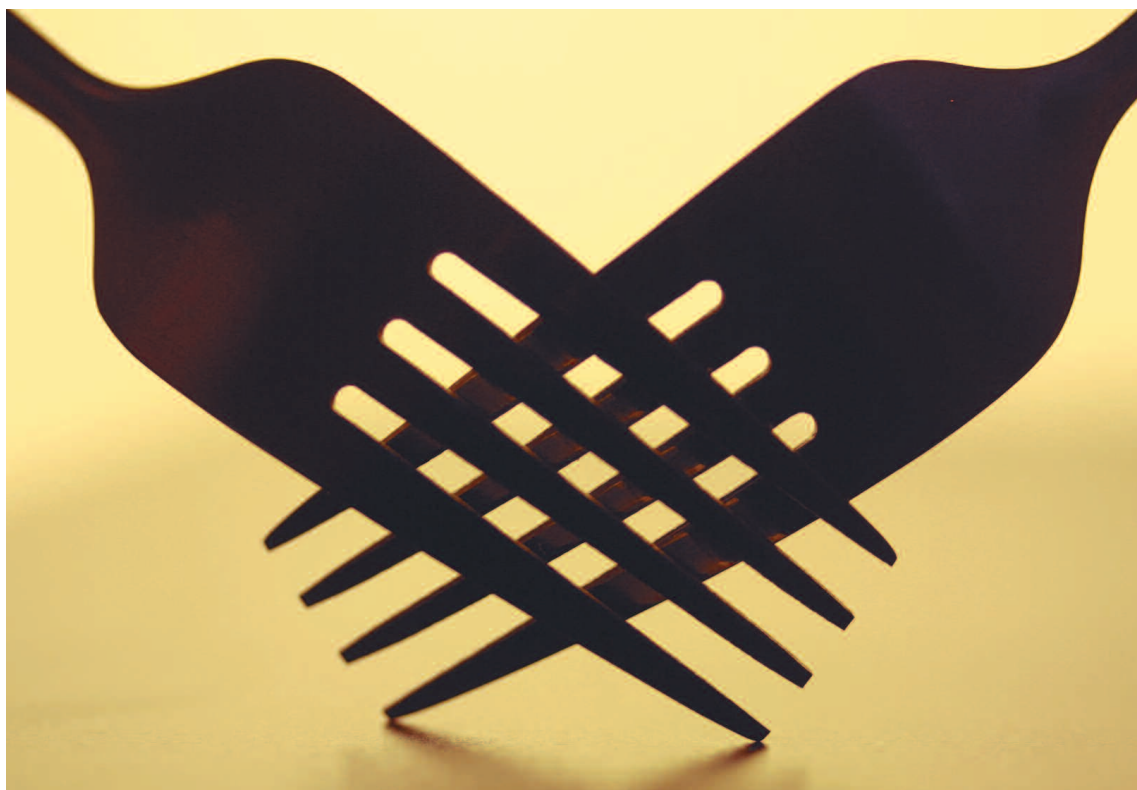


► Embarking on an Anti-Inflammatory Diet

By adding certain foods to our diet — and cutting back on others — we can put out the fire of inflammation and activate the body's natural healing ability

By Christine M. Okezie, CHHC



WE ALL KNOW INFLAMMATION ON THE SURFACE OF THE body as local redness, warmth, swelling and pain. It is the body's normal response to injury and infection, and a major component of healing. But when inflammation persists beyond its normal limits, or is misdirected, it damages the body and causes illness.

Chronic inflammation is the root cause of many degenerative diseases, including coronary heart

disease, inflammatory bowel disease, dementia, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes and many cancers. By learning how specific foods influence the inflammatory process, we can contain chronic inflammation and reduce longterm disease risks.

Unfortunately, most Americans are making food and lifestyle choices that actually promote inflammation rather than reduce it. They consume foods including poor quality fats, refined



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sugars and processed convenience foods, rather than protective foods, such as high-fiber, antioxidant choices, such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

The good news is, there are simple changes we can make to the diet to cool down inflammation in the body, and stimulate the healing process. Here are some tips to get started:

- **Get an Oil Change** – Avoid hydrogenated oils, such as corn oil, cottonseed oil and soybean oil, which are found in many processed junk foods. These are chemical fats that increase our risk for heart disease and cancer. Also, avoid all margarines, vegetable shortening and artificial butter spreads. Instead, use coconut oil, olive oil and grapeseed oil as your main cooking oils, and enjoy cold-water, oily fish, such as wild salmon, sardines and mackerel, which are rich in anti-inflammatory Omega 3 fats.
- **Cut Your Sugar** – Refined sugars are not only devoid of vitamins, antioxidants and nutrients, but regular ingestion of sugar causes the body to become resistant to insulin's sugar-clearing effects. Since insulin promotes the storage of

fats, weight gain follows. Just maintaining a healthy weight can reduce inflammation.

