

## FRUIT: PART OF A HEALTHY DIET?

By Julie Cottrell, MS, RD, LD

**Fruit is a confusing food.** We are told to eat more of it because of all the potential health benefits - but then we learn about all the sugar (fructose) in it - and we begin to question its place in our diet. We will take a closer look at fruit in this document to see how fruit may or may not fit into your plan.

### **Here are some terms and tips to help evaluate fruit's place in your diet.**

<b>DAILY CARB LIMIT</b>	<b>Consider your daily carb limit.</b> Then check the chart on pages 2-3 for the amount of carbs per serving for your favorite ones. For reference, most people need less than 100 grams of total carbs per day; some people need <50 grams per day.
<b>NET CARBS</b>	<b>NET CARBS = TOTAL CARBS - FIBER.</b> The net carb amount helps predict the impact a food will have on blood sugar. Check the chart on pages 2-3 to see which fruits have the least <b>net carbs</b> per serving. Berries are a good option.
<b>FIBER</b>	<b>Fiber is valuable for several reasons.</b> It slows the absorption of sugar into the bloodstream; it helps you feel full longer; and it serves as food for gut bacteria. Check the charts on pages 2-3 to see which ones provide the most fiber.
<b>FRUCTOSE</b>	<b>The sugar in fruit is called “fructose”.</b> Fructose is more than just a form of energy; it also functions as a signaling molecule. When we consume a lot of fructose at once, the liver quickly converts this to fat. Fructose also has the biggest effect on <a href="#">uric acid</a> levels, particularly from HFCS and sugary drinks.
<b>HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP (HFCS)</b>	<b>HFCS is made from corn syrup.</b> This version of fructose is much worse than what is found in fruit. The <a href="#">concentration of fructose is higher</a> ; so the effects of the fructose are much greater. HFCS is commonly found in processed foods like salad dressings, sauces and other condiments, and in soda. Read labels carefully! Healthline article: <a href="#">12 Common Foods with High Fructose Corn Syrup</a> Eat This Not That: <a href="#">23 Surprising Foods That Contain High Fructose Corn Syrup</a>
<b>VITAMIN C</b>	<b>Vitamin C is present in many fruits and vegetables.</b> It is valuable in many ways, including that it can help reduce blood sugar and blood lipids (scholarly article <a href="#">here</a> ) and also may help <a href="#">prevent gout</a> . See chart on page 4.
<b>ANTIOXIDANTS, POLYPHENOLS, VITAMINS AND MINERALS</b>	<b>These are compounds in fruits and vegetables that provide a range of health benefits.</b> Learn more about polyphenols <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a> . Here is a <a href="#">Healthline article</a> that showcases 20 different fruits and their potential benefits; or <a href="#">this top twelve list</a> from Medical News Today. Including some lower sugar fruits in your diet (in small portions and within the boundaries of your carb goals) could be worthwhile.
<b>JUICE (and sugary drinks)</b>	<b>AVOID JUICE!</b> The sugar (fructose) will hit your liver quickly, causing a rapid rise in blood sugar and insulin, which may result in a blood sugar rollercoaster. The large amount of fructose will also cause a quick conversion of the sugar to fat. This effect is magnified by the volume of juice consumed. Juice is a <u>processed food</u> ; whole fruit requires <u>your body</u> to be the “food processor”. Whole fruit is much better tolerated; may be included based on your daily carb goal.
<b>DRIED FRUIT</b>	<b>DRIED FRUIT = CANDY.</b> The sugars are concentrated (water removed) so there's a lot of sugar in a much smaller volume. Avoid snacking on fruit/nut mixtures (unless you are trying to gain weight!) and be careful about adding dried fruit to

