

Bok Choy: an October introduction

This week's healing food is one with a foreign sounding name, but with some very familiar and delicious characteristics you will enjoy! Bok Choy (sometimes called Chinese Cabbage, or pak-choi), like the star of the previous bulletin, kale, is a member of the brassica vegetable family (cruciferous vegetables), and shares many of the same health benefits as other members of that family. And like kale, broccoli, and cauliflower, Bok Choy does well in home gardens when planted as cool weather crop, such as early fall in the southeast.

Bok Choy differs from its cousins in shape and size. Most of the varieties of Bok Choy you will find in markets have a slender white stalk with dark green leaves at the top. The stalk and the leaves both are good to eat, and we will give some cooking ideas in a few moments here.

Let's review the nutritional good news: one cup of cooked Bok Choy provides only 20 calories, and over 2 grams of fiber, so this will be a filling treat and an ally in weight reduction if that is what is needed. That same cup supplies over 7000 units of vitamin A precursors, important antioxidants to protect your cells from toxic damage. It is a good vegetable source of calcium (over 150 mg per cup), also supplies potassium and magnesium, and is naturally low in salt. These electrolytes assure that this food will help prevent high blood pressure when eaten regularly. And as an anti-inflammatory, it supplies almost 70 mg of omega-3 fats which occur naturally in the plant as it develops.

And this month especially, since October is breast cancer awareness month, it's good to remind you that the cruciferous vegetables, including Bok Choy, are high in indole 3 carbinol (I3C), which has a protective effect against the development of breast cancer. I3C shifts the metabolism of estrogen in women's bodies to a form which is less likely to promote tumor growth. And even without I3C, bok choy is a good source of glucosinolates, which are compounds that induce enzymes in the body to get rid of carcinogens.

So now that you have been introduced, I am betting this vegetable with the foreign name will seem like a familiar friend after all. Continue to cultivate that friendship, and it can be a powerful ally in the prevention of chronic and serious disease!

Bok Choy stir fry

Wash and drain bok choy, usually one stalk per one or two people, depending on what else is being served. Cut the large bottom stalks away from the leaves, and chop the stalks diagonally, and the leaves only need to be cut if very large (they will cook down in size). Heat organic canola oil in a large pan or wok (or olive oil if you don't mind the flavor), and cut two slices of fresh ginger root into

matchstick size. Stir fry the ginger long enough to soften slightly, then add the bok choy. Stir on medium-high heat, taking care not to overheat the oil to smoking. Add about a tablespoon of low-sodium soy sauce to taste, and just before taking out of the pan, stir in ¼ tsp of sesame oil for flavor. It will not take long to cook, and the stalks should be crunchy but tender when served. Makes a great side dish for a fish dinner especially! If you want to make this the main dish, you could stir fry ½ inch cubes of extra firm tofu in the ginger before adding the bok choy, and serve over brown rice for a complete vegetarian option.

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

P.S. Please remember this October, Breast Cancer Awareness month, to forward this bulletin to family members and friends who also deserve to know about food choices which reduce cancer risk!

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