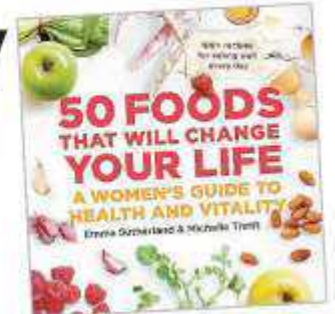




your body heart



Here are three foods that will do wonders for your health and well-being, **Emma Sutherland** and **Michelle Thrift** write

MKnown as the “king of fruits”, mangoes – a member of the cashew family – have had a long and interesting history, probably originating in India more than 4000 years ago. Grown now in most tropical climates and used in a number of cuisines, the mango has become a common fixture in our local supermarket fruit section and seems to only be gaining in popularity.

Packed with vitamin C and carotenoids, which account for its lovely bright-yellow flesh, mango is one of the healthiest fruits to add to your diet. Also offering a lot of fibre, as well as potassium – an important mineral required for water regulation in the body – they can be instrumental in keeping your immunity up to par as well as your digestive, cardiovascular, and respiratory systems working at their best. With a good amount of antioxidants, mangoes can help fight free radicals and ward off diseases, particularly those related to age.

Researchers from Queensland have discovered that the peels of two mango types, Irwin and Nam Doc Mai mangoes, have the ability to reduce the formation of fat cells and suggest that mango peel may become a weight-loss supplement in the future.

Available from November to March, mangoes are usually picked when green and allowed to ripen at room temperature. You'll know they are ready when their skin colour becomes yellow and red and the flesh is no longer hard, but slightly soft and giving when pressed. Once mangoes have ripened, be sure to refrigerate them and eat within a few days.

Getting at the actual fruit can be a challenge, as you have to cut around the large flat seed the mango contains. The best way to do this is by slicing off the sides as close to the seed as you can get and then removing the flesh from the skin by peeling or cutting into crosshatches to make cubes.

Easy ways to get mango into your diet

Grill mango cheeks until they are golden, then top with candied ginger and drizzle with melted chocolate.

Mango makes a great salsa. Combine with chopped mint, red chilli and lime juice. Serve with grilled pork, white fish or spicy barbecued prawns.

Mango and coconut are perfect partners. Use in baking, smoothies, and all manner of desserts.

Pumpkin: breathe easier, as this vegetable helps protect your lungs

Originally from the Americas and actually a type of winter squash, pumpkins offer a lot of health benefits. As a great source of vitamin C, fibre and beta carotene, they are superb for healthy digestion, better vision and a strong immune system. Available all year round, these gems of nutrition make the perfect addition to anyone's diet but can be especially beneficial for women's health.

Carotenoids such as beta carotene, which our bodies turn into usable vitamin A, have been shown to be highly protective of the lungs, especially in smokers and those exposed to secondhand smoke. By fighting free radicals, they are able to assist the body in removing dangerous toxins and ward off other lung-related diseases such as emphysema – conditions that are unfortunately increasing in the female population. Add folate, a vital B vitamin that pregnant women need and which pumpkins contain



in a good amount, and you have another reason to explore the various ways you can consume pumpkin.

It also packs a beneficial punch for men. Researchers from Perth have found higher intakes of carotenoid-rich foods such as pumpkin are linked to a lower rate of prostate cancer. A high intake of carotenoid-rich pumpkin and carrots reduced the risk of having elevated haemoglobin A1c levels, a measure of diabetes, by nearly 50 per cent.

Pumpkins will stay in cold storage for a long time.

Easy ways to get pumpkin into your diet

- Cut a pumpkin in half, scoop out the seeds, and roast in the oven with a little olive oil and seasoning for a side dish.
- Turn pumpkin pulp into a soup with the addition of carrots and spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg.
- Toss pumpkin seeds with salt and olive oil then roast in the oven until crisp for a healthy snack.

Everyone knows that salmon is beneficial to health, but it's important to know who can benefit most from its incredible nutritional value. Salmon is available all year round. While young, salmon live in rivers. When they become mature enough, they travel to the ocean.

Australian wild salmon can sometimes be found and certainly has the most flavour of all salmon,

although farmed Atlantic salmon is more common. Salmon contains incredible levels of omega-3 essential fatty acids, vitamin D, vitamin B12 and tryptophan, as well as protein. Typical Western diets are higher in omega-6 essential fatty acid and often deficient in the anti-inflammatory omega-3 varieties. This results in too much inflammation in your body; therefore eating foods rich in omega-3s will have a powerful balancing effect. Research generally concludes that higher levels of omega-3s correlate to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, arthritis and depression.

For women, the benefits don't stop there.

Eating fish twice a week reduces hardening of arteries and lowers atherosclerosis. One type of omega-3, called DHA, was measured in the diets of more than 900 women and the women who ate the most DHA were 70 per cent less likely to feel depressed than those who ate the least. They were also less likely to suffer from anxiety. Women who ate fish only once a week had higher levels of perceived stress than those who ate fish more often. This may be due to a combination of nutrients, but tryptophan, a precursor to our feel-good hormone, serotonin, is found in high levels in salmon.

Salmon seems a wise choice for so many reasons when it comes to children. Including it in your child's diet may protect them from respiratory problems and allergies, and this effect is due to the omega-3 polyunsaturated fats. Vitamin D is found in high levels in salmon and studies have shown that vitamin D is not only important to keep our bones strong but also in reducing our risk of chronic diseases such as insulin resistance and diabetes. Vitamin D boosts immunity and regulates how immune cells communicate with each other. This is vital to avoid autoimmune issues such as rheumatoid arthritis, coeliac disease, endometriosis, Hashimoto's disease and alopecia.

So everyone can benefit from eating salmon on a regular basis. If you are after the health benefits of omega-3s, aim to eat wild salmon, which contains a higher level than farmed fish. Just make sure it comes from a sustainable source.

Easy ways to get salmon into your diet

Toss smoked salmon with sliced fennel, blood orange segments and mixed herbs. Dress with a lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil and red wine vinegar mixture.

Use sashimi-grade salmon to make a carpaccio. Dress the salmon slices with chopped dill and drizzle with lemon juice. Serve immediately.

For those of you who are a little concerned about the fishy smell, here is a tip: wrap the salmon in baking paper and either bake or steam it. Add lemon and fresh herbs to the parcel for extra flavour.

■ This is an edited extract from *50 Foods that Will Change Your Life: A Women's Guide to Health and Vitality*. By Emma Sutherland and Michelle Thrift. Viking. \$35.