	salads or other treats (except on special occasions). It's better to add a small portion of <b>fresh fruit</b> to salads and Greek yogurt; use it as an accent to the meal/snack.
<b>ORGANIC</b>	<b>Organic fruit has less pesticides than conventionally grown fruit, and may have more nutrients as well.</b> Use tools like " <a href="#">Dirty Dozen</a> ", " <a href="#">Clean Fifteen</a> " to help decide which ones are worth buying organic. Also check out the <a href="#">EWG's 2022 Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce</a> .
<b>LOCAL/IN SEASON</b>	<b>Most of us are out of touch with when fruits are actually in season.</b> You can use <a href="#">this guide</a> (link also available on <a href="http://www.directaccess.com/healthyeating">www.directaccess.com/healthyeating</a> ) to learn more, or you may enjoy purchasing a <a href="#">visual chart</a> that you could consult. As we consider the fact that fruit should not actually be available to us year round - ripe and ready to eat - we gain perspective of how fruit should be more of an accent to our diet rather than a staple.

**Check your favorite fruit to find the net carbs per serving.**

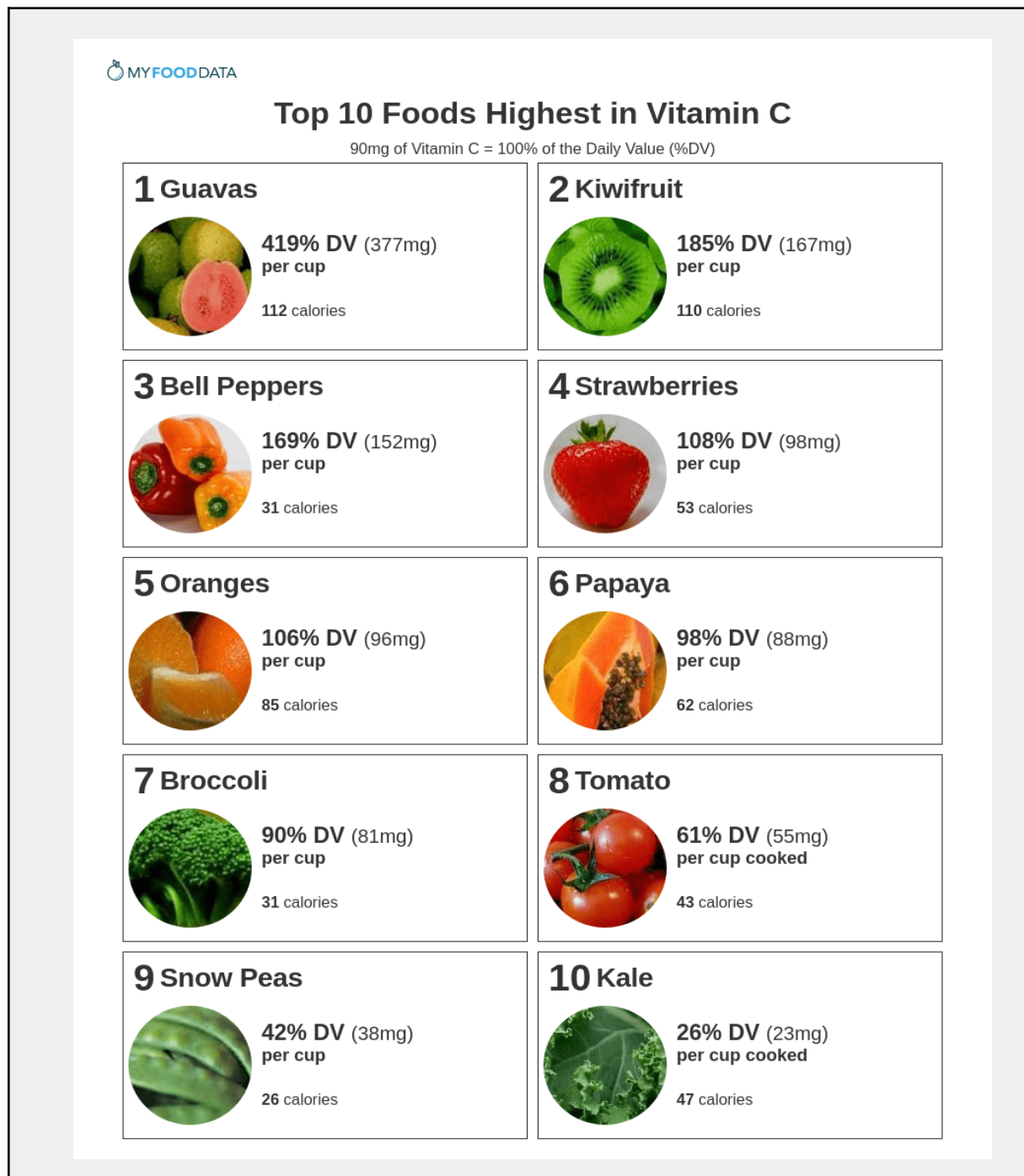
FRUIT	Amount (grams listed as weight of the fruit)	Calories	Carbs (grams)	Fiber (grams)	Net Carbs
<b>Apple</b>	1 medium, 3" diameter (182 grams)	95	25	4	21
<b>Banana</b>	1 medium, 7-8" long (118 grams)	105	27	3	24
<b>Blackberries</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (144 grams)	62	14	8	6
<b>Blueberries</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (148 grams)	84	21	3	18
<b>Cantaloupe</b>	1 cup, cubed (160 grams)	54	13	1	12
<b>Cherries</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (154 grams)	97	24	3	21
<b>Clementine</b>	1 each (74 grams)	35	9	1	8
<b>Cranberries</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (100 grams)	46	12	4	8
<b>Grapefruit</b>	1 medium, 4 inch diameter	108	27	4	23
<b>Grapes</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (151 grams)	104	27	1	26

