

# Ugly fruit is better for us

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According to Amy Reiter in the blog healthy eats, some research shows that produce that has bumps, dimples, scale or strange shapes may be “nutritionally superior and taste better than perfect-looking produce.”

We’ve all seen that gnarly heirloom tomato and it was delicious. Rusty apples are fine under the skin, and spots on peach skins are just spots most of the time.

The research says the scars and such on ugly veggies or fruit may be a sign that they have fought-off an environmental threat and have built up more antioxidants.

A Clemson University environmental biologist told NPR that the stressed plants “produce metabolites that are good for us.”

Here’s to the uglies. Haven’t we always been taught that looks can be deceiving?

Admit it — you try to eat healthy and you feel like you swallowed the Goodyear blimp. There’s a reason for that. A number of food items can cause us to bloat. Robynne Chutkan has written “The Bloat Cure,” which points the finger at artificial sweeteners, vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, kale and broccoli and even drugs like ibuprofen and aspirin. Avoid soy products, too, and sports drinks.

Some of her suggestions: use lemon on your cruciferous veggies to help in digestion. Try coconut milk, rice milk, hemp milk or unsweetened almond milk instead of soy milk. Thirsty? Drink water and treat yourself to a banana to replace lost potassium.

This could be very useful. Health.com asked nutrition experts what foods they would not touch: no sugar added or less sugar ice cream — loaded with artificial sweeteners that

can produce a laxative effect; no puffed veggie chips — lots of additives and calories; powdered peanut butter, lower in calories and fat, but also less healthy and satisfying; commercial salad dressings; whole wheat bread (glycemic index) and cold pressed juices that are high in sugar and lower in fiber.

And since we're in the neighborhood, let's check out another blog on healthy snacks.

Popcorn is great, as long as it's air popped. Avoid the movie-theater-butter version and enjoy the 30 calories per cup of air-popped popcorn with 5 percent of your daily fiber intake. Sprinkle it with sea salt and a little olive oil, or a light shower of Parmesan cheese.

Dried fruit does have a high sugar content, but eaten in moderation, it is an easy way to add fiber and antioxidants to your diet. Portion control is important, like a max of seven apricot halves or two tablespoons of raisins or cranberries.

Avocado, the current darling of the foodies, dieters and raw food movement — you know the drill, good fat, filling, and the antioxidant lutein, shown to help with eye health.

Make your own trail mix using raw or dry roasted nuts, whole gran cereal and dried fruit. That way you can skip all the added sweeteners and preservatives.

And, back to peanut butter. Look for peanut butter made with just peanuts and salt, no added sugar or oil. Skip the reduced fat because it may have more sugar or preservatives. Peanut butter can satisfy your hunger with protein and healthy fat, along with vitamin E.

Here's a fairly healthy and very tasty treat/snack that you can feel less guilty about, from Ellie Krieger from Food Network

### Cherry Almond Chocolate Clusters

1 cup toasted almonds, coarsely chopped

1/2 cup dried cherries, coarsely chopped

6 ounces dark chocolate, finely chopped

In a medium bowl, toss the almonds and cherries together. Line a baking sheet with waxed paper.

Melt the chocolate (3 ounces) in the top of a double boiler over slightly simmering water, over the lowest possible heat, stirring frequently. Make sure the water is not touching the top pan or bowl. Remove the double boiler from the heat and stir in the rest of the chocolate.

Gently wipe the water off the bottom of the pan or bowl and set aside. Replace the simmering water in the pan with warm tap water. Place the top pan or bowl back over the warm water. This will keep the chocolate at the right temperature while you make the clusters.

Stir the fruit and nut mixture into the chocolate. Spoon out heaping tablespoon-sized clusters of the chocolate mixture onto the baking sheet about 1 inch apart. Put clusters in the refrigerator to set for 15 minutes. Store and serve at room temperature.

Nutrition information: 155 calories, 15 g carbohydrates, 10 grams fat, 3.5 g protein, 2.5 g fiber.

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