

The Thrifty Gardener

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A NEW STUDY SUGGESTS THAT

eating chocolate can help you stay thin

Researchers at the University of California San Diego found people who frequently eat chocolate have lower body-mass indexes than those who don't. Other evidence indicates that chocolate can also ward off strokes, heart attacks, and diabetes. Make a resolution to indulge in chocolate daily in 2014.

chocolate...

...decreases stroke risk

A Swedish study found that eating more than 45 grams of chocolate per week (about 2 bars) led to a 20 percent decrease in stroke risk among women. Chocolate contains flavonoids, whose antioxidant properties help fight strokes explained the study's author, Susanna Larsson.

...reduces the likelihood of a heart attack

Other studies show that eating chocolate prevents blood clots and this reduces the risk of heart attacks. Blood platelets clump together more slowly in chocolate eaters, the studies say.

...protects against blood inflammation

Eat one dark chocolate bar per week and your risk of heart disease decreases according to a 2008 study. About a half of a bar of dark chocolate per day keeps the blood inflammation-inducing proteins away.

...helps with math

British psychologists discovered that the flavonoids found in chocolate helped people with their mental math. Study subjects had an easier time counting backwards from a randomly generated number after drinking a cup of hot chocolate. "The findings suggest students who binge on chocolate when revising for exams may gain a real benefit from doing so," the British Telegraph reported.

...helps you have a better garden

When gardeners were rewarded with a chocolate bar, they said their weed pulling, raking and planting went faster and was easier. This is according to a very, nonscientific but delicious study.

A couple of recipes to help you incorporate chocolate into your daily life. Make anti-oxidant, rich truffles or soak in a no-calorie, chocolate milk bath.



truffles

6 ounces good quality Semisweet chocolate
2 egg yolks
2/3 cups unsalted butter, softened
1 1/3 cups powdered sugar, sifted
2 teaspoon vanilla, 1/2 teaspoon almond extract, or 2 teaspoon of your favorite flavored liqueur (only use an extract or a liqueur to keep mixture firm enough to make balls)

Optional touches: unsweetened cocoa powder, ground nuts or sugar crystals to roll finished truffles, 2 teaspoon Chambord (raspberry liquor) or Grand Marnier (orange favored liquor).

DIRECTIONS:

Over low heat, slowly melt chocolate in a small saucepan, stirring often. Remove from heat and let cool, but you want it to remain warm and liquid. Cream egg yolks and butter together. Add sugar slowly to egg mix, and blend well. Then, pour the cooled chocolate into sugar mixture, add vanilla or liqueur of your choice. (If using a liqueur, omit vanilla) Combine gently, but thoroughly. Refrigerate truffle mix until firm enough to handle. Shape into 1 inch balls; roll in unsweetened cocoa or finely ground nuts and chill. Keep refrigerated until ready to eat.

HOT chocolate... MILK BATH

This recipe requires equal proportions of powdered milk and Epsom salts. Purchase fragrance or scented oil with chocolate scent. There are many available, like strawberry chocolate or orange chocolate. The fragrance oils are less volatile than extracts used in cooking. The extracts would quickly vanish in hot water so be sure to buy scented fragrance oil.

Start the first batch with one cup of Epsom salts and one cup of powdered milk. Add one full dropper (holds about thirty drops) of scented oil, and place mixture in a large bowl or on a cookie sheet with high edges. Then, let the oil, powdered milk and Epsom salt combine and dry by stirring once a day. This drying process takes about 48 hours, unless there is high humidity. Take this step to prevent clumping or the bath mix hardening inside the jar. Make a big batch for gifts! Store in airtight jars. Attach a ribbon and tag on the jar and voila a perfect no calorie gift. Use about 1/4 a cup per bath for a luxurious chocolate experience.

