

17 Bible Foods That Heal

by Marla Xeno

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Apples – Song of Solomon

No biblical food is more famous and none has gotten a worse rap than the apple – despite the fact that Adam and Eve probably didn't even see an apple, much less munch on one.

The Bible never says exactly what fruit the serpent used to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden. Tradition holds that it was an apple, but many scholars who have studied the botany of the Bible think it was more likely an apricot – maybe even a citron, an orange or a quince, a central Asian fruit that resembles a hard-fleshed yellow apple.

But else where in the Bible, the apple gets high marks for its healthful, healing powers that modern science has since confirmed.

The Ancient Greeks who lived during Bible times believed the apple healed all ailments. An Arabic author from the same era wrote: "Its scent cheers my soul, renews my strength and restores my breath."

An article in *American Medicine* magazine has praised the apple as "... therapeutically effective in all conditions of acidosis, gout, rheumatism, jaundice, all liver and gallbladder troubles, nervous and skin diseases caused by sluggish liver, hyperacidity and states of autointoxication."

Modern researchers at Michigan State University call the apple "... the all-round health food." Here are some of the potent healing powers of apples:

- They lower both bad cholesterol and high blood pressure
- The juices in apples are highly effective virus fighters
- They help stabilize blood sugar, an important factor in controlling diabetes.
- They suppress the appetite without robbing the body of necessary nutrients, so they're great for dieters.
- Depending on the need, they prevent constipation or help treat diarrhea.

Nutritionists suggest that eating two or three apples a day can boost the body's protection against heart disease thanks to the fruit's amazing ability to reduce blood pressure and lower dangerously high cholesterol levels. In fact, they say, the higher the cholesterol, the greater the benefits will be if you increase your consumption of apples. Apples also contain chemicals that scientists believed are vital in stopping cancer, and they also prevent tooth decay.

The apple's ability to keep our hearts healthy and pumping has been confirmed by U.S., French and Italian researchers, among others. An animal study at the Institute of Physiology in France came to the startling conclusion that a diet heavy in apples actually lowered heart-damaging cholesterol levels anywhere from 28 to 52 points.

One reason for this may be the pectin in the apple – that soluble fiber that is usually squeezed out to make jelly. The French researchers discovered that the pectin, acting with vitamin C and other natural chemicals in the apple, also forms a fortress-like shield around the heart that prevents cardiovascular disease.

In another study, when a group of 30 middle-aged men added three apples per day to their diets – without changing anything else -80% of them showed a significant reduction in cholesterol levels from 10 – 20 percent.

Even more surprising was the fact that the apple boosted the HDL, or “good” cholesterol in the blood, while reducing the LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, that’s responsible for clogging up the arteries, a condition that can lead to fatal heart attacks or disabling strokes. However, for some mysterious reason, an apple-rich diet lowers cholesterol more efficiently in women than men.

Apples are an excellent food source for diabetics and others who need to control blood sugar levels. They rank high among foods that best control blood sugar. Even though the apple is a rich source of natural sugar, it does not cause a rapid or dangerous rise in blood sugar. Also, it prevents the body from pumping out too much insulin which, in turn, helps bring down blood cholesterol and blood pressure.

Some people just have to smell an apple to get the benefit. Scientists at the prestigious Yale University’s Psychophysiology Center discovered that the scent of spiced apples produces a calming effect which helps to lower blood pressure. Researchers have noted that apple eaters also suffered far fewer stress-related illnesses.

Whole apples (as opposed to just the juice) are great for dieters. The rise in blood glucose levels that occurs when you eat an apple makes you feel fuller.

In addition, the apple juice helps keep you healthy and it helps during the healing process – especially if you are suffering from colds or viruses. People who eat apples regularly have far fewer colds and upper respiratory problems. In a Michigan State study of 1,300 students, those who regularly ate apples over a three-year period made one-third fewer visits to the campus health center than non-apple eaters.

There are also indications that apples may fight certain types of cancer. The reason appears to be that apples are loaded with natural acids that have successfully blocked cancer formation in laboratory studies.

Remember that to get the best health benefit, you have to eat the whole thing, skin and all. The skin contains the high level of pectin fiber, which seems to be the basis for the fruit’s amazing powers.

The apple may also be the only healing food capable of taking care of two opposite complaints at the same time – constipation and diarrhea. First, apples or applesauce have been used for centuries to help people get back on a regular diet after suffering bouts of diarrhea. The pectin in the apple fiber apparently is the

healing factor, which explains why it is included in Kaopectate, an over-the-counter diarrhea remedy.

Also, that same fiber is what dietitians have been telling us for decades is absolutely necessary to keep us regular and to prevent constipation.

Finally, apples are not only a superb healing food, but, as nature's original toothbrushes, they may even prevent cavities. The people of Bible times probably learned that through trial and error, but modern day researchers have confirmed that fact in the laboratory. Scientists in Norway found that children who ate apples had cleaner teeth than those who did not, and they also had significantly less risk of tooth decay.

The Bible's wise King Solomon knew what he was talking about when he said, "Comfort me with apples, for I am sick..."

Barley – Deuteronomy 8:8

The Bible is filled with reference to barley, which is among the earliest known and most nourishing grains ever to be cultivated. In fact, some scholars say The Feast of Unleavened Bread was an ancient barley harvest festival that became the celebration of the Passover.

Bible history experts say that barley was not as valuable as wheat. But it was the staple food of the masses and as such was a prominent feature of the early Israelites. Nevertheless, the fact that barley is mentioned so often shows that the people of the period consumed great quantities of this grain, which played a vital role in their health and healing – whether they knew it or not.

