

## Healthy Hollywood: Foods To Feed A Healthy Heart!

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Toni Braxton



Access Hollywood

As you may know, February is American Heart Month. With the month winding down, Healthy Hollywood thought it was good time to remind folks to keep their ticker healthy. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of men and women. And, celebrities like Toni Braxton, Miley Cyrus and Rosie O'Donnell have all gone public with their heart issues.

When it comes to heart health, you may be aware that good nutrition plays a key role. Yes, we all know (or

should) that it's a good idea to cut down on saturated fats, sugar and salt and load up on more whole grains and veggies. "Weight control and staying fit are critical to keeping your heart (and body) in shape – and the food you eat plays the most important role. In fact, you can prevent and reverse heart disease by diet," reveals nutritionist Layne Lieberman, who also wrote *Beyond The Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets Of The Super Healthy*.

"It's a matter of choosing quality ingredients, using low-fat cooking methods and eating the right-sized portions. I recommend using a tool called the super-healthy plate, which is a 9-inch plate (a typical salad size)," reveals Lieberman, who also suggests, "Pick your favorite lightly dressed organic and seasonal veggies to fill up half the plate. Then for one quarter of the plate choose a protein like cooked lentils, baked tofu, roasted organic chicken, broiled wild-caught fish or pan-seared top round grass-fed beef. On the other quarter of the plate choose a high-fiber starch like whole-grain pasta with tomato sauce, quinoa cooked in broth or sweet potato."

Layne shares with Healthy Hollywood her top 5 heart healthy foods.

### **1. Oat bran**

Studies consistently reveal oat bran's cholesterol-lowering properties. It contains beta-glucan, a potent soluble fiber with blood sugar–regulating and immune system–boosting benefits. Five to 10 grams of soluble fiber per day has been shown to lower LDL and total cholesterol. Oat bran also contains vitamin E, a well-known heart-protective vitamin.

### **2. Wild or Organic (Farm-Raised) Salmon**

Omega-3s make this fish a sweetheart for heart health, as it lowers triglycerides and slows the rate of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). Other heart-healthy fatty fish, such as sardines, mackerel, and lake trout, also contain high amounts of omega-3s. And if you are a vegetarian get your omega 3's from walnuts and flaxseeds.

### **3. Avocados**

Avocados are packed with monounsaturated "good" fats and are the richest food source of phytosterols (naturally-occurring plant compounds), known to lower cholesterol. The AHA recommends monounsaturated fats in place of saturated fats as part of a heart-healthy diet—when eaten in moderation and in place of saturated or trans fats, monounsaturated fats help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol) levels in your blood."

### **4. Organic fat free plain yogurt**

Organic milk (yogurt is made from milk and good bacteria called probiotics) contains a high ratio of omega-3 fatty acids to omega-6 fatty acids, according to a study by Washington State University. The opposite ratio (high omega-6s) is linked to heart disease, among other health issues. The organic milks tested contained an average of 62 percent more omega-3 fatty acids than regular milk, and 25 percent less omega-6 fatty acids. Yogurt contains probiotics that keep good gut bacteria in check.

### **5. Beans and legumes**

Legumes (black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, navy beans, cannellini, etc.) provide 4 to 8 grams of fiber per half cup, which may help reduce the risk of heart attack by lowering bad cholesterol (LDL). Besides being naturally low in fat, beans are also rich in protein, folate, iron, and zinc.

-- *Terri MacLeod*

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