FOOD FEATURE



People who eat fruit as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of heart disease, including heart attack and stroke.

BY ANGELA SHELF **MEDEARIS KITCHEN DIVA**

The best part of the bounty of summer is the abundance of fresh fruits. Eating fruit is not only delicious and refreshing, it's also good for you. Most fruits are naturally low in fat, sodium and calories. None have cholesterol.

People who eat fruit as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to have a reduced risk of heart disease, including heart attack and stroke. It also may protect against certain types of cancers, and reduce the risk of obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

Fruits are the source of many essential nutrients that aren't consumed as much as they should be, including potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C and folate (folic acid).

Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Sources of potassium include bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon and orange juice.

Dietary fiber from fruits helps reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower the risk of heart disease. Fiber is important for proper bowel function, and helps reduce constipation and diverticulosis. Fiber-containing foods such as fruits help us feel full with fewer calories. (Note: Fruit juices contain little or no fiber.)

Folate (folic acid) helps form red blood cells. In women of childbearing age, folic acid reduces the risk of neural tube defects, spina bifida and anencephaly during fetal development.

My recipe for fruit salad is combined with quinoa to make it a healthier and more versatile dish for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Quinoa is native to Bolivia and is a relative of Swiss chard, spinach and beets. It comes in three varieties (whole grain white, red and black) and is gluten free and packed with nutritional benefits.

Quinoa also is a complete protein, which means it provides all nine essential amino acids necessary for good health. Your body can't produce these nutrients itself, so you have to get them frequently through food. Just one cup contains 8 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber, plus significant amounts of iron, magnesium, folate and heart-healthy omega 3 fatty acids.

Summer Fruit Salad with Quinoa can be served for breakfast with the sweet Poppy Seed Dressing. For a spicy, sweet and savory lunch or as a light summer supper or side dish, serve with the Spicy Chili Vinaigrette.

- Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis

SUMMER FRUIT SALAD WITH QUINOA

1 1/3 cup water

2/3 cup quinoa (whole grain white, red or black varieties)

2 cups sweet cherries, stemmed

1/2 pound watermelon, cut in small

4 small plums, pitted and cut into

1 medium papaya, peeled, seeded and sliced

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh

Poppy Seed Dressing or Spicy Chili Vinaigrette

1. Combine water and quinoa in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to simmer and cook with cover on for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside, with cover off, to cool completely.

2. Arrange cherries, watermelon, plums and papaya in container with lid. Toss with quinoa and mint. Cover and refrigerate salad until ready to serve with Do not dress sal ad until ready to eat. Makes 6 servings.

POPPY SEED DRESSING

1/4 cup honey

2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice

1/2 teaspoon poppy seeds

1/8 teaspoon salt 1/3 cup oil

Beat together honey, lemon juice, poppy seeds and salt. Gradually beat in oil until dressing thickens. Cover and

SPICY CHILI VINAIGRETTE

2 tablespoons finely minced red on-

2 tablespoons lime juice

1/8 teaspoon salt

chill. Makes about 2/3 cup.

1 Thai or serrano chile pepper, finely

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a large bowl, whisk together onions, lime juice, salt, chile and cilantro. Drizzle in oil while continuing whisk constantly. Makes about 2/3

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