For thousands of years, barley has enjoyed a fine reputation as a food that improves potency, vigor and strength. Roman gladiators were sometimes called *hordearii*, meaning “barley eaters,” because the grain was added to their diet to give them bursts of strength before their contests. Today, we know from studies that barley is one of three balanced starches – along with rice and potatoes – that are rich in complex carbohydrates that fuel the body with a steady stream of energy.

Even today, barley is still an important food throughout the Middle East – which may account for the generally low rate of heart disease in that part of the world. In some places, barley is recommended as “medicine for the heart.” That’s because, say nutritionists, it is full of beta glucans – a type of fiber that can lower the risk of heart disease by reducing levels of artery-clogging LDL.

A diet that includes lots of barley, three times a day, has lowered blood cholesterol by about 15% in a number of medical studies.

That same high fiber content keeps us regular, relieves constipation and wards off a wide variety of digestive problems. It also may help block cancer.

As anyone who has done any Bible study at all knows, bread – always made from barley or other whole grain flours – was regarded as so vital to good health and a long life that it was called “the staff of life.”

Barley is effective at shutting down the liver’s production of the bad LDL cholesterol that does so much damage to our arteries – the kind that can cause strokes and heart attacks. In one interesting study on animals, researchers from the United States Department of Agriculture discovered that the production of LDL was reduced by a remarkable 18% when large amounts of barley were added to their diet.

In a follow-up study, scientists at Montana State University discovered that a high barley diet had the same effect on people. In that study, a group of men ate many foods containing barley, including cereal, bread, cakes and muffins made from barley flour. After six weeks of three servings a day, the men’s cholesterol levels

dropped an average of 15%. Those whose cholesterol levels were the highest at the start showed the most significant improvement.

Coriander (Cilantro)

When the Children of Israel wandered in the desert and received manna from the sky, they described it as looking like coriander seed.

Ever since, coriander has been called “the healer from heaven.”

Coriander is an annual plant of the carrot or parsley family and has pink or white flower clusters. The fruit consists of globular, grayish-white colored seeds. It grew wild throughout Egypt, ancient Palestine and other countries in the region. The seeds have a pleasant, aromatic oil. They are used as a spice or flavoring for pastries, meats, candies, salads, soups, curries and wine.

Chances are, none of the early peoples suffered from indigestion because coriander has been used for centuries as a treatment for minor stomach ailments. Unlike most medicines for digestive problems, coriander tastes great and has a warm fragrance like citrus and sage.

It's recommended for indigestion, flatulence and diarrhea. Externally, it's used to ease muscle and joint pain. Recently, scientists began looking at coriander as an anti-inflammatory treatment for arthritis. Other research has demonstrated that it reduces blood sugar levels, an indication that it may prove to be a useful sugar management tool for diabetics.

Fish – Luke 24:42-43

Fishing on the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan was a huge industry. During their exile in Egypt, the Israelites learned to prize fish from the Red Sea, and for the people of the Old Testament, there were precise dietary laws for seafood.

We know today that fish is low in cholesterol and contains healthy polyunsaturated fats.

Since there was no way of preserving fish (except by salting), most people in Bible times ate their fish fresh – a wonderfully rich source of protein, potassium, vitamins and minerals with only a moderate amount of sodium.

We also now know that eating fish:

- Thins the blood
- Protects arteries from damage
- Inhibits blood clots (anti-thrombotic)
- Reduces blood triglycerides
- Lowers LDL blood cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces risk of heart attack and stroke
- Eases symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis
- Reduces risk of lupus
- Relieves migraine headaches
- Fights inflammation
- Helps regulate the immune system
- Inhibits cancer in animals and possible humans
- Soothes bronchial asthma
- Combats early kidney disease

The key to the healing powers of fish lies in the omega-3 fatty acids. These are particularly concentrated in cold-water fish such as anchovies, bluefish, herring, lake trout, mackerel, sablefish, whitefish, bluefin tuna, salmon and sardines.

For more than 200 years, cod liver oil was prescribed for a number of ailments, including rheumatism and arthritis, because it was believed it could “lubricate the joints.” But it wasn’t until 1985 that doctors writing in the *New England Journal of Medicine* recommended that arthritis sufferers could benefit from eating fish once or twice a week.

In the case of arthritis, the omega-3 oils do “lubricate” the joints by reducing painful inflammation. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases says the oils “unquestionably are anti-inflammatory agents.”

Research funded through the institute demonstrated that these oils blocked the formation of something called leukotriene B₄, which triggers inflammation. The institute reported “... a significant correlation between the drop in leukotriene B₄ and decrease in the number of tender joints...” after the oils were prescribed.

There are three villains lurking deep inside our bodies that cause heart attacks and strokes. They are the plaque that can clog arteries and dangerously restrict blood flow; the accumulation of platelets (sticky pieces of blood cells) that clump together and form clots; and the sudden, unexplained spasms of blood vessels that can throw the heart out of kilter or halt the flow of blood to the brain, causing strokes.

Studies on fish oil show it works wonders in reducing or eliminating all three risks. People who eat lots of fish seem to have thinner blood, which is less prone to clotting. Omega-3 oils also reduce triglycerides and dangerous LDL cholesterol and that may be why fish is such a powerful ally in the battle against heart disease.

Eskimos eat about 13 ounces of omega-3 rich seafood a day and rarely suffer from heart attacks. The same is true of Japanese fishermen and their families who consume, on average, at least 7 ounces of fish daily.

Norwegian scientists recently discovered that a mere three ounces of mackerel in the daily diet thins the blood within six weeks, significantly reducing the risk of clogged arteries, heart attacks and strokes.

In Britain, a study involving hundreds of participants revealed that those on a heavy fish diet developed higher concentration of “good” HDL cholesterol than even vegetarians.

