruits to include as worthy members of the *101 Foods* book, I looked for distinguishing factors such as nutrient density, which is a measure of how much nutrition is delivered in comparison to the calories provided. Another important attribute was evaluating the health benefits of adding in a specific fruit into the diet. But as a consumer who also has an eye on taste and versatility, regardless how healthy and nutritious a super fruit is, if it isn’t accessible, easy to prepare, and great tasting, then in my book, that fruit is less-than-stellar. Not surprisingly, strawberries are a perfect example of a superfruit that meets all “super” criteria!

**Super Nutritious:** Strawberries are an excellent example of a nutritious superfruit. They are nutrient dense but also low in sugar (only 8 grams) and have only 50 calories per serving (1 cup or approximately 8 medium strawberries). And with such a low calorie and sugar profile they are a welcome addition for people who want to look and feel their best all year long – not just in the summer! Strawberries are packed with a variety of nutrients including vitamin C, folate, fiber and potassium. They also contain important plant nutrients called polyphenols such as anthocyanins, ellagic acid, ellagitannins, gallotannins, quercetin, kaempferol and phenolic acids.

**Super Healthy:** Being nutritious is great, but what about the effect of those nutrients on

health? Scores of studies exist that evaluate the health benefits of the nutrients found in strawberries.

- Potassium helps control blood pressure and fight stroke.
- Fiber helps control weight and relieve constipation.
- Vitamin C helps repair damage in the body and is an important nutrient in promoting a healthy immune system. This is especially important during cold and flu season. Folate is a B vitamin that fights birth defects and helps control the inflammatory process associated with heart disease.

The plant nutrients found in strawberries, particularly polyphenols, have antioxidant capabilities that can reduce inflammation and oxidative stress. These two harmful processes have been linked to major challenges to our health, including cancer, cardiovascular and neurological disease, arthritis, obesity, diabetes, autoimmune disorders and pulmonary disease. Polyphenols help protect and repair cells. Research on these and other nutrients found in strawberries have shown promise in various studies in:

- Improving cognitive decline.
- Reducing damage that leads to aging.
- Enhanced signaling between brain cells.
- Reducing total and LDL cholesterol and preventing the oxidation of LDL cholesterol.
- Reducing the requirement of insulin for glucose control.
- Protecting DNA from harmful mutations.

**Super Accessible:** Some superfruits are only available fresh at certain times of the year or not at all – not so super. Because California Strawberries are grown year round, you can find them fresh or frozen at your local grocery store whenever you want them.

**Super Delicious:** Perhaps this is the one “super” trait that trumps them all. Who cares if a fruit is good for you if it isn’t delicious? In fact, strawberries are ranked #1 as kids’ favorite fruit and

adults love them, too! They are versatile as an ingredient in salads, soups, sweet and savory dishes...you name it. And best of all, they are pretty super tasting all by themselves.

Have a super day! - *David Grotto*

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