



Mangoes, tangerines, peppers and spinach: These are just some of the fruits and vegetables that glow with bright colors thanks to nutrients called carotenoids. And they don't just round out a meal. Recent evidence suggests they may keep cancer at bay, as well.

A study published Dec. 19, 2012, in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, for example, analyzed data from eight previous studies and found that women with the highest levels of carotenoids in their blood were, on average, about 20 percent less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer than women with the lowest levels.

But it wasn't all or nothing, says Heather Eliassen, an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston who led that study. The researchers observed that as carotenoid levels went up, breast cancer risk went down—which suggests that women can benefit from any amount of carotenoid-containing produce they eat. (Eliassen's study did not look at supplements, and recent studies hint at the possibility that taking carotenoid supplements may actually do more harm than good.)

Carotenoid-rich fruits and vegetables also have been linked to a lower risk of lung and colorectal cancer. A study published Jan. 31 in *Nutrition and Cancer* that followed more than 60,000 men in China between 2002 and 2009 found that those who ate the greatest amount of carotenoid-containing produce were 36 percent less likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer than those who ate the smallest amount. And in a paper published online in February in the *International Journal of Clinical Oncology*, researchers in Japan reported that a study of nearly 900 people who had undergone a colonoscopy found that those with high levels of carotenoids in their blood were less likely to have a cancer diagnosis.

The fillet of sole recipe at right provides an easy way to add carotenoid-rich spinach to your diet. —STEPHEN ORNES

FILLET OF SOLE ON A BED OF SPINACH

- 4 cups baby spinach, lightly packed
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 medium-sized lemons
- 10 plum tomatoes, small-to-medium size, halved
- 4 fillets of sole, about 4 oz. each (1-pound total)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 7 tbsp. unsalted pistachios, chopped
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper

- Preheat the oven to 350°F.
- Place spinach and sliced garlic in a large pot with 1 cup water. Cover and bring to a boil. Then cook for 5 minutes, adding small amounts of water as needed to prevent the spinach from sticking. Drain the mixture in a thin mesh colander. Once the water has drained and the spinach is cool enough to touch, place the mixture in a cloth kitchen towel and squeeze out the excess water. Chop the mixture and spread it in the bottom of a shallow, large baking dish.
- Cut the pointed ends off the lemons and cut each into 4 wedges. Place the lemons and tomatoes around the baking dish.
- Loosely roll up each fillet and place on the bed of spinach.
- Drizzle the olive oil over the top and sprinkle with pistachio nuts and pepper.
- Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes.

Source: *Vegetables Eaten for a Healthy Heart*, Harvard Health Publications

READY TO BRIGHTEN UP YOUR DINNER?

Check out "Ask the Nutritionist: Recipes for fighting cancer," an iPhone app developed by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston that allows you to ask questions of nutrition experts and search for recipes that can help you manage dietary restrictions or symptoms, including mouth sores and nausea. It can even generate a grocery list.

- dana-farber.org/nutrition-app.aspx?track=nutritionapp