

Immune-boosting Foods

The Health Benefits of Thai Cuisine

Several Thai dishes, such as Tom Yum Soup, are currently under scientific study for their incredible health benefits. Of course, it's already known that many of the fresh herbs and spices used in Thai cooking - such as turmeric, galangal, coriander, lemongrass, and fresh chillies - have immune-boosting and disease-fighting power.

All Thai Dishes Begin with Fresh Herbs & Spices

Unlike a lot of Western-type recipes that begin with cans of this, or packages/mixes of that, Thai dishes start with a combination of the following ingredients:

- fresh onions or shallots
- fresh garlic
- galangal (or fresh ginger)

Added to these may be any of the following herbs/spices:

- turmeric
- coriander seed
- lemongrass
- fresh or dried chillies.

Finally, most Thai dishes are garnished with one of the following fresh herbs:

- fresh coriander leaves
- fresh basil leaves
- spring onion.

Each of these ingredients has many health benefits and immune-boosting power.

TURMERIC

Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, is known as an **anti-inflammatory** agent, helping to relieve allergy symptoms as well as arthritis (or any condition caused by excess inflammation). It is also a powerful **anti-oxidant**, that can protect the body from damage by toxins and free radicals. Curcumin also **protects platelets in the blood**, improving circulation and protecting the heart.

As such, turmeric has been known to be a valuable **digestive aid**, it helps those with **arthritis** and **cardiovascular conditions**, it protects the body from bacterial infections (such as **wounds**), and has been proven to **fight skin and breast cancers** in animal studies.

To add more turmeric to your diet, try to eat curry (the kind that includes turmeric) at least once a week

GALANGAL – Thai Ginger

Though foreign to most of us in the West, this relative of ginger has many health benefits, and as such it is used extensively in Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine. Galangal is thought to be more beneficial than ginger in some ways, and has been used around the world as a medicinal cure for a thousand years or more. Hildegard von Bingen recorded its various medicinal uses as early as the 11th century.

Galangal is known to **alleviate abdominal discomfort and pain, assist in digestion, remedy vomiting, cure hiccups, and treat diarrhea**. Like turmeric, galangal also has anti-inflammatory properties that can **help relieve arthritic pain**.

LEMONGRASS

This fragrant lemony herb is used extensively in Thai cooking. It has also been used since ancient times in Chinese medicine for the following conditions:

- flus and colds, which may be why Tom Yum Soup is so good at relieving cold & flu symptoms
- fevers
- headaches
- abdominal pain and other stomach conditions
- arthritis
- fungal conditions

CORIANDER

In Thai cooking, coriander is used in two ways: in its seed form, and as a fresh herb. In the West, coriander is also known as "cilantro" or "Chinese parsley". While fresh coriander has nutritional value, coriander seed has been used since ancient times by healers in Greece, Rome, the UK, China, and India for the following complaints:

- gastrointestinal trouble (including gas and bloating)
- digestive problems
- bacterial and fungal infections
- loss of appetite

CHILLIES(fresh or dried)

Recent human studies show that eating chillies **helps you sleep better, keeps your heart healthy, and help maintain consistent insulin and glucose levels**.

Coconut Milk

In recent years, coconut milk has somehow gotten a bad reputation - unfairly. Yes, coconut milk and oil contain fat - but this is good, not bad fat. Contrary to what you might believe, coconut milk helps to **lower bad cholesterol, while promoting good cholesterol**. It also has immune-boosting power, and offers numerous other health benefits, including **anti-aging**.

Source : <http://thaifood.about.com> (Author : Darlene Schmidt)