**Food as Medicine topic: Fruit**

The medicinal properties of fruit are indisputable. Fruit contains powerful antioxidants that can protect against heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and many other conditions too numerous to mention. Interestingly, whole fruit does not spike blood sugars in the same way as foods or beverages with added processed sugars. Fruit’s fiber content is the reason. The fiber helps to slow down the digestion of the natural sugars and nutrients, leading to a more gradual rise in blood sugar levels. This also aids in weight management because the body feels full, satiated, and well-nourished.

Across cultures, favorite fruits vary greatly. Regions like Asia favor mangoes, bananas, and lychees, while Europe and North America lean towards apples, pears, and berries. Latin America and Africa enjoy tropical fruits like pineapples, papayas, and mangoes. Generally, all whole fruits are good sources of fiber and nutrients, so eat what you love! The freezer section of the grocery store is often stocked with a wide variety of frozen fruits. The key is to choose plain frozen fruits without added sugar.

Here is a fruit crisp recipe from the cookbook *PlantYou Scrappy Cooking* (printed in the magazine *Forks Over Knives*). You can include any variety of fresh or frozen fruit you have available. To lower the fat content even more, I use a powdered nut butter. The sugar content is minimal, but I often replace the brown sugar with date paste (see recipe in notes) for added healthy antioxidants. This recipe is gluten-free but you can use regular oats and flour.

**Fruit crisp**

6 cups fresh or frozen fruit of your choice

¼ cup packed light or dark brown sugar (or ¼ cup date paste)

2 Tbsp. cornstarch

3 Tbsp. lemon juice

2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

2 cups gluten-free rolled oats

1 cup gluten-free oat flour (or any other flour)

½ cup maple syrup

¼ cup any nut butter

2 Tbsp. flaxseed meal

½ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp. baking powder

Pinch of salt

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. In a large bowl stir together fruit, brown sugar (or date paste), cornstarch, 1½ Tbsp. of the lemon juice, and 1 tsp. of the vanilla. Pour into a 2-qt. baking dish. Bake 10 minutes if using fresh fruit or 20 minutes if using frozen fruit.
2. In a medium bowl stir together the next seven ingredients (through baking powder), a pinch of salt, and the remaining 1½ Tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tsp. vanilla. Massage mixture by hand until it turns into small clumps.
3. Remove fruit from oven. Carefully spread oat mixture over top. Bake 25 to 30 minutes more or until top is golden brown.

**Notes:**

* **Top with low-fat plant-based yogurt or frozen dessert.**
* **Date paste recipe:** In a shallow container combine 1 lb. pitted Medjool dates and 1½ cups water. Cover container and let soak at least 3 hours or up to 8 hours. Transfer dates and any remaining liquid to a food processor or high-powered blender. Process until smooth. Transfer to an airtight container. Store in the refrigerator up to 1 month or freeze up to 6 months. Makes 2½ cups.