

[IMAGE]

Mix and Match: The Do's and Don'ts of Pairing Food

By Editorial Staff

Certain foods become even healthier when mixed with other certain foods. Conversely, other food pairings may become less healthy and even endanger your health. Follow these simple rules from CNN.com to get the most out of your food choices:

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DO** mix grilled steak and brussels sprouts: Certain compounds in brussels sprouts and other cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli and cauliflower, may help rid the body of carcinogens that can form on meat during high-heat cooking. Nevertheless, charring meat on the barbeque is not the best preparation method. Instead, cook your meat or fish at low temperatures until done.
- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DO** mix avocado and tomato: Tomatoes, which contain the antioxidant lycopene, are a superfood. If you eat some avocado at the same time, you've just made it even more super. The fat in the avocado helps the body absorb seven times more lycopene. Also, add a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil to your zucchini, spinach and other dark green vegetables to unleash the lutein, an antioxidant that may help protect against age-related macular degeneration.
- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DO** mix spinach and oranges: Although spinach has lots of iron, your body doesn't absorb it well when spinach is eaten alone. Add in some vitamin C and spinach becomes a veggie Popeye would be proud to eat. That's because vitamin C converts the iron in spinach into a form that is more available to the body. This is also true for other foods that are sources of iron such as broccoli and tofu. It doesn't take a lot of vitamin C - one medium orange will do.
- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DON'T** mix alcohol and energy drinks: Vodka mixed with an energy drink might be popular on the party circuit, but this combo can cause heart palpitations and breathing difficulties. In severe cases, it could contribute to a heart attack or a stroke. Overloading the body with stimulants such as caffeine (which is found in many energy drinks) and alcohol, which is a depressant and a diuretic, puts tremendous stress on the central nervous system and heart.
- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DON'T** mix alcohol and diet soda: You might cut calories but you also might get drunk faster. In a recent study, it took just 21 minutes for half a diet cocktail to leave the

stomach and reach the small intestine, where most alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, while the same amount of a non-diet cocktail took 36 minutes.

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **DON'T** mix coffee and breakfast cereal: Most cereals sold in the U.S. are fortified with iron. The problem is that polyphenols, an antioxidant in coffee, can hamper the body's ability to absorb iron. Black tea and some herbal teas (including peppermint and chamomile), which also contain polyphenols, also may reduce iron absorption (by as much as 94 percent) and hot cocoa cuts it by 71 percent.

The solution is to have your java before or after your cereal. According to a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, a cup of coffee consumed one hour before an iron-rich meal didn't affect absorption. If you choose to get your fix after breakfast, wait at least an hour or more.

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