The best news is that it might not even take very much fish to fight off heart disease. Researchers at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands monitored residents of one small town who ate only one ounce of fish a week.

The results were astonishing. The risk of heart disease in the study group was 50% less than among those who ate no fish at all.

Experts warn that hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the red light warning us that a life-threatening heart attack may be headed toward us like a runaway train. To stop it, they say, get that blood pressure under control!

The Center Institute for Cardiovascular Research in Berlin studied 24 men with slightly elevated blood pressure. For two weeks, half of the group dined daily on two seven-ounce cans of mackerel and followed that with three cans a week for the next eight months. Mackerel was chosen for its very high levels of omega 3 oils.

The results? The higher the levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood, the more their blood pressure dropped. The conclusion: A minimum of only three ounces of mackerel a week lowered blood pressure about 7% - and eliminated the need for medication.

Fish oils seem to be just as important in fighting cancer. Those overactive prostaglandins that may touch off heart problems, are also present in most cancers, says Rutgers University researcher Dr. Rashida Karmali. Now, encouraging

studies at Rutgers and elsewhere indicate that fish oils are highly effective at putting the clamps on the over-production. And once the heavy concentration of those nasty prostaglandins is reduced, the risk of breast, pancreatic, lung, prostate and colon cancer also drops. Eskimo and Japanese women eat lots of fish and seldom develop breast cancer.

Migraine sufferers may find relief with omega-fish oils, according to a team of researchers at the University of Cincinnati. Of those who took part in that study, 60% reported that their chronic migraines were less severe and the frequency reduced by half over six weeks when they took fish oil capsules. The average number of migraines dropped from two a week to two every two weeks. For some reason, men seemed to benefit more from adding the fish oils to their diet than women.

A change in diet in which omega-3 fish oils replaced animal fats also dramatically slowed down the rate of deterioration in people suffering early kidney disease.

Garlic

It's one of the world's oldest healing foods. It was being used both as a favorite food and as a powerful medicine centuries before Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

Garlic and its cousin the onion were regarded highly for both health-giving and magical qualities in ancient cultures. Garlic was one of the first foods to be deliberately cultivated, although wild varieties grew in abundance. Evidence of its healing powers is detailed in 4,000 year old records from the ancient kingdom of Sumeria. Depiction of garlic bulbs have been discovered on walls of Egyptian tombs that date back to 3200 B.C. – centuries before Joseph and his brothers settled in Egypt.

During that same period, ancient records reveal that garlic was the principal ingredient in many remedies that Egyptian healers prescribed as cures for headaches, sore throats and other complaints.

By the time of Moses, garlic was already being used as an anticoagulant, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and anti-tumor agent, as well as a relief for flatulence, a diuretic, a sedative, a poultice and as a cure for internal parasites.

At least 67 different varieties of garlic and onions have been identified as growing in the Holy Land, so it's little wonder that the ancient Israelites developed a fondness for it centuries ago. It may for health reasons that the Talmud specifies that several different foods are to be seasoned with garlic regularly.

Research suggests that garlic may help protect against heart disease and stroke by lowering blood pressure. It contains allylic sulfides, which may neutralize carcinogens. In fact, garlic has been linked to lower rates of stomach cancer too.

The *Environmental Nutrition Newsletter* published evidence from five clinical trials showing that ½ to one clove per day lowered blood cholesterol levels an average of 9% in people with borderline and high cholesterol.

Scientific interest in the healing power of garlic has exploded so much over the last decade that the National Library of Science now lists nearly 150 papers published on garlic's ability to maintain good health.

In various studies, garlic powder, aged garlic extracts and fresh garlic all have had positive effects in preventing cancer in animals; improving diabetes management; slowing the growth of human cytomegalovirus; preventing fatigue; and relieving stress more effectively than the addictive tranquilizer, Valium.

As little as half a raw clove will boost the body's natural protection against blood clots, which cause heart attacks and strokes. And it takes only two raw garlic cloves a day to lower cholesterol levels in heart patients.

The ingredient that gives garlic its strong smell is a chemical called allicin. That also makes it such a potent antibiotic. In hundreds of experiments, allicin extract from raw garlic has destroyed the germs that spread such illnesses as botulism, tuberculosis, diarrhea, staph, dysentery and typhoid.

One scientist reports: “Galic has the broadest spectrum of any antimicrobial substance we know of. It’s antibacterial, antifungal, antiparasitic, antiprotozoan and antiviral.” Some researchers say that one medium-size garlic clove has as much antibacterial power as 100,000 units of penicillin.

Japanese scientists have distilled an antibiotic medication called Kyolic from raw garlic. Because it was used so commonly as an antibiotic by Russian army medics during World War II, it became known throughout all of Europe as the “Russian penicillin.” An astonishing 500 tons of garlic were trucked into Moscow to combat one influenza epidemic in the 1950’s. European doctors still prescribe garlic to ward off colds, pneumonia, whooping cough and a wide array of intestinal disorders.

Another natural ingredient in garlic called alliin is changed into the antibiotic substance, allicin, when garlic is chewed, chopped or crushed. Animal tests in Japan indicated that fresh garlic might be an effective weapon against a form of breast cancer. And another finding from the same suggested that garlic is probably a better antioxidant than vitamin E, one of the top antioxidants known to slow the aging process.

At the M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Houston, investigators looked at sulfur compounds from both garlic and onions and concluded their ingredients blocked the formation of carcinogens that lead to colon cancer. Meanwhile, the National Cancer Institute has announced that the sulfur in garlic is high on its list of potential natural “chemo preventives.”