- **Eat Your Fruits and Veggies** – Choose green and brightly colored vegetables such as kale, spinach, broccoli, carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash. They are super rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber and disease-fighting phytochemicals. Whole fruits, especially strawberries and blueberries, protect our cells against oxidative stress. Try to include at least one of these anti-inflammatory foods into every meal.
- **Try Superfoods** – *Spirulina Powder*, a blue green algae, is a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory supplement. *Raw Cacao Powder*, an unprocessed, dark chocolate, is proven to have beneficial effects on cardiovascular health. Both can easily be added to smoothies to keep inflammation in check.
- **Go Nuts** – Add nuts and seeds into your snacks and meals, especially walnuts, cashews, almonds and nut butters made from these nuts. These fats boost your immune system and promote heart, brain and digestive health.



Anti-Inflammatory Foods

Alfalfa	Brussels Sprouts	Eggplant	Lentils	Sea Vegetables
Alfalfa grass	Buckwheat	Endive	Lettuce	Seaweed
Almonds	Cabbage	Fennel Seeds	Limes – Fresh	Sesame Seeds
Almond Butter	Caraway Seeds	Figs	Miso	Spelt
Artichokes	Carrots	Garlic – Fresh	Mustard Greens	Spinach
Asparagus	Cauliflower	Ginger – Fresh	Navy Beans	Spirulina
Avocado	Cayenne Pepper	Green Cabbage	Onion	Sprouted Seeds
Barley Grass	Celery	Horseradish Root	Oregano	Squash
Basil	Cherries	Jicama	Parsnips	Sweet Potato
Bee Pollen	Chives	Kale	Peas – Fresh	Tempeh
Bell Peppers	Chlorella	Kamut	Pumpkin	Tomatoes
Black Radish	Cilantro	Leakes	Red Beets – Fresh	Turnip
Blue Green Microalgae	Coconut – Fresh	Lemon – Fresh	Red Cabbage	Wheat Grass
Bok Choy	Cucumber		Red Radish	White Radish
	Cumin Seeds		Rutabega	Yam
			Savoy Cabbage	Zucchini



■ **Get Less Refined** – Swap out white rice, bread, bagels and pasta for high-fiber grains, such as brown rice, quinoa, barley and millet. These high-fiber foods keep blood sugar levels stable and decrease your risk for insulin resistance and Type 2 diabetes.

■ **Spice It Up** – Incorporate anti-inflammatory spices like turmeric, ginger, garlic and pepper into your meals and diet.



Incorporating some of these anti-inflammatory foods daily, while cutting out those toxic fats, sugars and refined grains altogether, can make a big difference. Your body will thank you with multiple benefits, including increased energy, natural weight loss, less chronic aches and pains, improved digestion and stronger immunity.

ABOUT CHRISTINE M. OKEZIE

Christine M. Okezie is a graduate of the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts in New York, and the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She founded her company, Your Delicious Balance, where she counsels individuals to heal themselves through real food and positive lifestyle choices. Her healing strategies are based on whole foods nutrition, and she guides her clients to adopt a plant-centered way of eating that offers anti-inflammatory and detoxifying benefits to the body. For more information, visit her Web site at www.yourdeliciousbalance.com or call (201) 880-5001.

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Red Quinoa with Kale, Mushrooms & Sweet Potatoes

4 to 6 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 cup red quinoa
- 1 ¼ cup water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 lb. sweet potatoes, diced small
- 12 oz. cremini mushrooms, quartered
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 bunch kale, stem removed, leaves cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup vegetable broth



Directions:

- Rinse quinoa in a fine mesh strainer under cold running water until water runs clear.
- In a small saucepan, over medium heat, add rinsed quinoa and stir constantly, toasting until water is evaporated and you smell a nutty aroma.
- Add water and salt, and bring to a boil. Cover and cook on low heat until all the water is absorbed — approximately 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let it stand for 5 minutes. Fluff cooked quinoa with a fork. Set aside.
- In a large pot over medium heat, add olive oil, sweet potatoes and mushrooms, and cook until slightly softened.
- Add the garlic and cook for an additional one minute.
- Add the kale and broth, and cook until vegetables are tender, approximately 15 minutes.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Serve over quinoa.

