

Best Valentine's Day bets for your sweetie, and your heart

February 11 2011

Forget the oysters and the champagne this Valentine's Day. If you want to keep your true love's heart beating strong, Susan Ofria, clinical nutrition manager at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital, said the real food of love is dark chocolate and red wine.

"You are not even choosing between the lesser of two evils, [red wine](#) and [dark chocolate](#) have positive components that are actually good for your heart," said Ofria, a registered dietitian at the Loyola University Health System's Melrose Park campus.

Red wine and dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 70 percent or higher contain resveratrol, which has been found to lower blood sugar. Red wine is also a source of catechins, which could help improve "good" HDL cholesterol.

Ofria, who is also a nutrition educator, recommends the following list of heart-healthy ingredients for February, which is national heart month.

Eight Ways to Say "I Love You" - Top Heart-Healthy Foods

Red Wine - "Pinots, shirahs, merlots - all red wines are a good source of catechins and resveratrol to aid 'good' cholesterol."

Dark chocolate, 70 percent or higher cocoa content - "Truffles, soufflés and even hot chocolate can be a good source of resveratrol and cocoa phenols (flavonoids) as long as dark chocolate with a high content of

cocoa is used.”

Salmon/tuna - “Especially white, or albacore, tuna and salmon are excellent sources of omega-3 [fatty acids](#), and canned salmon contains soft bones that give an added boost of calcium intake.”

Flaxseeds - “Choose either brown or golden yellow, and have them ground for a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, phytoestrogens.”

Oatmeal - “Cooked for a breakfast porridge or used in breads or desserts, oatmeal is a good source of soluble fiber, niacin, folate and potassium.”

Black or kidney beans - Good source of niacin, folate, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids, calcium, soluble fiber.

Walnuts and almonds - “Both walnuts and almonds contain omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, magnesium, fiber and heart-favorable mono- and polyunsaturated fats.”

Blueberries/cranberries/raspberries/strawberries - “Berries are a good source of beta carotene and lutein, anthocyanin, ellagic acid (a polyphenol), vitamin C, folate, potassium and fiber.”

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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