Garlic is also heart-friendly. Scores of studies around the world have focused on garlic’s astonishing ability to fight hypertension, prevent embolisms, or blood clots and lower bad cholesterol. A study at Bombay Hospital’s Research Center in India found that those who ate several garlic cloves daily significantly reduced the risk of potentially deadly blood clots – even in patients who already suffered from coronary disease.

In even smaller doses, garlic drastically reduced cholesterol levels – on average from a high of 305 all the way down to 218 over a 60-day period.

While cooking may destroy or reduce the allicin and weaken garlic’s potential, most of its therapeutic benefits remain intact. Cooked garlic still lowers blood cholesterol and works as a decongestant and cough medicine.

Before the birth of Christ, the Israelites were using garlic as a major ingredient in their food, as well as a medicine. In fact, they were so fond of garlic and consumed so much of it that in the Mishnah they proudly called themselves “garlic eaters.”

Whether cooked, raw or in extract form, garlic may be one of the most potent natural healing foods we have. The ancient people of the Bible knew that basic fact of life while some of our scientists are just rediscovering it.

Grapes – Numbers 12:23

Grapes were the first things Noah planted after the flood. Grapes were eaten fresh, dried and eaten as raisins just as we do today and pressed into cakes. But most of the crop of the vineyards was made into juice, wine and vinegar.

One reason this delicious fruit was so important in the diet thousands of years ago was because of its high content of boron, a mineral that we now know helps ward off osteoporosis. Boron is now sold as a dietary supplement in health food stores, but the people of the Bible had to get theirs from natural sources.

Aside from preventing osteoporosis, grapes offer many healthy benefits. A cup of raw grapes contain only 58 calories, 0.3 grams of fat; zero cholesterol and vitamins A, B and C. Grapes also contain important minerals such as boron, calcium, potassium and zinc.

They also fight tooth decay, stop viruses in their tracks and are rich in other ingredients that many researchers believe can head off cancer. That's because grapes are packed with things called polyphenols and tannins, both of which appear promising as antiviral and antitumor agents.

Recently, a team of Canadian scientist reported that grapes destroyed disease-causing viruses in test tubes. To test that potential, they examined grapes, grape juice, raisins and red, rose and white wines. They added certain viruses to a grape extract made from pulp and skins; other viruses to the grape juice and raisin mixture; and a third set of viruses to the wines.

All three substances seemed to effectively fight the viruses, but they were especially potent against the viruses that cause polio and herpes simplex. The reason is because grapes contain tannin, a virus fighter that is absorbed directly into the intestinal tract where it does the most good.

The grape tannins can survive digestion and quickly circulate through the blood, perhaps attacking deadly viruses. Grape juice also kills bacteria and dramatically restricts tooth decay.

Grapes also have extraordinarily high levels of something called caffeic acid, which has been shown to be a strong anti-cancer substance. And raisins, which are dried grapes, were definitely associated with the reduced rate of cancer deaths among one group of American senior citizens.

In biblical days, grapes provided all of these health benefits. People didn't know what the grapes did – they just knew that they were equally delicious eaten raw right off the vines, dried as raisins, boiled down into a sweet grape honey or fermented into wine.

Leeks

Leeks are also mentioned in the Book of Numbers, as a milder, sweeter version of the onion. In cooking, the leek is extremely versatile when used to flavor other dishes or as a food by itself. It has a more delicate flavor than garlic or onions and forms the basis of many traditional dishes that originated in ancient Israel and neighboring lands.

A favorite dish in biblical times – and still popular in present day Middle East – was a kind of porridge made from the white bulb of the leek, rice or similar grains, with crushed almonds and honey added as a sweetener.

Leeks were prescribed for infertile women and have traditionally been used internally and externally for a variety of conditions including obesity, kidney complaints, intestinal disorders and coughs.

Legumes – 2 Samuel 17:28, 29

As reported in the Book of Samuel, beans were among the highly nutritious foods sent to feed King David's hungry army and restore their strength for the hard times ahead. But why might beans have been so important?

We now know that beans are absolutely packed with soluble fiber, which helps lower LDL and reduces blood pressure. That same fiber also helps keep blood sugar levels stable, staves off hunger and has even been shown to reduce the insulin requirements of people suffering from diabetes.

Important as they are to us today, they were even more important as a staple food in biblical times. Beans are a wonderful source of protein as well as being packed full of vitamin C, iron and dietary fiber. In the West, most of us get these either from other foods or from supplements.

Beans were also easy for these early farmers to cultivate and could be made into purees and pottages or a type of coarse bread. Another advantage was that they were easily dried and stored for use during hard times.

Bible scholars say that the beans mentioned in the Bible were broad beans because these were extensively cultivated throughout the countries of the eastern Mediterranean during that period. They are known to have also been a popular food in Egypt.

Unlike our biblical ancestors, today there is a wide range of beans to choose from – red, white and black beans, black-eyed peas or cowpeas, chickpeas, fava, kidney, lentils, lima, split peas, pinto, white, Great Northern, navy and butter beans. All of them offer the same kind of wonderful health benefits.

Beans help lower blood pressure and reduce the “bad” cholesterol that today's research has shown to be the cause of so much devastating heart trouble – a rarity centuries ago.

Beans also contain chemicals that inhibit the growth of cancer and help control insulin and blood sugar levels so vital to the good health of diabetics. On a more routine level, beans help prevent constipation. They can stop hemorrhoids and other bowel-related problems from developing and help cure them if they do.

In those ancient times, beans and garlic were often boiled together, which produced a primitive version of cough medicine that was said to stop even the most stubborn cough.

But you don't have to eat beans morning, noon and night to receive the benefits. A cup of cooked beans a day may be all that's needed.

Even canned baked beans don't lose all their therapeutic strength as a result of their processing. One study found that a can of pork and beans could lower

cholesterol levels by an average of 12%. But beware, most canned goods also come packed in lots of salt.

