

# NEWS

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ON...

## “Somewhere over the Rainbow”



Five a Day is old news; we have all got it that we should be eating more fruit and vegetables. However we can expect different health benefits from different types of fruits and vegetables. Heard of the Rainbow Rule? This is the rule of thumb that nutritionists advise people to follow when shopping – and is equally useful for caterers when planning menus and food offers. In a nutshell, you should aim to eat as many different-coloured fruits and vegetables as possible. Why? Because the colour of a plant gives it a particular phytonutrient benefit. What are phytonutrients you might ask? Well, ‘phyto’ means plant in Greek and these are simply the health protecting properties found in plants, over and above their vitamin and mineral content. By eating a mixture of colours you can ensure that you are benefitting from the full spectrum of phytonutrients for maximum health protection.

So for example, your menu might include:

- A mixed berry breakfast smoothie – the bright purples, pinks and reds of berries show their high flavonoid content. Flavonoids are a group of phytonutrients which have particular benefits in spring time as their powerful anti-inflammatory actions make them helpful for hay fever sufferers.
- An apple as a snack – apples are rich in quercetin, another flavonoid phytonutrient with anti-allergy properties.
- Tomato soup for lunch – here’s an interesting fact - the antioxidant lycopene in tomatoes is far more easily absorbed if the tomatoes are cooked? Lycopene has proved valuable in protecting skin from damage by the sun’s UV rays – just a tablespoon (15g) of tomato purée every day in the run up to summer could reduce sun damage by as much as 30%!
- Baked sweet potato or butternut squash wedges with supper – the rich orange colour of these vegetables shows their high beta-carotene content. Beta-carotene is useful in protecting eyes from age-related macular degeneration.

These are just a few of the many powerful properties found in commonplace fruit and vegetables. So next time you are placing an order or shopping, stop and think “Rainbow Rule.”

