PISTACHIOS

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation
and Clemson University
Indigenous to the Middle East, pistachios grow in hot, dry conditions, such as the deserts of New Mexico and California, and are fond of salty soil. These sweet-tasting nuts grow as clusters on trees and are fully produced after 15 years of growth. Having been consumed by humans for at least 9,000 years, pistachios are one of the oldest flowering nut trees. They are typically found in a shell, which can be completely or partially closed depending on the pistachio’s ripeness. Pistachios ripen in turn from summer to fall, but they can be found in most grocery stores year-round, shelled or unshelled, raw or roasted and salted or unsalted.

Healthy ingredient contribution

**ANTIOXIDANTS:** Pistachios contain lutein and zeaxanthin, antioxidants that help rid the body of free radicals that damage vital body tissues. These two carotenoids have also been found to decrease the risk of macular degeneration.

**COPPER:** The mineral copper, a vital part of enzymes that allows them to function properly, is found in pistachios. Copper also allows connective tissue to form properly.

**FIBER:** Pistachios are a good source of fiber, providing 3 grams of dietary fiber, or about 12% of the daily value. This is twice the fiber in 1 ounce of walnuts and about the same amount as in a serving of oatmeal.

**MANGANESE:** Pistachios are an excellent source of manganese, which helps numerous bodily tissues develop properly and assists with the metabolism of fat and carbohydrates.

**MONOUNSATURATED FAT:** Pistachios contain monounsaturated fat, which helps lower “bad cholesterol,” or LDL cholesterol. Studies have shown that pistachios also help raise levels of HDL cholesterol, or “good cholesterol.”

**POTASSIUM:** One serving of pistachios has as much potassium as an orange. The potassium found in pistachios is important in maintaining healthy blood pressure.

**PROTEIN:** With 7 grams of protein per serving, plus fiber and healthy fat, pistachios can provide the body with an overall feeling of satiety, or fullness.

**VITAMIN B6:** Pistachios are an excellent source of vitamin B6, offering 20% of the daily value per serving. Vitamin B6 aids in antibody production for a successful immune response and in the creation of red blood cells.

Varieties and uses

- **Turkish pistachios** are the main pistachios imported to the U.S. They have been enjoyed by Americans for many years, primarily in pistachio ice cream. Turkish pistachios are smaller than most pistachios and are crunchy and sweet.

- **California pistachios** are slightly more flavorless than other varieties, but are generally larger. These pistachios are ideally grown and kept in dry conditions, as dampness and humidity lower their overall quality.

- **Iranian pistachios** are some of the oldest in the world, as Iran is the native region for pistachios. However, they are rarely found in the U.S. due to a 300% import tax. Iranian pistachios are the most flavorful and are grown in a variety of sizes, with the deeper green nuts having the greatest flavor.
Storage
Pistachios can be kept in a covered container in a cool, dry, dark place for 1 week or so. For longer storage, keep in a sealed plastic container in the refrigerator for 4-6 weeks, or in the freezer for up to 1 year.

Contributions to this article were made by Darrin Sorenson.

Recipe

PISTACHIO YOGURT CAKE WITH YUZU GLAZE

Yield: 12 servings (serving size is 1 wedge)

Ingredients:
- 1 cup shelled raw pistachios
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 t. baking powder
- ½ t. kosher salt
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ t. pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup confectioner’s sugar
- 2 T. yuzu juice

Method:
Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat 10-inch round metal cake pan with cooking spray. Place pistachios in food processor; pulse until just chopped. Add flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Pulse for another 20 seconds, or until mixed. Add eggs, yogurt, oil and vanilla. Pulse again for 10 seconds, or until just combined. Pour batter in prepared pan; bake 30-35 minutes, or until cake tester placed in center comes out clean. Prepare glaze: Combine confectioners’ sugar and yuzu juice. Pour over cake while warm.

Nutrition Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories: 280</th>
<th>Fiber: 1g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat: 15g</td>
<td>Protein: 21g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Fat: 3g</td>
<td>Vitamin A: 2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carbs: 35g</td>
<td>Vitamin C: 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium: 4%</td>
<td>Iron: 6%</td>
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This recipe was tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.