Here's a quick list of the power of beans:

- They are naturally packed with potent levels of plant protein.
- That same cup contains 6-7 grams of valuable fiber.
- They are low in fat and cholesterol free.
- They are high in potassium, iron and thiamine and low in sodium.
- Just a single cup provides about 12 grams of complex carbohydrates or starches. That makes them an excellent source for quick energy.

Scientists tell us that during the digestive process, certain natural chemicals contained in beans and other legumes are released. They slow down the liver's production of that dangerous LDL cholesterol. Moreover, those same chemicals go rushing through our cardiovascular system, helping to clean out evil LDL which might otherwise clog our arteries.

At least one noted researcher, Dr. James Anderson at the University of Kentucky, is so convinced of the power of beans that he recommends a minimum of one cup of cooked beans daily to help prevent heart disease. He says that even among middle-aged men a diet that includes beans dramatically reduces cholesterol levels by as much as 19%.

A companion study at the University of Minnesota came up with nearly identical findings.

At least two participants with dangerously high cholesterol levels who switched to the bean diet, surprised everyone by decreasing their cholesterol levels from 274 to 190.

The same digestive process that releases the cholesterol-fighting chemicals in beans also produces the all-important protease inhibitors, which are basic components of beans. The protease inhibitors seem to be extremely effective in blocking the formation of certain cancers including colon and breast.

All the research is not yet in, but it's possible these protease inhibitors aren't as effective after the cancer has developed. However, some experts think they may decrease out-of-control cell division before it progresses to cancer.

Beans also rank high on the list of nature's other regulators. Not only are they a quick and effective cure for constipation, but by keeping wastes moving along at a regular, healthy pace, they apparently reduce the risks of colon or rectal cancer, intestinal disorder and hemorrhoids.

Beans are also important to diabetics because of their ability to regulate insulin output. Type I diabetes can cut back on their need for insulin by as much as 38% when put on a bean-rich diet. Most of Type II diabetics in the same study were able to stop insulin injections entirely!

Worried about gas? An easy solution is to slowly increase your bean consumption to give your body a chance to adapt. Or soak them overnight or flush with boiling water, then let sit for four hours, drain and cook in fresh water.

Milk – Exodus 3:8

Milk nourished the spirits as well as the bodies of the biblical peoples. Milk and honey together symbolized good health, prosperity and blessings from God. Milk and milk products were an important part of the daily diet of biblical times. But it was difficult to keep the milk fresh. The solution was to use the same fermentation process with milk that was used to make wine or sourdough bread.

The result was what we today call yogurt, cheese and what is sometimes called curds in the Bible. Butter was seldom used for cooking then. Olive oil was used instead.

But even though the chosen people relied heavily on milk, they were hardly the first. Milk has been considered necessary for survival – for perhaps millions of years.

It has been called “the perfect food” because it provides so many of the nutrients we all need to grow, to fight off disease and to stay healthy.

Here are some of those recently discovered health benefits found in milk and milk products:

- Calcium builds bones in children and helps prevent or slow the development of osteoporosis in older women.
- Ingredients in milk lower high blood pressure and cholesterol, major factors of heart disease.
- Milk attacks bacterial infections, especially those that cause diarrhea. It soothes stomach linings irritated from drugs or harsh foods.
- Milk helps prevent dental cavities and chronic bronchitis.
- Researchers now say that while milk is stopping some cancers from developing, it’s also giving us a boost in mental alertness and energy.

With all this, it’s no wonder that this “perfect food” was so important in the lives of biblical people who had to depend on natural foods as healing medicines.

Milk can act like an antibody in fending off infections that attack our gastrointestinal system – something that was a matter of life or death in biblical times when penicillin and other drugs weren’t available.

These anti-infection chemicals help stamp out childhood diarrhea – which was very dangerous in ancient times and is still often fatal among infants in underdeveloped parts of the world.

Yet, for all its miraculous benefits, milk is not for everyone. People who suffer lactose intolerance know they have to avoid it. Lactose is a sugar found in milk and may produce intestinal and bowel disorders in people who are lactose intolerant.

Milk Derivative - Cheese

Since milk in biblical times didn't stay fresh very long, the people who lived then turned much of it into cheese or other by-products. Consequently, the people of the Bible were expert cheese makers. A gallon of fresh milk produced about a half pound of cheese that could then be utilized in many different ways while still retaining the numerous health benefits of milk.

Mint

The warm flavor of mint, due to the presence of characteristic essential oils, is well-known to all of us today, just as it was to the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans of Bible times who used mint as medicine as well as a flavoring.

Some Bible experts say mint was among the “bitter herbs” of Exodus 12:8 and Numbers 9:11 along with leaves of endive, chicory, lettuce, watercress, sorrel and dandelion, which were eaten as a salad. Mint is one of the “bitter herbs” of the Passover feast today.

Greek and Roman physicians used mint. They recommended adding it to milk to prevent spoilage and serving it after meals as a digestive aid. They also suggested hanging it in sick rooms to speed healing.

Several species of mint grew wild throughout the Holy Land. Today, we know mint mainly as peppermint and spearmint. Modern herbalists recommend peppermint be taken straight or added to foods as a treatment for menstrual cramps, motion and morning sickness, colds and flu, headache and heartburn, fever and insomnia.

Medical experts also know that the mints are marvelous for treating dozens of other problems. That’s why mints, with their menthol contents, are found in many over the counter remedies for indigestion, minor pain and congestion.

The mints are also antispasmodics. They soothe the muscles of the digestive tract and the uterus. But while peppermint may be good for nausea, it may also stimulate menstruation. So doctors war pregnant women to avoid peppermint as a treatment for morning sickness.

