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Water Wins Again!

If sugar content is not enough reason to limit intake of fruit juice, here is another one. According to Consumer Reports (CR), in a recent test of 45 fruit juices sold across the United States, including apple, grape, pear, and fruit blends, 21 were found to be contaminated with potentially harmful levels of the heavy metals, arsenic, cadmium, and/or lead. The juice brands tested include 365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods), Honest Kids, Ocean Spray, Capri Sun, Gerber, Minute Maid, Mott's, Nature's Own, Trader Joe's, and Welch's. Exposure to heavy metals can impact development as well as increase the risk of cancer, heart disease, type 2 Diabetes, and behavioral problems. Harmful effects depend on the amount of exposure as well as the amount of time, and risk from any one source may be low. The concern is that according to a CR survey, 74 % of children drink juice once a day or more. Heavy metals have also been found in infant and toddler foods, rice and rice products, and other foods as well as the environment (water, air, and soil). The CR findings are as follows:

- *Every product tested had measurable levels of at least one heavy metal (cadmium, arsenic, lead, or mercury).
- *21 (47%) of the juices had concerning levels of cadmium, arsenic, and/or lead.
- *7 of the 21 juices were harmful to children at 4 oz or more per day & 9 juices posed risk at 8 oz or more per day.
- *Five of the products with elevated levels are 4 -6.75 oz. juice boxes or pouches, which can pose risk to children who drink more than one per day.
- *10 of the juices pose risks to adults (5 at 4 oz. or more per day and five at 8 oz. or more per day)
- *Grape juice and blends were highest in heavy metals.
- *Organic juices did not have lower levels of heavy metals than conventional ones.

Currently, the federal arsenic standard for drinking water is 10 parts per billion (ppb) or less, which the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed as a limit for apple juice, although no standard has been set. CR proposes a threshold of 3 ppb and the inclusion of more juices, not just apple. The FDA has set a guideline for lead of 50 ppb in juice, which is 10 times that of bottled water with a limit of 5 ppb. Again, CR thinks the limit should be much lower. Although the FDA has not set a limit for cadmium in juice, CR supports 1 ppb. The limits proposed by CR reflect their findings in the most recent testing and the fact that there has been an overall reduction in heavy metal levels in fruit juices since their testing in 2011.


The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends limiting children's fruit juice consumption due to its sugar and calorie content, which contribute to tooth decay and obesity. The current AAP recommendations are:

- *No fruit juice for children younger than 1 year old
- *Daily maximum of 4 oz. for 1 – 3 year-olds, 6 oz. for 4 – 6 year-olds, and 8 oz. for 7 year-olds or older

Apple juices with heavy metal levels that posed potential risk at 1 cup per day were Gold Emblem (CVS) 100% juice, Great Value (Walmart) 100% juice, and Trader Joe's Organic and at ½ cup per day, Trader Joe's Fresh Pressed 100% juice. For a comprehensive list of the potential risk juices and better alternatives, visit consumerreports.org.

Harvest Time Is Here

As the leaves turn colors and the air becomes crisp, there is no better time to take a family outing to a local apple orchard, like Sweet Berry Farm and Rocky Brook Orchard in Middletown. Not only does apple picking bring everyone together but it also keeps them active. There is always a wide variety of apples to choose from, bringing different colors and flavors to your kitchen and meals. Hundreds of varieties of apples are on the market today, although most of us have only tasted a handful. The popular varieties include McIntosh, Red and Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Gala, and Fuji. Each type of apple has a different flavor and use.

-  **McIntosh:** Sweet and slightly tart taste. All purpose apple.
-  **Red Delicious:** Crisp, juicy, and mildly sweet. Good for snacking and salads, but poor for baking.
-  **Golden Delicious:** Crisp, sweet, and juicy. All purpose apple. Great for snacking, cooking, and baking!
-  **Granny Smith:** Mildly tart. Best for snacking & good for baking.
-  **Gala:** Mildly sweet flavor. Excellent for snacking & salads.
-  **Fuji:** Very sweet taste. Excellent for snacking & salads. Good for sauce.

You know the saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." Apples are a great source of fiber and vitamin C.

Make sure to eat the skin for optimal nutrition. Apples make the perfect fall snack and are easy to pack in lunches or throw in a purse. They are delicious with a little peanut butter or to top off a salad. They can also be baked with cinnamon for a sweet treat, roasted with winter squashes, or diced into fresh salsa. However you choose to use them, they are delicious, nutritious, and fun to pick.

Apples aren't the only healthy crop at harvest. Fall is the best time for other great produce, including winter squashes, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, snow peas, turnip, and more. Winter squashes and potatoes provide a delicious and nutritious complement to any meal; pair this starch with vegetables, lean meat, and/or fish. Not only is cooking spinach fast and easy, but it is also a nutrient powerhouse. Blanched snow peas and green beans make a great snack or addition to a stir fry. Expand your palate as the weather gets colder. Try incorporating different types of beans, like black beans, kidney beans, or lentils into your diet for both fiber and protein. Although dry is best, when using canned look for low sodium and strain and rinse them prior to use. If taste isn't enough reason to add these foods, check out highlights of their nutritional benefits.

Winter Squashes: Vitamin A (alpha and beta carotene), Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, Manganese, Copper, and Potassium

Sweet Potatoes: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Manganese, Copper, Pantothenic Acid, Vitamin B6, Biotin, and Potassium

Pumpkin (don't forget to eat the seeds): Vitamin A (alpha and beta carotenes), Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, Thiamin, Niacin, Pantothenic Acid, Folate, Copper, Potassium, Iron, and Zinc

Spinach: Iron, Folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Manganese, Magnesium, Copper, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B6, Vitamin E, Calcium, and Potassium

Snap Peas and Green Beans: B Vitamins, Vitamin K, Manganese, Copper, Vitamin C, and Phosphorus

Beans: Folate, Thiamin, Magnesium, Manganese, Iron, Copper, Phosphorus, Zinc, and Potassium

Lentils: Molybdenum, Folate, Copper, Phosphorus, Manganese, Iron, Pantothenic Acid, Zinc, Vitamin B6, & Potassium



For a delicious combination of fall flavors, try my Pumpkin Chick Pea Stew recipe.

To use even more of your harvest, stir in fresh spinach leaves toward the end of simmering.

Pumpkin Chick Pea Stew

Serves 8

Prep. Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes – 1 hour

Ingredients

- 2 tsp. – 1 Tbsp. Olive Oil
- 2 Cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 Green Bell Pepper, chopped
- 1 Red Bell Pepper, chopped
- 1 Medium Onion, chopped
- 1 ½ tsp. – 1 Tbsp. Adobo Seasoning
- ½ tsp. – 1 tsp. Ground Cumin (or more to taste)
- 1 Large Tomato, chopped
- 1 (8 oz.) Can Tomato Sauce, no salt added
- 2 (15.5 oz.) Cans Low Sodium Chick Peas (Garbanzo Beans), strained and rinsed
- 2.75 lb Pumpkin or Butternut Squash, cut into small pieces w/skin
- ¼ cup loosely chopped Fresh Cilantro Leaves (or more to taste)

Directions

Add olive oil to a large pot over medium heat, and sauté the garlic, bell peppers, and onion until tender. Stir in the adobo to taste, cumin, chopped tomato, tomato sauce, chick peas, and ½ cup water. Bring to a boil and stir in the pumpkin and cilantro. Simmer for 45 minutes to one hour, or until the pumpkin is tender, stirring occasionally. Add an Additional ½ cup of water during cooking if stew is not the desired consistency.



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