

Review of Vegetables and Fruits. Nutritional and Therapeutic Values

Vegetables and Fruits. Nutritional and Therapeutic Values. By Thomas S. C. Li (Penticton, British Columbia). CRC Press/Taylor & Francis Group: Boca Raton, FL, USA. 2008. ix +286 pp. 16 × 24 cm. \$129.95. ISBN 978-1-4200-6871-9.

Although the title of this book is compelling and the Foreword makes interesting mention of the historical use of food as medicine in many Asian cultures, the information that follows on the nutritional and therapeutic utility of various fruits and vegetables falls short of the expectations a scientifically trained reader might reasonably have for a reference volume.

One initially begins reading with the impression that evidence-based scientific and clinical literature has been critically reviewed and summarized within, accompanied by insights regarding the specific fruits and vegetables that are presented. However, this is not the case, as the “Nutritional and Therapeutic Values” listed in the tabular summaries for each species of mention appear to be randomly selected snippets taken from references that range from obscure popular press articles and media Web sites to review articles and primary literature. One might have expected a heavier emphasis on citing primary scientific literature, which would seem more appropriate given the target audience. A comprehensive survey of the publicly available literature may not have been carried out for each fruit or vegetable, as the information presented is quite limited in scope and suffers from significant omissions. For example, under kidney bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), although published reports on kidney bean phaseolamin predate the printing of this book, there is no mention of this protein, which has been reported to inhibit alpha-amylase, a key enzyme involved in breaking down starch into glucose. Folkloric and other uses are listed haphazardly per plant, sometimes without accompanying citations, and in some cases entries are poorly edited for accuracy. An example is the notation on page 13 under alfalfa sprout (*Medicago sativa*) stating that “alfalfa sprouts may trigger lupus in sensitive individuals if there is a family history with lupus infection.” The reader may or may not be aware that lupus is not an infection, but rather an autoimmune disease; such inaccuracies must be edited out prior to publication in order to prevent their perpetuation. Statements such as [Brussels] “Sprouts have always been eaten by vegetarians who tout their anticancer effects (p. 24, Brussels sprouts, *Brassica oleraceae* var. *gemnifera*)” are vague and not substantiated by authoritative referencing.

The tables of macronutrient and selected vitamin and mineral content per fruit or vegetable would have provided much more value had the units per weight or per serving been provided, so that a food chemist or practicing toxicologist could use this reference to aid in calculating estimated daily intakes of nutrients from specific food sources. Appendix 1 lists specific chemicals and some of the species that contain them, but the levels are not reported, which again limits the usefulness of this information. The scientific and practical value of this book is

thus severely limited in numerous ways; as such, it cannot be recommended.

Nancy L. Booth
 Spherix, Inc.
 Bethesda, Maryland

■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

Published: May 31, 2012