



Media Release

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DO YOU WANT A SUPER NUTRITIOUS TOMATO SAUCE?? SIMPLY ADD A HANDFUL OF HERBS

Cooking up a tomato sauce for tonight's pasta or winter casserole? Take note of the latest nutritional news and add a handful of herbs to your rich red brew and watch the antioxidant value of your sauce soar!

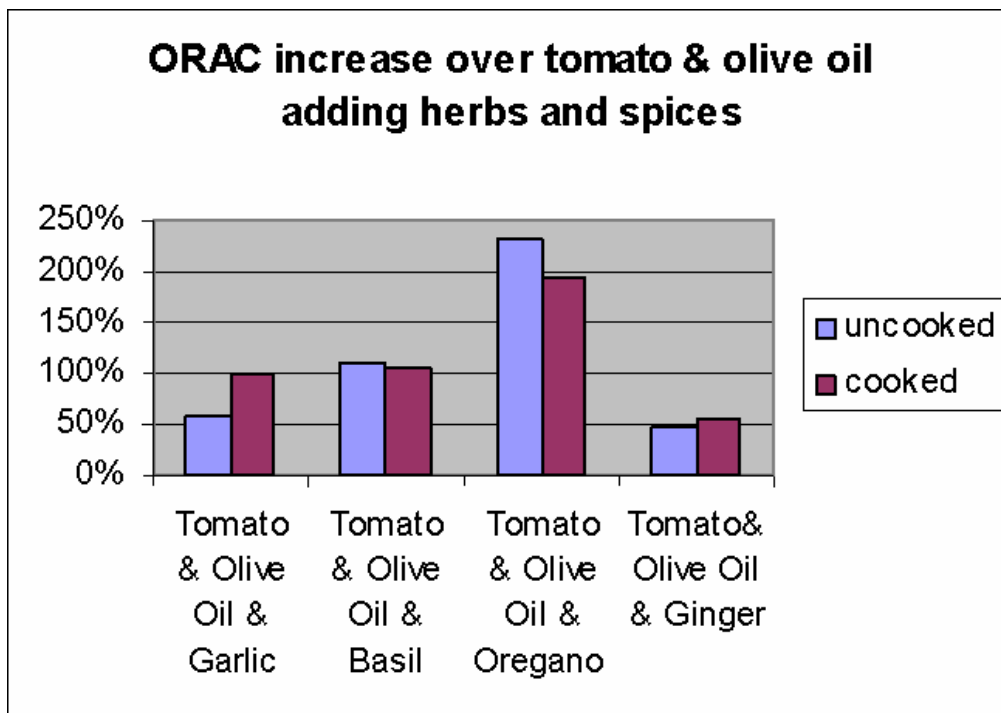
A study conducted by Southern Cross University, and released to Australian dietitians this week at the Dietitians Association of Australia national conference, further supports the high antioxidant content of herbs and their ability to significantly boost the antioxidant value of a meal.

The study involved researchers measuring the antioxidant value (termed ORAC value*) of a simple tomato and olive oil sauce, made from tinned tomatoes, and then testing whether the addition of herbs affected the sauce's antioxidant content.

After analyzing the tomato and olive oil base sauce, 20 grams of Gourmet Garden fresh herb pastes were added to the sauce. In the study four sauce mixes were developed and measured, each featuring a different herb, being oregano (20g), basil (20g), garlic (20g) and ginger (20 g).

In all cases the addition of the herbs resulted in the antioxidant value of the sauce increasing significantly, even after cooking. Twenty grams of oregano tripled the antioxidant content of the sauce; 20 grams of basil more than doubled the antioxidant value of the sauce, as did 20 grams of garlic after cooking. The addition of 20 grams of ginger also resulted in a significant increase in the sauce's antioxidant rating. (see table below)

The effect of cooking was analysed with the herb enhanced tomato sauces, by bringing the sauce to a gentle simmer and then cooking for ten minutes. The good news is that cooking did not significantly reduce the ORAC value of the sauces, showing that the antioxidant capacity was maintained after cooking. The results suggest that cooking may even have increased the antioxidant value of the garlic and ginger sauces but the number of samples measured was unable to show if this increase was significant.





As fresh herbs vary considerably in terms of quality and nutritional content, the fresh herb pastes from Gourmet Garden were used to ensure a constant product quality and consistency across the research. Analysis by the same Southern Cross University laboratory has shown that Gourmet Garden pastes have antioxidant levels similar to a recipe equivalent amount of fresh herbs (10 grams).

“The message is clear, if you want to up the antioxidant value of your diet, add some herbs. The results for oregano, basil and garlic were particularly impressive, with the addition of these herb pastes more than doubling the antioxidant levels, and in the case of oregano tripling the antioxidant capacity of the sauce, compared to the original tomato and olive oil base,” said leading Australian dietitian Karen Inge APD, who with her team worked with Southern Cross researchers on the study.

“What is particularly important, is that these herb enriched sauces offer a simple and practical way to increase your antioxidant intake. Just by using tomatoes, olive oil and herbs anyone, no matter how limited their cooking skills, can literally make a delicious tasting sauce like this tonight.

“Apart from the high antioxidant capacity and the flavours the herbs deliver, tomatoes and olive oil also bring great health benefits,” said Inge.

Inge confirmed that tomatoes are rich in an antioxidant called lycopene, a member of the same chemical family as beta carotene which the body uses to make vitamin A. Tomatoes also contain vitamins C and beta carotene. In addition, olive oil, the staple of the healthy Mediterranean diet, is high in heart healthy monounsaturated fat and dietitians are constantly recommending the inclusion of healthy oils in the daily diet.

Inge said that herbs were super foods, adding flavour without the fat, while providing the body with antioxidants and a range of vitamins.

Dietitians now encourage people to eat a diet high in antioxidant rich foods including colourful fruits, vegetables and herbs and spices. Antioxidants are the body’s good chemicals. They swiftly mop up the body’s damaging “free radicals” and by doing this, support the body’s defense and renewal processes.

“That is why eating foods high in antioxidants is essential to our health, and this easy to make herb enriched sauce is tasty, practical, easy and packed with antioxidants.”

Recipe for Antioxidant Rich Herb Filled Tomato Sauce

Ingredients

1 400 g can of tomatoes
15 ml Extra Virgin Cold Pressed Olive Oil
20 grams (1 tablespoon) of Gourmet Garden Herb Paste (or recipe equivalent of fresh herbs).
Herbs you can try are oregano, basil, garlic or for a Moroccan twist, try adding ginger to your tomato brew. In the research, oregano produced the highest antioxidant rating of the sauce.

Method

Combine all ingredients in a pot. Bring to a gentle simmer and then cook for 10 minutes.

Makes about 1 ½ cups of sauce, so it would serve two people as a main dish. This quantity of sauce is sufficient for 200-250 grams (dry weight) of pasta. Use as a base for pasta, a rice dish, a stir fry or casserole



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* ORAC value stands for the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity of a food and it measures the antioxidant value of the food

