

BRUNCH

Fruit of folly

Did you know there is a right way and a wrong way to eat your apples and pears? Most of us eat them wrong, here's how to do it right

by Colleen Braganza

YOU'VE KNOWN for a while now that fruit is good for you. But these are inflationary times and if you want the maximum bang for your shrinking buck, you should know there is a right way and a right time to eat fruit to get the maximum nutrition. Read on.

THE BEST TIME

During childhood, fruit was an after meal ritual when mothers or grandmothers cut the fruit of the season – mangoes, watermelons, apples, pineapples or pears – and handed them around the table. So we continue with this ritual as adults too.

But eating fruit after a meal is not the best thing to do if you are looking at gaining maximum nutrition. Though, before we say anything further, let us say this: eating fruit at any time is never bad for us because eating some fruit, whatever the time, is better than having none at all.

But if you are really looking for *paisa vasool* – if you want all the nutrition you can possibly get from the fruit you eat – the best time to eat fruit is in between, not after, meals.

This is because when you eat fruit after a meal, the stomach is busy trying to absorb the carbohydrates and proteins it has just ingested so it is not able to absorb fruit very efficiently, says nutritionist Ritika Samaddar, head dietician, Max Healthcare, Saket, Delhi.

But when you eat fruit as a snack between meals, the fruit is digested and absorbed better because your stomach is not too full. Besides, eating fruit between meals also makes sense because we live in a warm country and tend to sweat a lot and fruit, with

its high water content and minerals, helps replenish electrolytes, preventing us from feeling exhausted, says Rupali Dutta, head, department of clinical nutrition, Fortis, Vasant Kunj.

THE BEST WAY

As many of us already know, the best way to eat fruit is to eat it whole, including the skin if the skin is edible. "The

der running water is sufficient to get rid of pesticides, she adds.

And is it a good idea to eat fruit *chaat*? Our experts say that though adding *chaat* masala to a plate of mixed fresh fruit is not a bad thing, it shouldn't be done very often because *chaat* masala is high in salt.

"Instead, squeeze a little lemon juice on the fruit as lemon enhances the absorption of all nutrients," says Dutta. The experts also point out that eating fruit with *dahi* or milk doesn't make a significant difference from the nutritional point of view. However, avoid eating fruit with caffeine-rich drinks like tea or coffee because caffeine hampers the absorption of micronutrients, says Samaddar.

IN SEASON

When we were children, the availability of fruit depended on the season. So, summer brought with it a bounty of mangoes and succulent watermelon, autumn meant crisp apples, and oranges signified the onset of winter. But now, fruits are available, at a price of course, round the year.

Now price may not concern you, but is unseasonal fruit really worth spending a bomb on? No, say our experts.

If you are looking at nutrition, you are better off saving your money buying seasonal fruit, even lowly indigenous fruits like *bel* and *ber*, instead of exotic unseasonal fruit. This is because most unseasonal fruit comes from cold storage and its nutritional content has significantly decreased by the time it reaches your fridge.

Samaddar explains: "The moment a fruit is plucked off the tree, it starts losing its nutri-

A SLICE AT A TIME

Certain fruits like bananas, *chikoos*, mangoes and pineapples are high in calories and should be eaten in moderation.



DON'T PEEL A FRUIT TO GET RID OF PESTICIDES. WASHING IT THOROUGHLY IS GOOD ENOUGH

maximum fibre and minerals in the fruit are in the skin and just below the skin. So if you peel edible skin away, you are not left with much nutrition in the fruit," says Samaddar.

Many of us peel fruit because of the fear of pesticides. But thoroughly washing the fruit un-



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GO FOR VARIETY

IT IS always best to include a variety of fruit in your diet. "It is important to have at least five servings of fruits and vegetables in a day, so the more variety you eat, the better," says Rupali Dutta, head of the department of clinical nutrition, Fortis, Delhi. But aren't some fruits high in calories and shouldn't they be avoided? Our experts say no fruit is bad for you unless you are diabetic, so do not avoid any fruit completely. Simply avoid eating fruits high in sugar and starch frequently if you are watching your weight. "Certain fruits like bananas, chikoo, mangoes, sharifas and pineapples are dense in calories. But they are nutritious too. They should be eaten in moderation," says nutritionist Ritika Samaddar, head dietician, Max Healthcare, Delhi.

eat one or two at the most. But to make a glass of orange juice you need to squeeze at least 4-5 oranges. Now, all fruits are rich in sugar, so when you have fruit juice, instead of consuming the sugar contained in one orange (if you eat it whole), you have five times that amount with your glass of juice.

You may still reason that getting five times the sugar content with fresh fruit juice isn't really bad because you also get five times the vitamins and minerals. But it's not that simple. The human body can absorb only a certain amount of minerals and vitamins at a time. "Whatever it cannot absorb - excess minerals and vitamins - will simply be flushed out," says Dutta.

But remember, all this holds true if you are a normal, healthy individual. Fresh fruit juice is often recommended for the ill and frail.

A FRUIT IS NOT A MEAL

"A lot of us decide to have fruit for breakfast, thinking it is healthy. But it isn't. Breakfast should be a good balance of carbohydrates and protein and fruit. If you have only fruit, you will get a glucose kick but you will have a low just as fast too," says Samaddar. Not the perfect way to start the day.

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tional content. So fresh fruit will always have the maximum nutritional value. Off-season fruit from the cold storage has significantly depleted reserves of Vitamin C and A. Fruit loses 60-70 per cent of its nutritional content during storage."

Dutta adds that nature has fashioned fruit in such a way that seasonal fruit

gives us exactly what we need during each season. Take the watermelon, almost 80 per cent water and high in electrolytes too. It is exactly what we need to revitalise us in summer.

Another reason to avoid unseasonal fruit is the fact that chemicals that are not good for the body are used to preserve fruit during storage.

"This, and the fact that unseasonal fruits are really expensive and deficient in nutrition shows that it just doesn't make sense to eat it," says Dutta.

IS FRUIT JUICE GOOD?

Many of us are aware that packaged fruit juice with its high sugar content isn't very healthy so we assume fresh juice must be good.

According to Samaddar and Dutta, many people don't realise that they are better off eating a whole fruit instead of drinking even fresh fruit juice for two reasons:

- Making juice with a fruit removes fibre that is good for our system because it aids digestion.
- When you eat an orange, you will

EAT FRUIT WHOLE BECAUSE THE MAXIMUM FIBRE AND MINERALS ARE PRESENT IN THE SKIN AND JUST BELOW IT