<b>FRUIT</b>	<b>Amount (grams listed as weight of the fruit)</b>	<b>Calories</b>	<b>Carbs (grams)</b>	<b>Fiber (grams)</b>	<b>Net Carbs</b>
<b>Kiwi</b>	1 each, 2" diameter (69 grams)	42	10	2	8
<b>Lemon</b>	1 small, 1 7/8" diameter (40 grams)	12	4	1	3
<b>Lime</b>	1 small, 2 inch diameter (67 grams)	20	7	2	5
<b>Mango</b>	1 cup, sliced (165 grams)	99	25	3	22
<b>Orange</b>	1 medium, 2 5/8" diameter (131 grams)	62	15	3	12
<b>Peaches</b>	1 medium, 2 2/3" diameter (150 grams)	59	14	2	12
<b>Pear</b>	1 medium, 2 1/2 " diameter	101	27	6	21
<b>Pineapple</b>	1 cup, chunks (165 grams)	83	21	2	19
<b>Prunes</b>	1 dried prune	23	6	1	5
<b>Raisins</b>	1/4 cup or 1 ounce (28 grams)	85	22	1	21
<b>Raspberries</b>	1 cup, whole pieces (123 grams)	64	15	8	7
<b>Strawberries</b>	1 cup, halves (152 grams)	49	12	3	9
<b>Watermelon</b>	Large slice, 7 1/2" diameter x 1" (286 grams)	86	21	1	20

Data obtained from [www.cronometer.com](http://www.cronometer.com). For ease of use, values have been rounded. Fruit is listed in amounts commonly eaten. Berries are listed as a full cup; reduce portions to 1/4 or 1/2 cup for a very low carb way to enjoy fruit.

