

getting juicy

Anna Middleton feels it's time to squeeze some goodness into our lives... start your 5-a-day the juicy way!

Why is juicing so good for us?

Juicing fresh organic fruit and vegetables is a great way to provide our bodies with a high level of quality nutrition. It's easy to juice more fruit and vegetables than we could possibly eat in a single sitting so as a result, we are supercharging our bodies with antioxidants, vitamins, enzymes and minerals. These nutrients help our cells to regenerate and grow, strengthen our immune system, boost our energy and give our skin a radiant glow. Juicing can also assist with weight loss and keeps hunger cravings at bay. Very little effort is actually required by the digestive system to process juice so all the goodness is absorbed pretty quickly and reaches our bloodstream in less than 30 minutes. Juicing has an incredibly cleansing effect on a cellular level and it doesn't take long to see and feel the health benefits of drinking juice on a regular basis.

Whilst fruit juices are great for health, they are also high in sugar so it's a good idea to make juices with a variety of fruits, vegetables, fresh herbs, spices and sprouted seeds.

Raw vegetables, especially the green varieties, are extremely alkaline and can help prevent us becoming too acidic which is important because once our cells become acidic we are at risk of developing a whole host of health problems. Disease is able to grow faster in acidic environments and an overly acidic body has been linked to an increased risk of more serious conditions such as cancer and heart disease.

Green juices contain lots of chlorophyll which is the green plant pigment in vegetables. The darker the green, the more chlorophyll it contains. The molecular structure of chlorophyll is almost identical to heme (the red component of our blood cells), the only difference being that chlorophyll contains a magnesium atom where heme has an iron atom. However, when we consume chlorophyll, our digestive system turns the chlorophyll into heme so eating green veg will improve our red blood cell count. Dark leafy greens such as spinach and kale, wheatgrass, spirulina & chlorella are some of the best food sources of chlorophyll. Adding beetroot juice or parsley to our green juice can increase the benefit as both are a great source of iron. Lemon also combines well with green juices as it can take away the bitterness and is a good cleanser for the liver.

How long can juice be stored?

Freshly squeezed juice should be consumed immediately after making, to ensure maximum benefit. When this is not possible, it can be kept for up to 24 hours when stored in an airtight container to prevent oxidation and kept in a fridge. It's essential to understand that any type of juice or smoothie bottled and sold from a shop has been heat-treated or pasteurized, a process which destroys enzymes and damages other nutrients. So, the only way to benefit from juicing is to visit a fresh juice bar or to juice at home.

What type of juicer?

There are a range of different juicers available depending how much you want to spend and what you want to juice.

Centrifugal juicers are the most affordable. They are great at juicing most fruit and veg but struggle with leafy greens, herbs and grasses. They contain a blade which cuts the fruit or vegetables as they are spinning at high speed. The juice gets aerated easily so the process of oxidation starts quicker and the juice doesn't last as long. Also, the pulp left over is often wet meaning that they don't give the highest yield of juice. They are great juicers to get started with and are often available with large chutes that allow whole foods to be added without the need to cut and prepare food into smaller pieces.

Masticating (or single gear) Juicers use a single auger that crushes fruit and vegetables and breaks up the plant cells, resulting in more fibre, enzymes, vitamins and trace minerals. They are more efficient than centrifugal juicers because they can extract more juice from the same amount of food (i.e. the pulp comes out drier) and have no problem juicing fruits, vegetables, leaves,

grasses and herbs. They operate at lower speeds resulting in less heat which means more nutrition in the juice. They are more expensive and tend to start at around £200 but they are also more versatile than centrifugal juicers because most of them have attachments to finely grind nuts & seeds and to make nut butters, ice creams and fruit sorbets.

Twin gear juicers are the most pricey and also offer the most benefits as they operate at slower speeds resulting in a greater yield and even more nutritious juice. They are often found in health centres and spas.

If you own a liquidizer then one option is to purchase a nylon nut bag from a kitchen shop and simply blend everything you want to include with a little added water and strain it all through the bag. It may not be the most efficient method of juicing but it's a quick, cheap and cost-effective way to get started.

Cleansing Green Juice

half a cucumber
2 sticks of celery
a few big handfuls of leafy greens (eg romaine lettuce or kale)
2 apples
½ lemon (with or without peel)
slice of ginger
clove of garlic (optional)

Cucumbers and apples are both hydrating and great for cleansing the body. Celery reduces acidity, kale and green leafy veg are full of minerals and high in chlorophyll which boosts energy. Ginger is a natural anti-biotic and decongestant. Lemon and garlic both have anti-bacterial properties and are great for cleansing the liver and intestines.

Sweet Red Blood Boost

½ ripe pineapple
1 small beetroot
½ yellow pepper
2 carrots
2 oranges (without the peel)

If you want something a little sweeter, try this juice. Pineapple contains bromeline which is a digestive enzyme, it also helps dissolve mucus. Beetroot is great for cleansing the liver and boosting iron in the blood. Both yellow peppers and carrots help cleanse the liver. Yellow peppers also cleanse the intestines and carrots are also good for eye and skin health. Oranges are good for destroying free radicals and flushing toxins from the body. This juice is full of anti-oxidants and on top of being great for your blood, it will clean your liver and boost your immune system.

For further details about naturopathic techniques & holistic nutrition, go to www.annamiddleton.com