Nuts – *Song of Songs 6:11*

Botanists today believe that Solomon's "garden of nuts" referred to in Scripture was a rich grove of walnut trees. At the time, walnuts were prized for the oil they produced, which was regarded as only slightly inferior to olive oil. The fact that walnuts were a delicious treat and highly nutritious was an added bonus.

In other cultures of the time, walnuts were thought to bring good luck and good health. The Romans called it the "royal" nut.

Again, it was no accident that these people of biblical times who included nuts in their diets apparently were not troubled by many of the health disorders that seem to plague us in these modern times such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

The belief that nuts were a powerful healing food continued into the Middle Ages. Walnuts were considered so powerful that they were included in a prescription to ward off even the dreaded Black Plague that swept Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

We now know that nuts contain the right mixtures of natural ingredients whose benefits include cancer prevention, a lower risk of heart disease and help for diabetics.

The oil found in walnuts is considered healthful because it is one of these "good guy" polyunsaturated fats and tends to lower blood cholesterol levels.

Nuts are just as much a part of the daily life and diet today in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean as they were in biblical times when Jacob instructed Judah to send them as a gift to Joseph, the governor of Egypt.

Olives

The olive was certainly one of the most valuable and versatile tress of biblical times. It is mentioned frequently throughout the Bible.

Probably the most famous reference to olive oil and its healing powers is in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the Samaritan cares for a beaten and robbed traveler, treating his wounds with oil and wine.

Olive oil is a high-energy food and one of the most digestible of all fats. The ancients of biblical times found ways to incorporate it in many of these meals. It was also used as a fuel, as part of religious ceremonies, as a cosmetic and to offer to guests as a sign of welcome. In addition to its healing properties as a food, olive oil mixed with wine was used to soften and soothe bruises and wounds.

The “anointing with oil” that was a sacred tradition among biblical people was probably done with olive oil. One ancient piece of folk wisdom tells us that “olive oil makes all your aches and pains go away.”

For hundreds of years the benefits of olive oil nutritionally, cosmetically and medicinally have been recognized by the people of the Mediterranean which includes the Holy Land.

It was used to maintain the suppleness of skin and muscle, to heal abrasions and to soothe the burning and drying effects of the sun and wind.

Pliny and Hippocrates, the noted physicians of ancient Greece prescribed medicines containing olive oil and olive leaves as cures for such disorders as inflammation of the gums, insomnia, nausea and boils. Many of these old remedies have passed into tradition and become a part of folklore. But research today confirms that they are just as valid today as they were hundreds of years ago.

A study largely underwritten by the American Heart Foundation found that on the Mediterranean island of Crete, the mortality rate due to cardiovascular illnesses was the lowest in the world. They compared the figure and the diets with those of Finland and the United States. Those countries have the highest death rates from heart attacks.

The difference was in the types of fat in the diets. In countries with the highest rate of cardiovascular diseases, diets were heavy in saturated fats, which increased cholesterol levels. The saturated fatty acids are found in animal fats, such as butter and lard.

Monounsaturated fatty acids do not have cholesterol. Olive oil contains 56-83 percent of these acids, also called oleic acids.

Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fats, which may lower blood cholesterol. A recent study found that LDL (bad) cholesterol levels can be reduced by some 7%

by substituting olive oil for margarine. Eating four or five tablespoons of olive oil daily dramatically improves the blood profiles of heart attack patients. And 2/3 of a tablespoon daily lowered blood pressure in men.

If you're trying to reduce the amount of fat in your diet to avoid the risk of heart attack, think of olive oil as an ideal replacement. Anything you can sauté' in butter, you can sauté' in olive oil. Not only will you be helping your heart, but you'll also be pleasing your taste buds.

The healthy aspects of olive oil are not limited to its positive effect in the battle against heart disease. The evidence is strong that it also retards cancer growth.

For example, olive oil seems to strengthen cell membranes, which makes them more stable and better able to resist the invasion of the "free radicals" that roam around through the body causing so much damage. Lately, free radicals have become major suspects as a leading cause of cancer.

Olive oil is rich in vitamin E, a great antioxidant. Experts believe that those antioxidants help human cells fight off cancer. In doing so, they fortify the cells and thus, slow down deterioration that accompanies the aging process since the cells are healthier and live longer.

Olive oil has been shown to reduce the normal wear and tear of aging on the tissues and organs of the body and the brain. And there may be more to the connection between olives and longevity because olive trees themselves have been known to survive for 3,000 years or longer!

Olive oil has been shown to reduce gastric acidity. It protects against ulcers and aids the passage of food through the intestines, thus helping to prevent constipation. It stimulates bile secretion and provokes contraction of the gallbladder, reducing the risk of gallstones.

Since olive oil contains vitamin E and oleic acid, it aids normal bone growth and is most suitable for both expectant and nursing mothers because it encourages development of the infant's nervous system before and after birth.

Since olive oil works wonders at blocking the tendency of blood to clot, improving good HDL cholesterol levels and reducing the dangerous buildup of bad cholesterol in arteries, some experts now strongly recommend olive oil as an excellent way to cut the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Physicians in Spain give heart surgery patients 4-5 tablespoons of olive oil per day as part of their recovery process. Within six months, patients in one study showed so much improvement that they were deemed less susceptible to future heart attacks and strokes than patients who had not had the oil.

The University of Texas Health Science Center in Dallas also reported that the monounsaturated fats in olive oil dramatically lowered and favorably altered blood cholesterol. In tests on middle-aged people, olive oil reduced all blood cholesterol by 13% and the dangerous LDL cholesterol by an amazing 21% !

University of Kentucky researchers found that as little as 2/3 of a tablespoon a day reduced blood pressure in men by 5 systolic points and four diastolic points.

