

Naturally Nutritious Blog

HEALTH & WELLNESS



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Falling for Apples

When September comes around and fall is right around the corner, my mind goes straight to walking through local apple orchards with my family. There is so much nostalgia wrapped up in that moment when I pluck a beautiful fresh apple straight from a tree and bite into its sweet, crunchy, tart flesh. It reminds me of leaves changing color, cozy meals in a crockpot, warm sweaters, and Sundays spent watching football. With many ways to embrace apples, it wouldn't feel like fall without them.

Apples, one of the most widely available fruits, are not just a staple in our diets but a powerhouse of health benefits and culinary versatility. Coming in over 100 varieties globally, there's an apple

out there to meet anyone's taste preferences. With less than 100 calories per apple on average, they are packed with fiber to aid in digestion and help maintain healthy cholesterol levels, especially when consumed with the skin on. Pair diced or grated apples with oatmeal for even more cholesterol-lowering power. The pectin, a type of fiber, in apples, is also known for its role in gut health and promoting satiety. Rich in flavonoids, apples boast antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, while their potassium content helps regulate blood pressure and hydration.

In the kitchen, apples transform dishes with their taste and adaptability. From the classic

apple pie to innovative salads incorporating the crisp sweetness of apples, the possibilities are endless. They can be baked, stewed, or served raw, pairing beautifully with a range of flavors from warm spices to savory cheeses. A simple and easy snack is apple slices or wedges dipped in peanut butter providing fiber, healthy fats, and protein. Applesauce can be used as a substitute for oil in cakes or muffins, and pure apple cider can be used to naturally sweeten sauces, dressings, or marinades. So next time you bite into a juicy apple, remember it's not just a treat for your taste buds but a boon for your health and a versatile ingredient that can inspire a variety of recipes. Enjoy the crunch and savor the benefits!

For a nutritious snack or dessert, I love to serve sliced Honeycrisp apples with a sweet and savory dip. If you want to try something new, I invite you to try my salted caramel cheesecake dip below. All it takes is a few ingredients and a blender.



Note: Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.

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SALTED CARAMEL CHEESECAKE DIP AND APPLES



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Ingredients

5 pitted Medjool dates, soaked in hot water for 10 minutes
¾ cup 2% milkfat cottage cheese
2 ounces 1/3 reduced fat cream cheese or Neufchatel
1 tsp vanilla extract
Honeycrisp apples, sliced

Instructions

1. Drain the water from the soaked dates, reserving about 1 tablespoon to help the blending process
2. Place all the ingredients, except apples, in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Serve with sliced apples.

This recipe makes enough dip for 6 to 8 servings depending on how generous you are with dip. As soon as I opened my blender, I immediately smelled salted caramel. Dates are one of my secret weapons for sweetness in the kitchen as they naturally emulate the flavors of brown sugar and caramel. The cottage cheese and cream cheese provide all the salt needed in this recipe. The dip is sweet and savory with the unmistakable tangy creaminess of cheesecake. Sweeter varieties of apples such as Honeycrisp, Fuji, or Snapdragon complement the savory elements of the dip. This classic pairing gives off cozy fall vibes that will leave you craving more.

Parul

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