## WHERE DO WE FIND VITAMIN C?

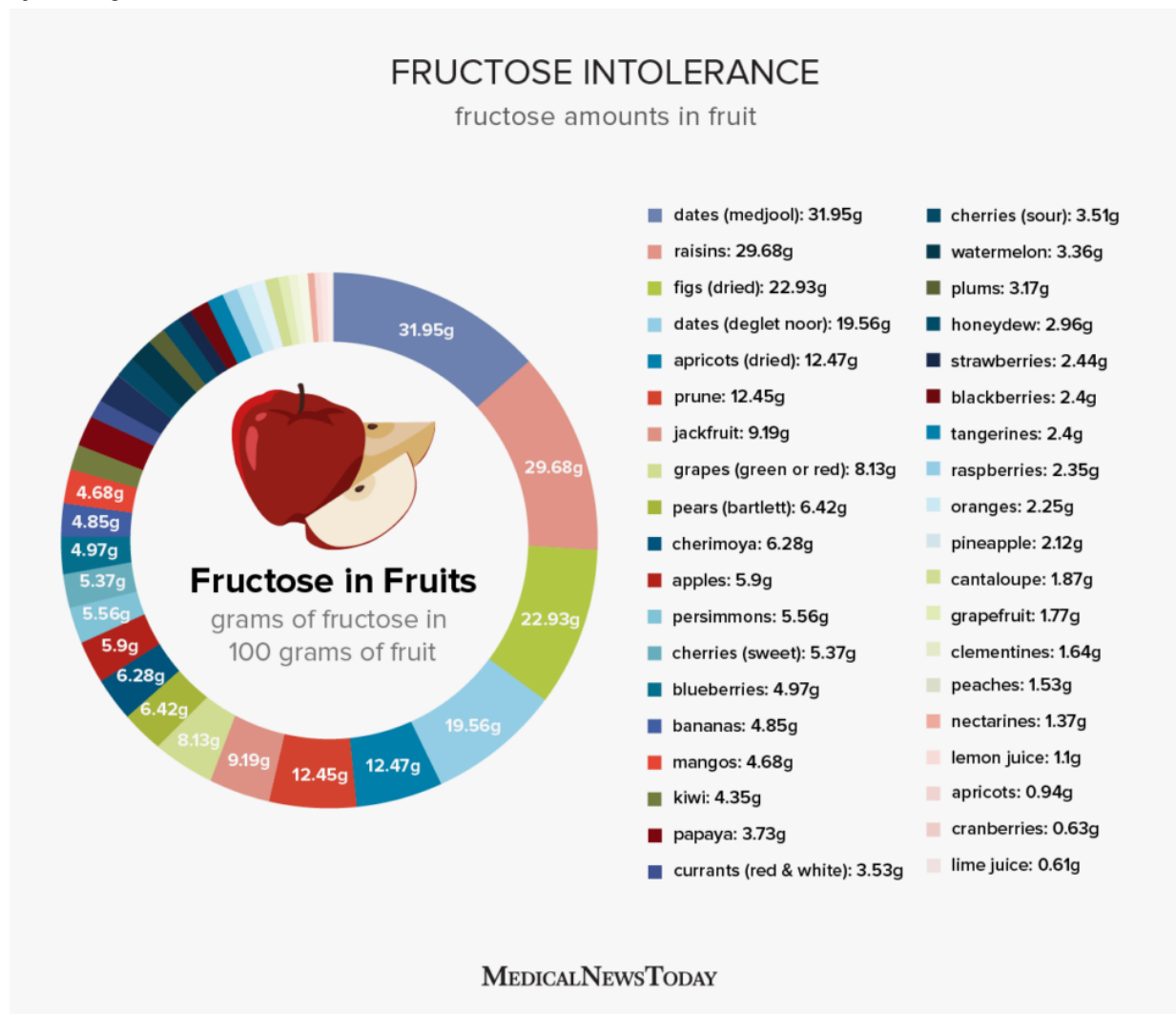
**Fruits and vegetables are both sources of vitamin C.** Vitamin C is valuable for many reasons, including the fact that it can help lower blood sugar and blood lipids, and can also reduce uric acid. Try to include some of these foods in your usual diet, especially the ones lower in carbs.



