

# Dark chocolate, red wine will keep your honey heart-healthy this Valentine's Day

February 12 2014, by Nora Plunkett

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Forget the oysters and the champagne this Valentine's Day. If you want to keep your true love's heart beating strong, the real foods of love are dark chocolate and red wine, said Loyola University Health System preventive heart specialist Sara Sirna, MD.

"Red wine and [dark chocolate](#) taste great and have heart-healthy components," said Dr. Sirna, who also is a professor of Medicine at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "We can help fight heart disease and aging and perhaps even boost our romance for the evening by choosing our foods wisely."

Red wine contains resveratrol, which has been found to lower blood sugar and LDL, or "bad" cholesterol. It also is a source of catechins, which can help improve HDL, or "good" cholesterol, and polyphenols, which may prevent the formation of toxic plaque that leads to Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Sirna warns that you should drink in moderation by consuming no more than one 5 oz. glass for women and two 5 oz. glasses for men.

Dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 70 percent or higher is rich in flavonoids, which help prevent the plaque buildup in the arteries. It also boosts the immune system and contains cancer-fighting enzymes.

Other items that top the list of heart-healthy foods include:

**Nuts** – The heart-health benefits of nuts have been documented in

several large studies, including the Nurses' Health Study and the Iowa Women's Health Study. The FDA reports that eating a diet that includes 1 oz. of nuts daily can reduce your risk of [heart disease](#).

**Fish** – Consider a Valentine's meal with fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce your risk of dying from a heart attack. Salmon and tuna are excellent sources. Canned salmon also contains soft bones, which give an added boost of calcium intake.

**Flaxseed** – Choose either brown or golden yellow and have them ground for a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, fiber and antioxidants.

**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** – These beans are a good source of niacin, folate, magnesium, omega-3 [fatty acids](#), calcium and [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.

**Berries** – Blueberries, cranberries, raspberries and strawberries are a good source of beta carotene, lutein, polyphenols, vitamin C, folate, potassium and fiber.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

Citation: Dark chocolate, red wine will keep your honey heart-healthy this Valentine's Day (2014, February 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-dark-chocolate-red-wine-honey.html>

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