

Health Benefits of Coconut



The coconut is a fruit, or seed, of the coconut palm found in tropical regions. Although not a true tree, it is often referred to as the “Tree of Life” because it contributes food, drink, fiber, fuel, cosmetics, building materials, musical instruments and more.

The coconut has 3 layers. The outermost layer, exocarp, is green and smooth. The next layer is the husk or mesocarp which surrounds the fibrous inner layer called the endocarp. The coconuts we see in grocery stores have had the exocarp and mesocarp removed.

There are many types of edible coconut. The immature seed is filled with liquid endosperm or coconut water. As it matures, the water solidifies on the walls, creating the seed. The inner white seed is often referred to as the kernel, flesh or meat. Generally, a coconut is 52% meat, 10% water and 38% shell. When solid coconut flesh is mixed with water, it creates coconut milk. Coconut oil is made by pressing dried coconut meat.

WHAT MAKES COCONUT GREAT?

Nutrition

2 Tbsp shredded unsweetened coconut provides 35 Calories, .5 gm protein, 1 gm fiber, 3 gm fat, no cholesterol.

Fat

The fat content of coconut varies depending on the part of the fruit being consumed, meat, milk or oil. Coconut meat about 86% fat, with 89% of that being saturated. The majority of this saturated fat consists of medium-chain triglycerides or MCTs.

These have an advantage over other long-chain fats in that MCTs are metabolized quickly and are converted into energy rather than being stored on the body. MCTs have been shown to improve gut health and digestion. Coconut meat also contains small amounts of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Fiber

Most of the fiber in coconut meat is insoluble, which aids in digestion, prevents constipation and hemorrhoids.

Protein

Because coconut meat is mostly fat, it is low in protein.

Vitamins

Vitamins in coconut include small amounts of vitamin C and the B vitamins folate and thiamin. It also contains polyphenol antioxidants that protect LDL cholesterol from oxidation.

Minerals

Coconut meat is rich in minerals especially manganese, which supports enzyme function and fat metabolism, and copper important for bone formation and heart health. Coconut also provides phosphorus, selenium, iron, zinc and potassium.

BUYING & USING COCONUT

Whole fresh coconuts can be found in grocery stores and specialty markets. A good coconut should feel heavy and slosh when shaken, indicating liquid inside. You can retain the water and use for drinking or in recipes. Use fresh coconut immediately since the high fat content can oxidize and spoil quickly.

Coconut meat is most often sold as flakes in the baking aisle and can be found in regular or organic varieties. Choose flakes that are unsweetened and unsulfured in tight, resealable bags. Store unused flakes in the freezer until ready for use.



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Coconut milk is most often used to thicken soups or make curry dishes. It can be substituted for cream in coffee or dessert recipes. Because this is a combination of coconut meat and water, it is high in fat. When choosing canned coconut milk, seek out brands that are BPA-free. BPAs accumulate in high-fat foods like coconut milk.

Coconut oil can be used to replace margarine, butter or oil in recipes but it does carry the coconut flavor and may compete with other food flavors. It can also be used as a skin moisturizer or hair treatment.

Coconut flour is made by squeezing the liquid from coconut meat. What remains is dried and ground into flour suitable for use in baking. It is gluten free and has a distinct coconut flavor. It can be used to replace up to 20% of the flour in a recipe. Because it is dried and higher in fiber, it absorbs more water than other grain flours.

Coconut sugar is a good alternative sweetener to cane sugar since it contains a small amount of inulin, a soluble fiber known to help modulate blood sugars. It has a color and flavor profile similar to brown sugar.

Coconut Curry

Detoxinista.com

Ingredients:

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| 1 tsp olive oil | 1 14-oz can coconut milk |
| 1/2 onion, chopped | 2 cloves garlic |
| 1 sweet potato, chopped | 1 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce |
| 4 tsp curry powder | 1 Tbsp maple syrup |
| 1 pound assorted vegetables | |

Directions:

1. In large pan, sauté onions in olive oil until soft and add garlic, stirring for one minute.
2. Add in coconut milk, spices, maple syrup and tamari and bring to simmer.
3. Add chopped sweet potatoes and cover. Cook 5 minutes.
4. Remove lid and add remaining vegetables, stirring to coat with sauce. Cover and lower heat. Cook 8-10 minutes.
5. Serve over cooked grain like brown rice, cauliflower rice, quinoa, millet or barley.

Coconut Cookies

beamingbaker.com

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 c large unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1/2 c ground almond flour
- 1/4 c + 2 Tbsp coconut oil, room temp
- 1/2 c pure maple syrup

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line baking sheet with parchment or wax paper.
2. Add all ingredients to a food processor and blend until thick and sticky.
3. Using a scoop, create firmly-packed balls of coconut mixture and space them on the cookie sheet, leaving space between because they spread.
4. Bake 12-16 minutes or until edges are golden brown. Cool 30 minutes.
5. Store leftovers in a covered container at room temp or in the refrigerator.

Note: You must use large coconut flakes or the cookies will not spread properly.

Coconut Bacon

Making-healthy-choices.com

Ingredients:

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| Meat from 1 fresh coconut | 1 tsp maple syrup |
| 1 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce | Pinch of cayenne |

Directions:

1. Mix together tamari, maple syrup and cayenne.
2. Mix raw coconut with marinade and cover. Set aside at least 10 minutes or several hours.
3. Place marinated coconut meat onto dehydrator trays and dehydrate overnight (8-10 hours).
4. Store leftovers in airtight glass jar.

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