Caution: Olive oil has a slight laxative effect. So add it to your diet gradually.

Tip: The more pure the Olive oil, the better. Spend a little extra and get Virgin Olive Oil.

Onions – Numbers 11:5

Like its cousin, garlic, the onion is noted as a cure-all. And the folk healers hold it in high regard as far back as 6,000 years ago or more.

Although onion was only mentioned once in the Bible, it was within a list of foods with the best healing properties. Hence, its inclusion here.

Onions were considered such an important source of energy and endurance, wrote Herodotus, the Greek historian, that the Egyptian pharaohs spent nine tons of gold for onions to feed the slaves and laborers who built the pyramids. Whether or not it was an acquired taste history doesn't say. But the Jews took a distinct fondness for the onion when they followed Moses into the wilderness.

So at least 3,000 years before the birth of Christ, onions were treasured both as food and for their therapeutic value – particularly in the treatment of kidney and bladder problems.

Onions have been used externally as an antiseptic and a pain reliever. They've been taken internally as a tonic to soothe intestinal gas pains and to alleviate the symptoms of hypertension, high blood sugar and elevated cholesterol.

In some countries in the Balkans, people attribute their long life to a diet that includes high concentrations of onions and yogurt.

It's said the folk remedies in many other cultures called for the juice of an onion and syrup made from honey to treat coughs, colds and asthma attacks. A tonic of onions soaked in gin or a similar distilled spirit was prescribed for kidney stones and to eliminate excessive fluids.

Modern herbalists recommend onion syrup as an expectorant (*it helps eliminate mucus from the respiratory tract*). Onions are also believed to be diuretic and to reduce high blood pressure.

Onions also have a profound effect on blood cholesterol by raising the good and lowering the bad. In fact, Dr. Victor Gurewich, a professor of medicine at Tufts University, has made a careful study of cardiovascular disease and onions and simply advises: "Eat onions."

The therapeutic components in onions also slow blood clotting in addition to regulating blood sugar, breaking up bronchial congestion and possibly preventing cancer.

Luckily, you don't have to gorge on onions to get protection for your heart. Some doctors say as little as ½ a raw onion will boost good cholesterol by 30%. And a single tablespoon of cooked onions will nullify the adverse effects of eating a fatty meal.

Onions are also effective against bacteria like the deadly E. coli and salmonella. Onions possess a strong antibiotic that kills a variety of bacteria responsible for illnesses ranging from diarrhea to tuberculosis.

The people of the Bible were among the first to treat colds and similar ailments with onions. Now, technology is confirming that many of those age-old folk remedies have scientific proof.

Wheat – Jeremiah 41:8

For the people of the Bible, wheat was a great food treasure. It was a staple at most every meal. In addition, wheat could make the difference between life and death because of its nutritional value and the protection it offered against a host of disabling, often deadly, disorders and diseases.

Wheat *was* the “staff of life.” Because it was such an important part of everyday survival it became an important religious symbol for both Jews and Christians. An abundant harvest was a blessing from God.

Biblical people ate their grain boiled and parched, soaked and roasted, and even ate it green from the stalk. It was pounded, dried or crushed to be baked into casseroles, porridges, soups, parched grain salads and desserts such as puddings and flans.

Bible scholars say that Ezekiel’s Bread was intended to be a survival food during the dark days of the Babylonian conquest because it contains wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt. The Israelites put their faith in this multigrain foodstuff to maintain their health and stay fighting fit.

Much of the wheat the Israelites ate was actually the wheat bran, the outermost layers of the wheat kernel which is nearly all fiber. It is now well-established just how critical fiber is to healthy digestion and efficient bowel function. Wheat bran is also absolutely loaded with crucial B vitamins and protein.

Wheat germ ranks up there for its all-encompassing nutritional value. A ¼ cup packs 5 grams of fiber, as well as B vitamins, iron, magnesium and zinc. It’s also rich in chromium, manganese and vitamin E. Whole wheat bread contains triple the fiber found in white bread and is much richer in magnesium and vitamin B.

Wheat bran’s high fiber content is one of the richest dietary sources of insoluble fiber known. Nothing quite matches the power of this fiber in keeping wastes moving regularly throughout our systems.

The fiber in wheat is our best protection against – and cure of – constipation. It prevents intestinal infections, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, improves bowel function, and guards us against colon cancer.

Recently, a team of researchers at a nutritional clinic in England set out to compare the effectiveness of various vegetable fibers in our diets. Volunteers were given wheat bran, carrots, cabbage and apples to eat. The conclusion was that while all the vegetables were useful, none came close to matching the effectiveness of wheat bran.

Experts report that in other parts of the world where fiber intake is much higher than the US, colon and bowel disorder are rare. The same was true centuries ago in the lands of the Bible where fiber-rich diets, especially grains, were standard fare.

In a study in Finland, farmers whose normal diet is high in fats from dairy products, the rate of colon cancer was way down when it should've been very high, according to the American Health Foundation.

The reason is that these farmers also ate lots of whole grain cereal and whole wheat bread. This confirms the belief that the high fiber content of their diet somehow blocked the formation of the cancers that are often a result of a very high fat intake.

Most people only need about 1/3 cup of 100% whole wheat bran cereal daily. But cereals and whole wheat breads aren't the only way to add fiber. The Bible mentions several various types of grains and ways to use them.

According to most Bible scholars, the parched grain spoken of was the forerunner to tabbouleh, the bulgar-wheat salad which is still popular throughout the Middle East. Its popularity spread to other parts of the world with different variations.

The Bible's cracked wheat, bulgar wheat and tabbouleh are actually whole wheat kernels that have been boiled, dried and cracked.

