

Cheers to your health

Raise a glass of beer for a happy, healthy life

DON TSE

While the health benefits of wine have been widely publicized, those of beer have been largely ignored. And yet, moderate consumption of beer can be a healthy part of your diet — even more so than wine.

— Firstly, beer contains nutrients — it is a relatively rare non-fortified source of the entire B complex of vitamins, as well as vitamin D. Beer also provides significant minerals, including magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. Believe it or not, it also provides significant soluble fibre.

A typical beer contains only 150 calories, none of which come from fat. In fact, beer contains less calories than an equal volume of milk, juice or non-diet soft drink. Beer is cholesterol-free, caffeine-free (other than certain beers infused with caffeine or caffeinated ingredients) and nitrate-free.

In addition, a number of scientific studies have shown significant benefits from the moderate consumption of beer. For example, moderate drinkers live longer than teetotalers. Second, many studies have shown that the health benefits attributed to the moderate consumption of wine — including reduced risk of heart disease, stroke and mental decline — also apply to beer.

Even though wine has about 20 times more polyphenols (natural antioxidant chemicals) than beer, beer is nonetheless as effective in preventing the oxidation of blood plasma. A study by the University of Western Ontario showed that the body absorbed about equal amounts of polyphenols from beer as wine, reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

Beer also contains large amounts of other disease-fighting antioxidants: A

It's not called the nectar of the gods for nothing — moderate drinkers reportedly live longer than teetotalers.

BEER

University of Scranton, Pennsylvania study discovered that beer prevented the oxidation of low-density lipoprotein and very-low-density lipoprotein, the two types of bad cholesterol. Indeed, when cholesterol-fed hamsters were given the equivalent of two beers a day, the incidence of atherosclerosis was halved.

Beer consumption can help maintain strong bones (because of the presence of vitamin D and of silicon),

reduce risk of kidney stones and lower blood pressure. It's even been demonstrated that certain compounds found in hops inhibit cancer-causing enzymes and help to break down carcinogens.

Although most of this evidence is circumstantial and the exact source of such benefits is yet unknown, it is generally believed that these health benefits are derived primarily from the grains used to brew beer and the yeast used to ferment it. To get maximum benefit from your pint, choose craft

beers, which are made with a greater percentage of malt, and unfiltered beers, which are packaged with yeast in the bottle. Unfiltered beers may be hazy, but the beer will be more flavourful and healthy. On the other hand, mainstream lagers are often made with adjuncts such as corn, rice or sugar and are almost always filtered.

Moderation is the key, so drink less but drink better!

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