

Shell out for this good-for-you snack food

pistachios

HOW IT HEALS Pistachios, native to the Middle East and now grown abundantly in California, are not technically nuts but drupes with a small, hard shell. Crack one open: studies have shown that the bright-green goodies inside help lower levels of “bad” LDL cholesterol, thereby reducing the risk of heart disease; they’re a rich source of phytosterols, which chip away at cholesterol and keep arteries free of buildup. “Pistachios are low in saturated fat yet high in mono- and poly-unsaturated fats, as well as fiber, all of which have positive impacts on cholesterol,” says Jill Nussinow, MS, RD, a dietitian in Santa Rosa, Calif.

Scale stuck? Try eating more pistachios. A study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* in 2010 found that snacking on pistachios every day can help curb appetite. “The trifecta of protein, healthy fats, and fiber can dull hunger, so you’re less likely to overeat,” explains Nussinow. A mere ounce of pistachios delivers 3 grams of hunger-quelling dietary fiber and as much protein as an egg. Pistachios also supply a payload of lutein and zeaxanthin, antioxidants that help maintain good vision.

EAT IT UP

Pistachios add satisfying crunch to whole-grain salads, baked goods, oatmeal, and ice cream. Try roasting them with Chinese five-spice powder, or whirl up a smoothie with pistachios, yogurt, soymilk, and ginger. Limit yourself to a handful, or 1 ounce, to avoid calorie overload, says Nussinow. And buy pistachios in the shell—the extra work of shelling may help control intake.



Pistachio-Crusted Eggplant Cutlets

SERVES 4 | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER

These cutlets make a quick, satisfying weeknight meal. Serve over warm couscous, bulgur, or Greek-Style Rice Pilaf from vegetariantimes.com.

- 1 cup shelled unsalted pistachios
- 6 oz. oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained
- 2 jarred roasted red peppers, drained
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 medium eggplant (1 lb.), peeled and cut lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices (6 to 8 slices each)

1. Preheat oven to 375°F, and coat baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Blend pistachios in blender or food processor until finely chopped. Transfer to plate or shallow bowl.
3. Add sun-dried tomatoes, roasted red peppers, and garlic to blender or food processor (no need to rinse), and purée until smooth.
4. Spray 1 side of each eggplant slice with cooking spray, and place sprayed-side down on baking sheet. Spread 2 Tbs. sun-dried tomato

mixture on each eggplant slice, and sprinkle with 1 Tbs. ground pistachios. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until eggplant is tender and pistachio topping is browned and crispy.

PER SERVING (3 TO 4 CUTLETS): 270 CAL; 9 G PROT; 18 G TOTAL FAT (2 G SAT FAT); 23 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; 199 MG SOD; 8 G FIBER; 6 G SUGARS

Canadian nutrition writer Matthew Kadey, RD, finds it dangerous to keep a bowl of shelled pistachios by his computer.