

Super Foods: Contemporary Health Ingredients

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Abstract—These are lots of variety of super food which can be eaten raw or cooked. Super foods provide a lot of nutrients and have amazing health benefits

The purpose of this study is to identify the current trends and clarify the changing direction of modern kitchen ingredients. A life style filled with stress competition a run for money fame has made the human living a real challenge. People have no time for them self and look for easy and fast alternative to stay in race for the glory. This life in the fast lane has changed the modern life practice from day to day life. Everyone is looking for easy resources to gain benefits take food for that matter of fact with no time to cook and lots of ifs and but involved in ones diet to stay fit and healthy people look for some amazing food which are easy to cook or could be eaten raw and also fulfills the requirements of one diet. These foods are nothing other but SUPERFOODS which act as all in one power house of energy vitamins minerals proteins, Research is being conducted to find different kinds of super foods present in the market and their scope in current catering industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Diet plays an important role in our life, with changing life styles, changing nature of jobs and fast food culture mushrooming it has raised serious concerns on health of our current generations. Many studies have proven that obesity has reached epidemic proportions in our country. Many factors have contributed to this rise: the rise in middle class incomes, increase average caloric intake, less physical activities etc. Unhealthy, processed food has become much more accessible following India's continued integration in global food markets. [1]

According to a study published in the noted journal Lancet, India is just behind US and China in this global hazard list of top 10 countries with highest number of obese people.[2]

Now lot of studies are being done to form a balanced diets and we have variety of them in the market to follow, amongst these a new category of food has emerged named super foods which is used to describe foods with supposed health benefits.

Super foods are a special category of foods found in nature. By definition they are calorie sparse and nutrient dense meaning they pack a lot of punch for their weight as far as goodness goes. They are superior sources of anti-oxidants and essential nutrients.

2. DEFINITION OF SUPER FOODS:

Super food as a food that is considered to be very good for your health and that may even help some medical conditions.[3]

Super food is a nutrient-rich food considered to be especially beneficial for health and well-being” [4]

Another source defines Super foods as "a non-medical term popularized in the media to refer to foods that can have health-promoting properties such as reducing one's risk of disease or improving any aspect of physical or emotional health. So-called Super foods may have an unusually high content of antioxidants, vitamins or other nutrients. [5]

Use of the term “super foods”

As of 2007 the marketing of products as "Super foods" is prohibited in the European Union unless accompanied by a specific medical claim supported by credible scientific research.[6]

Thus we can define super foods as Super foods are food that are high source of nutrients and can also act as natural medicine. Super foods are low in calories and contain nutrients such as fibre, protein, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, enzymes, amino acids and omega-3 fatty acids.

3. TYPES OF SUPER FOODS:

Super foods can be divided into 9 categories:

1. Cacao products
2. Algae (phytoplankton)
3. Dried roots, grasses and vegetables (wheat grass & ginseng)
4. Dried berries and fruit (including goji berries, mulberries)
5. Vegetable fats (including coconut oil)
7. Bee products (including bee pollen, royal jelly and raw honey)
8. Mushrooms extracts & super herbs (Including chaga, reishi, maitake, lion's mane)
9. Other super foods (including colloidal silver)

Health benefit of Super foods

Cacao

Cacao beans contain natural chemicals called flavonoids, a type of antioxidant compound that promotes general health. [7] In that study, researchers compared the antioxidant capacity of black tea, green tea, red wine and cocoa, concluding that cocoa has the highest antioxidant activity among the four products and the greatest potential for health benefits. [8]

Antioxidants helps in removing free radicals and contribute to arthritis and other diseases and prevents blood clots. In a review of evidence from human subjects, published in 2009 in "Nutrition and Cancer," researchers concluded that compounds in cacao might prevent cancer or improve the outcome when the disease is already present.

Algae (phytoplankton)

Marine phytoplankton is a single-celled organism, It is the life form responsible for creating an oxygen-rich environment on our planet. They are present in small quantities in nori sheets also that is why eating nori is a very healthy habit and nori rolled sushi is one of the healthiest and nutrient filled dish. [9] Beyond the trace minerals, marine phytoplankton contains literally hundreds of potent phyto chemicals that work in synergy to protect your body's tissues, detoxify your blood and remove toxins, enhance oxygenation and circulation and reverse abnormal cell division that can lead to cancer.

