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14 New Superfoods To Add To Your Grocery List Right Now

The Huffington Post Canada | by Terri Coles

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First it was pomegranate and spinach, now it's chia and kale. It's hard to keep track of which superfoods you are supposed to add to your diet, and why.

But what is a superfood, exactly? "Fruits, vegetables and other foods classified as superfoods provide high levels of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibre and phytochemicals," saysregistered dietitian Lisa De Pazio. These are foods with some kind of extraordinary nutritional feature, and they are often tested for their health benefits.

"We are definitely in the midst of a superfood trend," says Daniel Levine, director of the Avant-Guide Institute, a world trends consultancy firm. And once a trend like this gets going it tends to keep moving forward, launching individual fads for foods like quinoa and kale within it, Levine says.

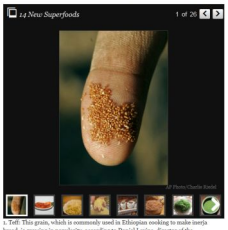
Part of what drives these fads is the search for "braggable experiences," he says. "Scarcity is part of the allure of these things." That's why many of the most popular superfoods come from other parts of the world. Blueberries have plenty of health benefits, after all, but they can seem like old news now.

On the flip side, considering that Dr. Oz – a frequent booster of superfoods – was recently reprimanded in front of the U.S. Senate for overselling the benefits of some of the foods he's promoted, it's worth remembering that many of the supposed super benefits of superfoods have not been proven in clinical trials. "There's a little bit of snake oil mixed in with this whole thing," Levine says.

"Superfoods are often pitched in such a way that the message is that one only has to consume them to achieve health and wellness," said interventional cardiologist and chef Dr. Mike Fenster. "But achieving health and wellness requires a commitment towards a lifestyle change; not simply a change in snacking preference."

Your best bet? Eat the superfoods you truly enjoy, and see them as a way to add some variety to your diet, and take any jaw-dropping health claims with a grain of salt. (Pink Himalayan salt, perhaps?)

Here are 14 superfoods we expect you'll see a lot more of in the next year.



1. Teff: This grain, which is commonly used in Ethiopian cooking to make injera bread, is growing in popularity, according to Daniel Levine, director of the Avant-Guide Institute, a world trends consultancy firm. Teff is gluten free and that is part of why its profile is rising in North America, where gluten-free foods remain trendy. Unfortunately, increased Western demand for teff is sending prices higher and making it less accessible to Ethiopians who rely on its nutritious benefits and use it as a key part of their traditional cuisine.

2. Kimchi: Noticing this Korean ingredient in more and more of your favourite stores? That's partly due to the growing popularity of fermented foods — kimchi is made with fermented cabbage — and other new-to-us ingredients, as well as an extension of the yogurt and probiotic trend. But you won't just find kimchi in Korean dishes. "One of the biggest trends of the last year is kimchi hot dogs," Levine says.

3. Sauerkraut: Sauerkraut is another living food that is part of the interest in fermented foods. It's part of the ongoing "Brooklynization of food," Levine says — pickled and fermented foods are a big part of that scene. There's also a focus on eating authentic or raw fermented foods vs. the sauerkraut you'd find on your average grocery shelf, in order to get the full health benefits.

4. Amaranth: This tiny grain-like seed, native to Oaxaca and once very commonly eaten in Mexico, is high in protein and fibre and gluten free. It can be cooked and substituted for rice or pasta, or popped when raw to use as a topping or eat as a snack; the plant's leaves are also edible. But as with teff, international demand is sending prices higher in Mexico and cutting availability, so many farmers have stopped exporting amaranth.

5. Hemp Hearts: The growing consumption of hemp hearts is an example of how our cultural climate drives food trends, Levine says, since it's influenced in part by the increasing decriminalization of marijuana. "It's in the ethos at the moment," he explained. But the popularity of this protein-rich seed is also related to the surging popularity of plant-based diets.

6. Farro: You may have heard farro referred to as spelt, but it's actually another grain entirely — one that is also from the wheat family. Farro has a chewy texture and a nutty flavour and is a familiar ingredient for fans of Italian cuisine (where it is often referred to as spelt, adding to the confusion). The farro fad is part of the growing focus on ancient grains like kamut and the move to add fibre-rich foods to our diets.

7. Sea Veggies: Have you noticed seaweed snacks in your local grocery store? That's because the profile is rising for sea vegetables like kelp, nori, and hijiki. It makes sense that seaweeds would start creeping into our everyday foods, considering the growing popularity of Japanese cuisine in North America, but kelp and its ilk were long considered food for hippies and found only at the stores they frequented. "The line between health-food stores and regular food stores is blurring," Levine explained.

8. Matcha: With David's Tea rapidly expanding and Starbucks aiming to make a splash with Teavana, tea's popularity in North America is well established. Now the trend is moving towards teas that have even more benefits than the antioxidant boost found in green tea. Matcha is a powdered form of green tea that is used in traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, and while it does have a stronger taste than regular green tea, it's increasingly found in lattes, chocolate, and in tea stores that sell it in its unflavoured form.

9. Camu Camu: This round and red berry might be the new acai, complete with Amazonian roots. This fruit, used for medicinal purposes in its native growing area, is chock full of vitamin C and therefore antioxidants. Fans of the food say camu camu is great for your eyes and gums and can help fight shingles and the common cold, but the scientific verdict on those claims is still out.

10. Purple Cauliflower: Cauliflower and other brassicas like kale and Brussels sprouts have been increasing in popularity as people discover that the vegetables they hated as kids are actually delicious. Purple cauliflower is an extension of that trend — one that has bonus anthocyanin, the antioxidant found in red wine. It's also the same antioxidant found in purple potatoes.

11. Umeboshi: The rising profile of this Japanese food is part of our continued interest in adopting foods from other cultures that are familiar in other parts of the world but seem fresh and exotic in North America, Levine says. "There's a lot of borrowing going on." Umeboshi are pickled sour fruits that are something of an acquired taste, thanks to the combination of sour and salt, but they are increasingly showing up outside of Japan.

12. Nutritional Yeast: Vegans are no stranger to nooch, as it's commonly called: it's often used to add a savoury or cheesy flavour to food, and can be purchased supplemented with vitamin B12. Nutritional yeast is increasingly popular because of the growing interest in vegan foods and diets, but it has uses for omnivores as well — sprinkle them on eggs, tofu scramble, popcorn, and other foods to add a cheese flavour. Sales of nutritional yeast flakes are up 53 percent over the past year at food retailer Frontier Co-op.

13. Raw Cacao: The popularity of raw cacao is an extension of the dark chocolate trend, Levine says. "This is taking it one step further." This raw food, which has no added sugar, can be eaten by snacking on cacao nibs or sprinkling ground raw cacao on cereal or yogurt or adding it into your smoothies. Anne Reeson, the public relations manager for Frontier Co-op, reported a nearly 60 percent increase in sales of cacao nibs in the past twelve months.

14. Noni: The greenish-white fruits of the Morinda citrifolia tree are valuable in Polynesian folk medicine, and now North Americans are starting to catch on to the potential benefits found in this tropical fruit. A lot of the buzz around noni is due to its potential anti-inflammatory properties, says Levine, something a lot of people are generally interested in. It's also been studied for antibacterial and analgesic properties. A potential downside: noni has earned the nickname "vomit fruit" because of its less-than-appealing odour.

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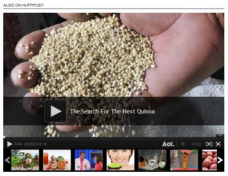

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