

Noni Juice:

Where does it come from?

Noni is a tropical evergreen tree that grows throughout the Islands of the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Australia and Polynesia.

How is Noni used?

- Noni has been used to treat joint pain and skin conditions by applying preparations directly to the skin.
- Noni proponents market it as a “health tonic” that claims to do an array of things like treat cancer and cardiovascular disease, lower blood pressure, reduce inflammation, alleviate allergies, menstrual cramps, arthritis, and more.
- Today, Noni is found in the United States in many different forms including juice, extracts, capsules, and soaps.

How much does it cost?

- The cost of Noni juice is variable, from \$12-\$42 for a 32oz bottle. Most of the juice sold contains only small amounts of noni diluted with water, other juices and added sugar, making the product high calorie and ineffective. It is important to read the ingredients and make sure that noni is listed as the first ingredient.
- Noni found in supplement form can cost anywhere from \$8-\$25 for a small number of pills. It is important to remember that the FDA does not regulate supplements so there is no real way of knowing just how pure a product is.

What the Science Says:

- Preliminary research done on animals and in lab revealed that noni has potential antioxidant, immune-stimulating, and tumor-fighting properties. This means more studies need to be done to say whether it can be a useful tool in maintaining good health.
- Noni has not been well studied in people for any health condition.

Things to be aware of:

- People who are on potassium-restricted diets should avoid noni because it is high in the mineral. One serving of juice contains similar potassium content to that found in orange juice.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued warnings to several noni manufacturers about making unsubstantiated health claims.
- Aside from hurting the wallet, there are few reported side effects from using noni. There is no clear information on the safety of the products on the market.

Information from: <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/noni/>

Acai Berries:

What are they?

Acai berries come from a species of palm tree native to Central and South America. The berries are related to blueberries and cranberries and look similar to grapes but are smaller and contain less pulp.

What are Acai Berries used for?

- Acai berries have become popular here in the United States, promoted as a "superfood." Products made with acai berries have been marketed for weight-loss and anti-aging purposes, but there is no definitive scientific evidence to support these claims.
- Acai berry products are sold in the form of juices, powders, tablets, and capsules.

How much does it cost?

- Sales of acai products catapulted to \$13.5 million in 2010 according to natural-food tracker Spins Inc.
- Acai products are distributed through such stores as Whole Foods, Wild Oats and Jamba Juice, as well as many conventional grocery chains and the Web.
- Cost of acai products varies for juice price ranges from \$20 for a two-week supply of capsules to \$39.95 for two-day detox formula.
- Very expensive, money would be better spent on fresh fruits and vegetables as more affordable antioxidant sources.

Things to be aware of:

- There is little dependable information on the safety of acai as a supplement.
- It is possible to be allergic to the acai berry, and obviously those with the allergy should not consume the berries and its products.
- Eating acai might affect MRI test results. Therefore, if you use acai products and are scheduled for an MRI, check with your doctor.

Information from: <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acai/>

Pomegranate Fruit

What is it?

- Pomegranate, also known as the “Chinese apple,” is a red fruit that is full of edible seeds. It can be a somewhat difficult and messy fruit to eat.
- The fruit is native to the Middle East and Asia, however today is also grown in the United States, India and Africa.
- Pomegranate has become increasingly popular due to its high antioxidant levels. There are a multitude of health claims that surround the fruit from the prevention of aging to cancer.

How is it used?

Pomegranate can be found in a variety of forms from the raw fruit to juice to supplements with its extract.

How much does it cost?

The cost of a fresh pomegranate is very much dependant on whether the fruit is in season. The juice can cost from \$8 to \$32 for 24 ounces of juice. Pomegranate supplements in capsule form cost between \$6 and \$23 for a one-month supply.

How does it work?

Pomegranate contains a variety of chemicals that might have antioxidant effects. Some preliminary research suggests that chemicals in pomegranate juice might slow the progression of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) and possibly fight cancer cells.

Are there safety concerns?

Pomegranate fruit and products made with it are likely safe. Most people do not experience side effects. In rare cases people can have allergic reactions to pomegranate fruit.

Information from:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/392.html>

Goji Berries

What are they?

Goji berries come from an evergreen shrub found in temperate and subtropical regions in China, Mongolia and in the Himalayas in Tibet. Goji berries are usually found dried and look like bright red raisins.

What are Goji Berries used for?

- Goji berries are rich in antioxidants, specifically carotenoids such as beta-carotene.
- In recent years, goji juice has become popular as a health beverage. Marketers also list extensive health benefits of goji juice, even though there are few published clinical trials in humans.
- Although goji berries like the ones used in traditional Chinese medicine aren't very expensive, goji juice is very pricey. Considering that a 32-ounce bottle of goji juice can run as high as \$50, the evidence isn't convincing enough at this time to justify the cost of goji juice.
- There are no known side effects with the regular consumption of goji, or whether it will interfere with treatments or medications.

Information From: <http://altmedicine.about.com/od/completeazindex/a/goji.htm>

Review written by:

Cameron Wells, UAB Dietetic Intern