

For taste and nutrition

Figs are gaining popularity

Growing consumer concern about the nutritional value of the foods we eat has resulted in a search for natural, nutritious alternatives.

As a consequence, the fig is enjoying a resurgence in popularity among North Americans. This is hardly surprising since dried figs are a high source of fibre, calcium, iron and potassium as well as many other vitamins and minerals important to a healthy lifestyle.

The two most common varieties of dried figs are the Mission — a dark-fleshed fig with a sweet, hearty flavour — and the Calimyrna, which is amber colored and has a nutlike flavour.

The rich texture of the fig — a characteristic which adds to its enjoyment — is also the quality which makes it an excellent source of dietary fibre.

One cup (250 ml) of dried figs

provides 9.54 grams of fibre, making them the leader in fibre. Although there is no specific recommended daily intake of fibre, there is evidence to show that diets with a high fibre content reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

Those on a potassium-rich diet or those who simply want to supplement their daily intake of potassium can add figs to their diet. With 712 mg for every 100 grams, the fig outranks other potassium-rich fruits such as the banana (396 mg) and the orange (181 mg).

Figs are an important source of calcium. One hundred grams of figs will provide 144 mg of calcium or about 20 per cent of the daily requirement for an adult woman.

Figs are also high in iron and have a taste and texture that are much more appealing than other high-iron foods like lima beans or liver. One

hundred grams of dried figs provide about 15 per cent of the adult daily requirement of iron.

Spiced Fig Compote

- 1 strip orange peel (6 in/15 cm);
- 2 cups (500 ml) orange juice;
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) sugar (optional);
- 4 whole cloves;
- 2 cinnamon sticks;
- 2 whole allspice;
- 2 cardamom seeds broken;
- 1 lb. (500 g) California Calimyrna or Mission Figs*.

Directions: In large saucepan, combine orange peel, orange juice, sugar if desired, cloves, cinnamon sticks, allspice and cardamom seeds. Bring mixture to a boil; boil, uncovered, 5 min. Add figs; cover and simmer 20 min. Cool. Serve cooled or chilled. Makes about 4 cups (1 litre).



Spiced Fig Compote — an impressive and elegant no-fat dessert — is deliciously mellow and simple to make.

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