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Peelings, nothing more than peelings

Removing the skins from fruits and vegetables removes health benefits too!

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The fruits and vegetables that we eat daily contain many compounds that play significant roles in the prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease. But be careful of removing their skins, because the compounds found in them are very good for you and are often found in large quantities.

Many types of plants store their genetic material in the form of fruit which, if they are fertilized, will allow the plants to reproduce. These fruits generally contain large quantities of sugar, to allow the grains to take advantage from an energy source that will help them grow.

This high sugar content makes the fruit appealing not only to us, but also to different types of parasites. Plants have had to develop elaborate defense systems to be able to protect themselves from different insects, bacteria and mushrooms found in their natural habitat, which are constantly looking to use the nutrients found in fruit.

To do this, plants produce powerful insecticide and anti-fungal compounds that attack these parasites, allowing the plants to survive sometimes hostile conditions. It is for this reason that the skins of many types of fruit, such as apples, pears and grapes, can also help in the prevention of certain serious illnesses, such as cancer.

The grape, as it is very sweet, is particularly at risk of being attacked by parasites and is a good example of the impact these defense systems can have on our health. When attacked, generally by microscopic mushrooms, the vines react by creating a compound called resveratrol, which accumulates in the skin of grapes where it acts as a powerful anti-fungal agent to reduce the damage caused by the mushrooms.

The quantity of this natural anti-fungal in the skin of grapes is directly tied to the stress felt by the vine; for example, the vines that are cultivated in the rainiest regions (the Niagara valley, for example) and therefore the one with the thinnest skin (like the Pinot) are more often attacked by mushrooms and therefore possess a higher level of resveratrol.

The resveratrol content of grapes is not only essential for the vine, but also plays a major role in the health benefits of red wine. In fact, the fermentation of the grape skins needed to make red wine results in the extraction of large quantities of resveratrol, which can reach up to 10 milligrams per litre.

This concentration is high enough to block the growth of a impressive number of cancer cells observed in a lab, and it also can impede the development of many cancers in animals.

It should be noted that much less resveratrol is found in white wine, which undergoes its fermentation process without the skins, and it is for this reason that red wine surpasses white when it comes to potential health benefits.

The benefits associated with fruit skins are not only associated with grapes. Studies have shown that the skin of many fruits consumed regularly, like apples, pears, peaches, prunes, etc. contain the large majority of cancer-fighting compounds. The same goes for vegetables: the cancer-fighting compounds in cucumbers and potatoes, for example, are only found in their skins. A great food to focus on is new potatoes, which have delicious skins!

Eating any and as many of these fruits and vegetables in their whole form is a great way to gain the maximum health benefits from them. So quit peelin'!