

Greenwich Sentinel



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Eating Green – Better Than I Thought

By Julia Chiappetta



Happy New Year! Beginnings are always exciting: a new job, new relationship, new ideas, new discoveries, new revelations and now this new year. My pastor just reminded us, during our New Year's Eve Service, that we should not cling to the things of 2017 that have already been answered; instead, we should move on to new projects to nourish our bodies, minds and spirits. I agree! Perhaps this might manifest in taking on a new path and adopting better diets? This new path may bring challenges, but the rewards may be found in the gifts of more energy, better sleep, clarity of mind and overall enhanced performance.

I came to know, through continued research and personal experience, that eating green was mandatory for me to heal my body and have better quality of life. These nutrient, rich foods are essential to any diet and especially a recovery or healing platform. So, I ask, why not add a daily dose of condensed sunlight to your glass or to your plate? If you read my columns, you will undoubtedly know that

my signature valediction always includes a nudge to eat or drink something green. Well, imagine my excitement when I read an online article, a few weeks ago, published by Newsweek, titled:

Eating Salad Every Day Keeps Brains 11 Years Younger and Prevents Dementia, Study Shows. By Melissa Matthews, December 20, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/eating-salad-every-day-keeps-brains-11-years-younger-and-prevents-dementia-754256>

I just knew I had to share it with my readers. While we are bombarded by advertisements that feature claims of turning back the clock, could the answer be as simple as consuming more greens?

Here is an excerpt from that article:

“Nutritional epidemiologist Martha Clare Morris and her team at Chicago's Rush University Medical Center found that people who ate one to two servings of leafy green vegetables each day experienced fewer memory problems and cognitive decline, compared with people who rarely ate spinach. In fact, Morris estimates that veggie lovers who ate about 1.3 servings a day had brains that were roughly 11 years younger, compared to those who consumed few greens, like spinach or kale.

The study involved 960 people, all between 58 and 99 and without dementia. Everyone enrolled in the study was part of the Memory and Aging Project, which has been ongoing since 1979 at the Knight Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at Washington University. As part of their involvement in that project, participants completed questionnaires about their dietary habits over nearly five years.

Questions included assessments of how often people consumed salad, spinach, and kale, collards or other greens. Participants also took yearly thinking and memory skill tests to gauge cognitive ability.

Then researchers divided subjects into groups depending on their consumption. Those who ate the most leafy greens averaged about 1.3 servings per day, while those who consumed the fewest greens averaged 0.1 servings a day. Scientists followed up with participants for 10 years and discovered that the rate of decline for those who ate the most greens was the equivalent to being 11 years younger in terms of brain age. Of course, people who eat a lot of salad are likely to have other healthy behaviors that could influence memory, but these findings took into account other factors associated with cognition, like education, physical activity, alcohol consumption, obesity and depression.

The study was published Wednesday [December 20, 2017] in the journal *Neurology*.

But it's not just leafy greens that could potentially keep our memories alive. According to co-author Martha Morris, the nutrients found in these vegetables that may be responsible for the brain-boosting benefits are found in other food sources, too.

‘Some of the nutrients already have excellent scientific evidence, such as vitamin E, a potent antioxidant which has been demonstrated in carefully controlled animal models to protect against neuron loss, oxidative stress and inflammation, and the accumulation of amyloid plaques,’ she told Newsweek in an

email.

Morris cites nitrate, vitamin K and kaempferol as potential contributors to brain health that warrant further examination.”

Although the study was observational, with no concrete evidence of a relationship between spinach and brain health, but why shouldn't we consider adding more leafy greens and vegetables to our diet each day? You might create a colorful salad with nuts, quinoa and chopped apple on a bed of spinach, or a morning juice of organic, spinach, kale, cucumber, green apple and lemon for a boost.

Green has always been my favorite color to consume and my absolute favorite in the green category is wheat grass, where one shot packs the most powerful punch of enzymes, nutrients, vitamins, minerals and superfoods on the planet.

Greens are my great friends.... please consider giving them a try.

As we begin 2018, I am challenged to find ways to spend less, share more, resize and realize my dreams, seek God more, volunteer outside my comfort zone, write a new book and take on new projects. After all, I just read that I've gained 11 more years in brain power! Ha-ha.

2018, here we come! Get ready!

Julia Chiappetta is the author of “Breast Cancer: The Notebook” (Gemini Media, 2006) and is also the owner of Julia Chiappetta Consulting. She lives in Cos Cob.