Use [this link](#) to find this chart above, plus links to other helpful information about vitamin C.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT FRUCTOSE

Use the chart below to compare the fructose content in various fruits. Keep in mind that whole fruit also contains valuable components like fiber and vitamin C, which reduce the impact of the fructose; this is in contrast to juice and sugary beverages or high-sugar desserts and treats, which don't have fiber, vitamin C or other protective components. Nevertheless, it's still best to choose fruits that are lower in fructose. This is especially true if you are a person who has a history of gout. Controlling uric acid levels by reducing high-fructose foods, sugars, beer/alcohol, and foods high in purines is paramount. Even if you don't have gout, these same factors apply to managing blood sugar, blood pressure, blood lipids, fatty liver, inflammation and body weight. It would do most of us good to abide by these guidelines! [Link to chart below.](#)



### Additional reading and learning regarding fructose and uric acid:

- ❖ [“Drop Acid”](#) by David Perlmutter MD
- ❖ [“Nature Wants Us To Be Fat”](#) by Richard Johnson, MD
- ❖ [YouTube video](#) about uric acid levels by Dr. Perlmutter
- ❖ Medical News Today article: [Is fructose bad for you?](#)

## WHAT ABOUT CHERRIES?

Cherries have the potential to reduce uric acid levels, and may be used successfully to treat and/or prevent gout flare-ups. You can read more about this [here](#) and [here](#). If you would like to use cherries as part of your plan, keep the total and net carb amounts in mind; and try to find ways to use whole cherries rather than juice. You may also experiment with tart cherry supplements.

### CONCENTRATED CHERRY SUPPLEMENTS

If you prefer to try a concentrated supplement, here is an example from [Sports Research](#) that uses tart cherries. You may find this one on Amazon or locally. Compare others that you find to this one.



**Here is a recipe to try:** This comes from a site called Diethood; the recipe is "[Cherry Walnut Chicken Salad](#)". Use fresh cherries if in season.

#### Ingredients:

*Chicken, spinach, gorgonzola, dried or fresh cherries, walnuts, olive oil, red wine vinegar, salt and pepper.*



**An easy snack or dessert** might be a serving of lower-sugar Greek yogurt or cottage cheese topped with warmed cherries and a tablespoon or two of chopped nuts.

Oikos Triple Zero is a good option for Greek yogurt. Look for red tart cherries rather than dark cherries for best effect on uric acid.

Picture (left) compliments of [www.thedeliciousspoon.com](http://www.thedeliciousspoon.com)

## SERVING SIZES: HOW MUCH TO INCLUDE?

If you check the charts on pages 2-3 you will notice the serving size is often listed as “one cup” or “one medium fruit”. We often have to “eyeball” serving sizes, since we don’t walk around with measuring cups in our pockets. A tennis ball is roughly the size of one cup serving.








The amount and type of fruit that may fit into your plan depends on your daily carb goal.	
<b>Less than 20 grams per day</b>	Only berries, if at all.
<b>Less than 50 grams per day</b>	One serving of fruit per day MAY work. Choose the lowest carb options. Also consider your level of insulin resistance.
<b>Less than 100 grams per day</b>	One to two servings per day may work. You also have more freedom in choosing which ones.

### EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY WAYS TO INCLUDE FRUIT IN YOUR PLAN:

- ❖ Add **lemon** to your water or to a homemade salad dressing.
- ❖ Add a squeeze of **lime** to rice/riced cauliflower or to Mexican dishes.
- ❖ Use a small serving of **berries** to top off Greek yogurt or cottage cheese.
- ❖ Add sliced **strawberries** or other **berries** to salads for a punch of fresh flavor.
- ❖ Try half an apple sliced into wedges and paired with cheese for a snack or dessert.

### HERE'S A FEW RECIPES TO TRY:

				
<a href="#"><u>Spinach Salad with Grilled Chicken and Berries</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Southwest Blueberry Cobb Salad</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Curried Chicken Salad with Grapes</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Berries and Whipped Cream</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Low Carb Blueberry Dump Cake</u></a>