

When it comes to food aphrodisiacs, expert says look for nutrition at first bite rather than love

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It's been said that food is the language of love. If so, can certain foods—or aphrodisiacs—promote romantic feelings or sexual desire?

Probably not, according to a Kansas State University nutrition expert and registered dietitian.

Linda Yarrow, assistant professor of human nutrition in the university's College of [Human Ecology](#), says the [Food and Drug Administration](#) has long maintained that there is no scientific support for claims that food aphrodisiacs can boost [sexual desire](#).

"The aphrodisiac effects of certain foods seem to be based on [placebo effect](#) more than anything," Yarrow said.

But while food aphrodisiacs may not boost your love life, some of them have a lot to love from a nutritional standpoint, Yarrow said. These include:

- **Chocolate**, one of the most popular Valentine's Day gifts. A growing number of studies indicate chocolate can be good for your heart, Yarrow said. Chocolate is made from the cocoa bean, which contains flavanols. Flavanols have antioxidant effects that can reduce damage to cells and increase vascular function. Both

of these can reduce risk for heart disease. "Flavanols are present in higher amounts in dark chocolate, so choose [dark chocolate](#) with a cocoa content of 65 percent or higher," Yarrow said. "But beware. Most chocolate has added fat and sugar that contributes to overall calories."

- **Oysters**, an excellent source of the minerals zinc, iron and calcium. Yarrow said zinc helps maintain a healthy immune system and is important in wound healing. Iron is important for preventing anemia and calcium helps maintain strong bone health.
- **Eggs**, a good source of non-meat protein for people who choose to limit or avoid meat products. They are also high in choline, riboflavin and vitamin B12. Yarrow said choline is essential for brain development, which improves focus, learning and [memory function](#). Riboflavin is important for [energy metabolism](#), tissue building and vision. Vitamin B12 helps form [red blood cells](#) and helps maintain the central nervous system.
- **Bananas**, an excellent source of potassium, which is a mineral important to muscular function. "Potassium may also lower risk for heart disease and reduce blood pressure," Yarrow said. "In addition, bananas are a good source of fiber, which reduces risk of constipation and certain cancers."
- **Almonds**, a non-animal source of protein. The nut is also high in vitamin E, which is an antioxidant and may reduce cancer risk. Yarrow said almonds have minerals such as magnesium, phosphorous and zinc, and are also a good source of fiber. Studies have shown that people who consume nuts can reduce their risk of heart disease, she said.
- **Avocados**, a good source of fiber, potassium, vitamin E and folic acid. "Avocados are best known as a source of monounsaturated fats in the diet," Yarrow said. "Monounsaturated fats can reduce risk for heart disease when they replace sources of saturated fat in the diet."

- **Figs**, which are a good source of calcium—for healthy bones and teeth—and can provide fiber, which can lower the risk of certain cancers. Yarrow said figs are high in antioxidants and may reduce risk for [heart disease](#). They are also a good source of iron, which is important for preventing anemia. "But use caution. Figs have a laxative effect and should be consumed in moderation," she said.

Provided by Kansas State University

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