

Real Foods that Heal
Weekly bulletin, volume 1, #12
March 25, 2008

Turmeric: it's not just for curry anymore

Last weekend, my wife and I decided to go out for an Indian dinner. I love to open the door of that restaurant and have my nose greeted with all those mysterious aromas I cannot name. We are adventurous eaters, but you don't have to be so in order to enjoy turmeric, a spice commonly used in Indian curries.

With this issue of Real Foods that Heal, we are introducing for the first time a spice that has well-researched anticancer properties. Turmeric imparts that characteristic yellow-orange color to Indian foods, and has a distinctive flavor. It is not highly pungent or "hot" like chili peppers, just very flavorful. The spice is the ground powder from the rhizome (underground stem) of the Turmeric plant, closely related to ginger. It has been cultivated and used in cooking for at least 4000 years of recorded history in India, so you can imagine how many recipes you could choose from after 4000 years!

The major ingredient of turmeric powder is curcumin, which has normally been the subject of any medical research on this topic. Studies have shown that curcumin significantly slows the growth of breast cancer cells which were started by exposure to pesticides. And in combination with a soy protein the effect was even stronger. However, at least one study has shown that the addition of curcumin to the diet DURING chemotherapy for cancer made the chemotherapy less effective because curcumin is such a strong antioxidant. So let me be very clear: based on good science, I recommend that women who are concerned with breast cancer prevention eat turmeric spice on a regular basis, and women who already have breast cancer can add it to their diet, but NOT during chemotherapy. Once finished with chemotherapy, using turmeric makes good sense as a way to enhance standard treatment.

Turmeric seasoned lentil soup

Heat to boiling in a large pot 3 cups of water, 1 cup of dried lentils, and 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder. (If you are bothered by gas from beans, soak the lentils overnight and discard the water they were soaked in). In another large pot, sauté 2 cloves of crushed garlic and a small onion in extra virgin olive oil until golden, then add chopped green peppers and zucchini to the sauté and turn down the heat. When the lentils are tender, pour the lentils and water over the sautéed vegetables, stir, and add a few fresh spinach leaves at the last minute. Add salt in moderation to taste if desired. Serve and enjoy!

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

DISCLAIMER: The contents of this bulletin are for informational purposes only and do not render medical or psychological advice, opinion, diagnosis, or treatment. The information provided through this Web site should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. It is not a substitute for professional care. If you have or suspect you may have a medical or psychological problem, you should consult your appropriate health care provider. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this Web site. Links on this Web site are provided only as an informational resource, and it should not be implied that we recommend, endorse or approve of any of the content at the linked sites, nor are we responsible for their availability, accuracy or content.