



Nutritional Importance of Dragon Fruit

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Dragon fruit is a tropical fruit that has become increasingly popular in recent years. Dragon fruit grows on the *Hylocereus* cactus, also known as the Honolulu queen, whose flowers only open at night which you will find in tropical regions around the world. The plant's name comes from the Greek word "hyle," which means "woody," and the Latin word "cereus," which means "waxen." On the outside, the fruit has the appearance of a hot pink or yellow bulb with spike-like green leaves shooting up like flames around it. Cut it open and you will find fleshy white stuff inside dotted with black seeds that are ok to eat.

This fruit comes in red- and yellow-skinned varieties. The cactus originally grew in southern Mexico and South and Central America. The French brought it to Southeast Asia in the early 19th century. Dragon fruit is the fruit of a variety of cactus species. It has a unique appearance, sweet taste, and crunchy texture. The dragon fruit contains multiple antioxidants that are beneficial for good health. Dragon fruit also contains many vitamins and minerals that are important for a healthy body. Though people primarily enjoy it for its unique look and taste, evidence suggests it may provide health benefits as well. The plant is native to southern Mexico and Central America. Today, it is grown all over the world.

It goes by many names, including pitaya, pitahaya, and strawberry pear. Dragon fruit may look exotic, but its flavors are similar to other fruits. Its taste has been described as a slightly sweet cross between a kiwi and a pear.

Dragon Fruit: Health Benefits

Dragon fruit has many potential health benefits, including:

- It's rich in antioxidants like flavonoids, phenolic acid, and betacyanin. These natural substances protect your cells from damage by free radicals -- molecules that can lead to diseases like cancer and premature aging.
- It's naturally fat-free and high in fiber. It makes for a good snack because it can help keep you full for longer between meals.
- It may help lower your blood sugar. Researchers say this might be partly because it replaces damaged cells in your pancreas that make insulin, the hormone that helps your body break down sugar.
- It can strengthen your immune system. Dragon fruit is high in vitamin - C and other antioxidants, which are good for your immune system.
- It can improve your iron levels. Iron is a key for moving oxygen through your body and provides you energy, and dragon fruit has iron. And the vitamin C in dragon fruit helps your body take in and use the iron.

Nutrition Facts

Dragon fruit contains small amounts of several nutrients. It's also a decent source of iron, magnesium, and fiber. Here are the nutrition facts for a serving of 3.5 ounces, or 100 grams:

- ✓ **Calories:** 60
- ✓ **Protein:** 1.2 grams
- ✓ **Fat:** 0 grams
- ✓ **Crabs:** 13 grams
- ✓ **Fiber:** 3 grams
- ✓ **Vitamin C:** 3% of the RDI
- ✓ **Iron:** 4% of the RDI
- ✓ **Magnesium:** 10% of the RDI

Rich in high amount of fiber and magnesium, as well as the extremely low calorie content, dragon fruit can be considered a highly nutrient-dense fruit.



Dragon Fruit

How to Eat It?

Though it may look intimidating, dragon fruit is very easy to eat:

- ✓ Select a ripe fruit with bright red, evenly colored skin that gives slightly when squeezed.
- ✓ Use a sharp knife and cut straight through the fruit, slicing it in half.
- ✓ You can use a spoon to eat the fruit out of the skin or peel the skin off and slice the pulp into small pieces.

Ideas for Serving Dragon Fruit

- ✓ Simply slice it up and eat it as is.
- ✓ Chop it into small pieces and top with Greek yogurt and chopped nuts.
- ✓ Include it in a salad.

References

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