

Naturally Nutritious Blog

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Winterize Your Health with Citrus

As the days grow shorter and temperatures drop, it's essential to take steps to winterize your health. Embracing the cold season can bring surprising benefits, and incorporating citrus fruits into your diet can add a refreshing twist to your meals. Winter can be tough on the body, but with a few simple strategies, you can stay healthy and even thrive during the colder months. Boost your immune system by ensuring you're getting enough vitamins and minerals. While it might be tempting to hibernate, staying active is crucial. Exercise boosts your immune system, improves mood, and helps maintain a healthy weight. It's easy to forget to drink water when it's cold, but staying hydrated is just as important in winter as in summer. Try a soothing cup of herbal tea or warm broth to keep your fluid intake up. The shorter days can disrupt your sleep patterns, so aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night to keep your body and mind in top shape.

Foods rich in antioxidants, like berries and leafy greens, and especially citrus can help fight off winter illnesses.

Citrus fruits, such as oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits, are not only delicious but also packed with health benefits. They are well-known for their high vitamin C content, which is essential for a healthy immune system and helps in the absorption of iron from plant-based foods. The antioxidants in citrus fruits help protect your cells from damage caused by free radicals, reducing inflammation and lowering the risk of chronic diseases. Citrus fruits have high water content, which helps keep you hydrated and provides a refreshing burst of flavor that can make drinking water more enjoyable. The fiber in citrus fruits aids digestion and helps maintain a healthy gut, regulating blood sugar levels and lowering cholesterol.

Citrus fruits are incredibly versatile in the kitchen. Use lemon or lime juice to create tangy marinades for meats and vegetables, or citrus-based dressings to brighten up salads. Citrus zest and juice can enhance the flavor of baked goods like cakes, cookies, and muffins. Every Christmas my signature cookie is a tangerine, cardamom, and black pepper sugar cookie. Citrus fruits are perfect for making homemade lemonade, limeade, or even adding a slice to your water for a hint of flavor. Toss your favorite vegetables with olive oil, salt, pepper, and a squeeze of lemon or orange juice before roasting. The citrus will caramelize and add a delightful tang.

Citrus can balance the richness of savory dishes; add lemon zest to pasta, lime juice to tacos, or orange segments to a winter salad for a burst of freshness and a great way to add flavor without adding salt like in the recipe below. By embracing the cold and incorporating citrus into your diet, you can enjoy a healthier, more vibrant winter season. So, bundle up, stay active, and savor the zesty goodness of citrus fruits in your meals!



Roasted Beet, Orange & Arugula Salad

Ingredients

- 1 to 1 1/4 lbs fresh beets peeled, sliced 1/4"
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 5 oz. fresh baby arugula washed
- 2 oranges peeled, seeded, sectioned
- 2 Tbsp flat leaf (Italian) parsley chopped
- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds optional
- Citrus Vinaigrette recipe follows
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp grated orange zest
- 1 tsp grated lemon zest
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves, minced or 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- pinch kosher salt
- pinch ground black pepper a few grinds
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Citrus Vinaigrette

- 2 Tbsp fresh orange juice

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F
- On parchment-lined sheet pan, spread beets in single layer. Coat beets with cooking spray; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast until tender-crisp, 15-25 minutes. Cool.
- While beets are roasting, prepare citrus vinaigrette by combining juice, zest, thyme, salt and pepper in a bowl, and whisking ingredients while drizzling olive oil into bowl to emulsify.
- In serving bowl, toss arugula, chopped roasted beets, oranges, parsley, sesame seeds (if using), and citrus vinaigrette dressing. Serve.



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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