Ginseng

Although Ginseng has been around for more than 5,000 years, it has just recently come to the forefront as a "Super Food". Besides the benefits of Ginseng, just its naturally healthy vitamins and phyto-nutrients alone classify this herb as a super-food. Ginseng is extremely rich in anti-oxidants, vitamins, minerals and other essential components that we need to maintain a healthy body and mind. Ginseng is rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that it supports health at the cellular level. Ginseng also provides a natural boost of energy by supporting stamina and athletic endurance as the body processes waste products. [10]

Wheat grass

Wheatgrass is a baby wheat plant that's harvested when it reaches its nutritional peak. Through the sprouting process, the grass is packed with energy, high levels of nutrients, and live enzymes that help humans digest the grass when consumed, allowing nutrients to enter the bloodstream quickly. Wheatgrass contains all nine essential amino acids and is loaded with chlorophyll, vitamins, and minerals, offering a host of health benefits. Some research also suggests the chlorophyll in wheatgrass makes it effective at fighting off cancer-causing compounds in the body [11].

Goji berries

These shrivelled red berries are alleged to boost the immune system and brain activity, protect against heart disease and cancer, and improve life expectancy.

Goji berries contain vitamin C, vitamin B2, vitamin A, iron, selenium and other antioxidants (notably polysaccharides)[12]

Bee pollen

Bee pollen contains all the essential components of life. The percentage of rejuvenating elements in bee pollen remarkably exceeds those present in brewer's yeast and wheat germ. Bee pollen corrects the deficient or unbalanced nutrition common in the customs of our present-day civilization of consuming incomplete foods, often with added chemical ingredients, which expose us to physiological problems as various as they are numerous. Pollen is considered an energy and nutritive tonic in Chinese medicine.

Cultures throughout the world use it in a surprising number of applications:

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using questionnaire as a research tool. The questionnaire had ten close ended questions. The respondents were professional chefs working in hotel industry, academic chefs who have worked and are now part of academics, students of hotel Management College and random individuals who are regular diners and critics. There were limitations as it's a new discipline very few studies have been done in this field in our country, most of the literature reviewed for the research were of research done outside our country.

5. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

The purpose of the study is to examine the rise of super foods in food and beverage industry .The main objectives of the study are:

1. To find out different types of super foods
2. Finding the scope of super foods in current catering industry.

6. RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

The study used questionnaire to find out the customer perception about super foods, 50 respondents were sent the questionnaire, which included 10 academic chefs, 10 industry chefs, 30 trainee chefs. Out of which 40 responses were received, this included 6 industry chefs, 10 academic chefs, 24 trainee chefs.

7. FOLLOWING WERE THE RESULTS:

When asked about whether they know the term out of 40 respondents 75 % have heard the term super foods and they know about this recent phenomenon.

Majority of the respondents have heard about these healthy powerhouse from visual media, that is TV or internet. All the academic chefs and trainee chefs who have heard about this type of advancement is either through Internet or TV, Only the chefs working in industry have either worked on it or got to know about it from trade journals.

Out of all the respondents only 16 have seen or eaten a menu comprising of dishes in which these latest ingredients have been used. Out of the all 16 respondents who have experienced super foods in person, 15 have found it very good, that makes around 90 % liking percentage, when spoken in person these individuals have found it exotic to see their food fortified with these ingredients.

Only 10% of all the respondents have seen all the super foods mentioned in this paper, majority have seen Goji berries & ginseng.

Some have also included prunes and nuts to be super foods.

94 % of the respondents were comfortable with the idea of spending little extra to have these ingredients incorporated into menu.

Most of the academic chefs and industry chefs see this as an exciting change but still feels authentic Ingredients have withstand longevity of time and will continue to do so. Most of the respondents believe that lack of information and unavailability of the ingredients as main hindrances, very few restaurants and cost are also hiccups in introducing these items.

8. CHALLENGES:

Lack of awareness

Although most of the people have heard about a broad category of super foods but very few of them have eaten or used it in their salads or main dishes.

Unavailability of the ingredients

As most of the super foods are imported, they are not easily available although the scenario is changing at a rapid pace.

Expensive

As the ingredients are expensive, so will be the dishes made from the ingredients.

9. SUGGESTIONS:

Change in curriculum

Most of the culinary curriculum have not been amended with the changes in the industry this has widened the gap between industry and academics, it can be helped by more guest lectures and demonstrations by the industry experts.

10. CREATING AWARENESS:

These ingredients can only be useful if people know about it, creating market awareness is very essential. There still not substantial data or research to show all the health benefits of super foods and some even say its a marketing gimmick, but there is a serious possibility that eating them may reduce the risk of chronic disease, and may provide prolong life.

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