Wine – 1 Timothy 5:23

Making wine from grapes is one of the most ancient arts and the beverage of choice in the Bible. According to Genesis, one of the first things Noah did after the Flood was plant a vineyard to he could make wine.

Researchers are now rediscovering what the physicians of the Bible knew centuries ago. In moderation, wine has a profound impact on our health and healing. Just a single glass of wine a day may be enough to raise the good cholesterol by 7% and help the body put up a barrier to a variety of cancers.

One hundred years ago, doctors in France noticed that during one cholera outbreak, people who drank wine straight seemed less likely to be stricken than neighbors who added water to their wine. As a test, cholera and typhoid germs were added to containers of water, pure red or white wine and a half-and-half mixture of water and wine. Amazingly, while the germs in the plain water were unaffected, those cholera germs in both the wine and the diluted mixture were wiped out within 15 minutes. The typhoid germs in the wine lasted 24 hours before dying off.

Since then, similar tests have achieved the same results. But to everyone's surprise, it turns out that the fermentation process releases polyphenols – chemical compounds that attack bacteria in much the same way that penicillin does. Researchers say that red win diluted in a 1-4 ratio with water has the same potency after 15 minutes as 5 units of penicillin per milliliter.

Wine also appears to help stop heart disease and cancer. A study at the University of Ottawa in Canada concluded there is a clear link between wine consumption and lower rates of heart disease. Countries where more than 90% of alcohol is consumed in the form of wine have the lowest rate of heart disease deaths.

A British study of 100 men and women discovered that a single glass of wine or sherry everyday increased the HDL or good cholesterol. When the group abstained from drinking wine, the HDL level decreased.

Red wine also seems to strengthen the body's defenses against cancer, just as it does against heart disease.

Researcher Dr. Hans Stich says "Wine, notably red wine, has high concentrations of gallic acid, one of the tannic acids that give the bouquet to the wine. Gallic acid is also anticarcinogenic."

White wine may carry some of the same therapeutic benefits, but research so far seems to indicate that red wine is the most effective cancer-blocker.

Yogurt – 2 Samuel 17:28-29

Since the earliest days of the Israelites, sour or curdled milk (or curds) was mixed with honey, flavored with dates, raisins, grapes or other fruits or nuts. Those curds, many Bible scholars believe, were what we now call yogurt.

Tradition says an angel promised Abraham that he would live a long life if he ate the biblical version of yogurt. He lived to be 175 years old!

Today, in parts of Turkey, Armenia and some of the more remote regions of the Caucasus Mountains, there is an unusually high number of very old people. Men and women often live well beyond 100 years while maintaining healthy, active lifestyles.

The reason is they eat plenty of yogurt. The longevity theory has never been tested on humans. But when scientists with the US Department of Agriculture were researching the effects of yogurt on salmonella infections in mice, they discovered one astonishing side effect: the mice that were fed yogurt did more than beat the infection – they lived much longer than those that were not given yogurt.

Yogurt is highly regarded all around the world as a super source of bone-building calcium. It may prevent colds and allergic reactions, fight cancer and strengthen the body's immune system. It also lowers bad cholesterol levels, prevents dangerous intestinal infections, improves bowel function and blocks ulcers.

Research has shown that once inside the intestinal tract, the lactobacilli in yogurt embarks on a search-and-destroy mission. Its target is E. coli bacteria that sneaks into our bodies, multiplies and wreaks havoc on the entire digestive and elimination system. E. coli makes us sick. In infants, it can cause diarrhea which can become fatal.

Yogurt also helps to maintain a normal balance between the “good” and “bad” bacteria that are constantly present in our bodies. Just a little dab of yogurt may be enough to cure most of the general gastrointestinal disturbances that are caused by a poor diet or infections.

Yogurt puts the bacteria we need into our systems and reactivates the energetic lactobacilli. With all the bacteria, yogurt is also a natural antibiotic, known to head off such diseases as dysentery and influenza.

Yogurt also lowers the bad cholesterol and raises the good cholesterol. To get the greatest benefits from yogurt, make sure its ingredients contain “live active cultures.” If it doesn't state it on the label, it may not be real yogurt. The pasteurization process can destroy the active cultures necessary for yogurt to do its job.

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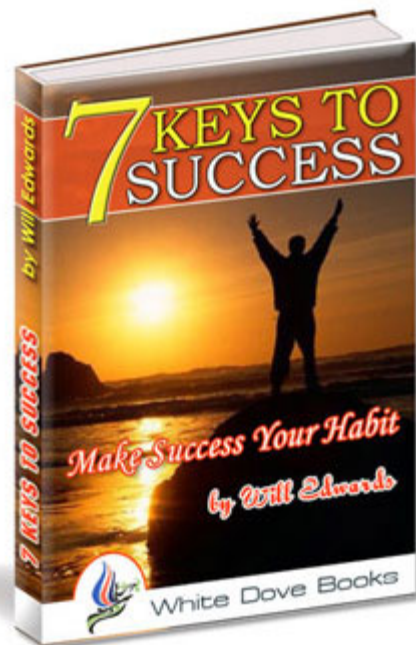
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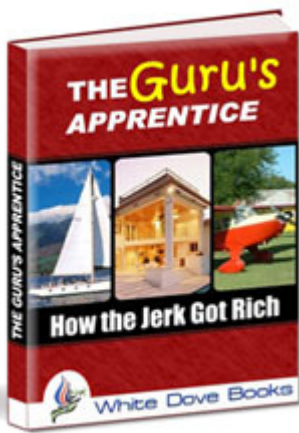
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Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

The INSPIRATION newsletter was started in 2005 as a way of providing helpful information including tips, articles and free inspirational eBooks to our visitors.

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