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Apple Cider Vinegar: A Powerful Elixir



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I'm a huge fan of apple cider vinegar. As I recall, the first time I heard about this wonderful food product I knew nothing about its healing properties. And it fits in with my philosophy of consuming things that are organic and nutrient-heavy.

Please buy the good stuff: raw, organic, and unpasteurized. I like the blend from Braggs, and recently saw a beautiful display of this golden liquid on sale at my local grocery store. With the good stuff, you will see a strand-like sediment floating at the bottom, which makes it look murky—but don't judge a book by its cover. The gunk that's settled at the bottom is the most important part. It's called "the mother" because it contains raw enzymes and gut-friendly bacteria that promote healing. So shake your bottle well before using to get equal amounts of all the ingredients.

Vinegar in general is made by fermenting grain or ethyl alcohol, resulting in acetic acid. Apple cider vinegar ferments apples, which result in a liquid containing citric acid, formic acid,

malic acid, lactic acid, succinic acid and acetic acid, but the big story here is organic apples. Apples contain anti-oxidants, vitamins B1, B2, B6; biotin, folic acid, niacin, pantothenic acid and vitamin C, along with trace amounts of sodium, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, iron, and magnesium.

Apple cider vinegar has been used for centuries both topically and as a drink. I like to sprinkle it on top of my salads or vegetables to add flavor or as drink, taking one tablespoon and diluting it in 6 to 8 ounces of water, and down the hatch it goes. Some people add a pinch of honey to soften the taste or add it to room temperature herbal tea.

Apple cider vinegar can help with myriad issues, including weight loss, cramps, pain, upset stomach, sore throats, sinus problems, high blood pressure, arthritis, blood pressure, cholesterol, infections, and helping the body rid itself of toxins. Topically, it's used for acne, as a skin toner, for sunburn, shingles, insect bites and to prevent dandruff.

Here are some cool reasons to use it:

Reduces blood sugars. Studies in rats and humans show that it can increase insulin sensitivity and significantly lower blood sugar responses during meals. So everyone benefits.

Relieves gas, bloating and heartburn. Take a drink before a meal or when you feel heartburn symptoms.

Promotes alkalinity. It may taste acidic, but it promotes alkalinity in our bodies. Charlotte Gerson, author of "The Gerson Therapy,"

writes, "Cancer cannot live in an alkaline body and alkalinity makes it an inhospitable environment for cancer."

Non-toxic cleaning spray. Cleaning supplies are mostly toxic, but apple cider vinegar is a cheap alternative that absorbs odors and has antibacterial properties. Mix one part apple cider vinegar to one part water and put in a spray bottle to clean and wipe down surfaces, bathroom tiles, hardwood floors and countertops.

Hair care. It balances your hair's pH, adds shine, helps seal cuticles and can help with dandruff and scalp irritations. Mix one tablespoon in a glass of water and rinse at the end of your bath or shower and then rinse well. The smell will dissipate after your hair dries.

Skin care. Use it as an astringent by applying to your face or dab it right on blemishes to dry them out. It will both tighten and plump.

Sunburn relief. Dilute it in water and pat on burnt skin or add one cup to bathwater.

Deodorant. It absorbs and neutralizes odors, so rub a bit under your arms. As when you apply it to your hair, the smell goes away once it dries.

Some people find the taste very strong and tart, so these recipes I found might be of interest to add it to your diet and hide taste.

Tangy Carrot-Apple Salad with Cider Vinaigrette, from "Vegetarian Times":

1½ tbs. apple cider vinegar
1 small clove garlic, minced (½ tsp.)
2 cups grated carrots
½ red apple, diced (½ cup)

¼ cup sliced green onions
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
¼ cup chopped dried cranberries
1 tsp. honey
1 tbs. olive oil
2 cups baby spinach leaves

1. Combine cider vinegar and garlic in small bowl. Let stand 15 minutes.

2. Stir together carrots, apple, green onions, parsley, and cranberries in large bowl.

3. Whisk honey and oil into cider vinegar mixture. Add to carrot mixture; toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and chill 2 hours, or overnight. Serve salad on bed of spinach leaves.

Triple Citrus Dill Vinaigrette, from The Gerson Institute:

1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup lemon juice
1/2 cup grapefruit juice
1 day-old baked potato
1/4 cup dill leaves
1/2 cup flax oil

Put all ingredients in blender and puree. That's it!

Store in a mason jar and enjoy on salad or cooked greens. Yields about 3 cups.

There are many ways to use apple cider vinegar, so please consider adding it to your daily diet to enjoy the benefits. As always, I encourage you to seek ways to heal, be good to your body and live healthy and happy. Each day is a gift; don't take them for granted!

Julia Chiappetta is the author of "Breast Cancer: The Notebook" (Gemini Media, 2006) and is also the owner of Julia Chiappetta Consulting. She lives in Cos Cob.