

The Powerful Pomegranate

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Pomegranates are one of God's "power foods." Many of you may have tasted them or noticed how plentiful they are in our grocery stores during the fall. There are some important health reasons to consider incorporating this deliciously sweet and juicy fruit into your diet. Studies in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition and the Journal of Nutrition indicate they are extremely rich in antioxidants and have the ability to reduce LDL or "bad" cholesterol oxidation and high blood pressure. Rich in vitamin A, potassium and lignin (fiber), pomegranates have more protective antioxidants than a serving of red wine, green tea, blueberries, cranberries or orange juice. Grenadine is actually pomegranate syrup.

Oddly enough, hand grenades are named after the pomegranate fruit because the seeds resemble the explosive powder capsules. Translated, grenade means *seeded apple*. Some Biblical scholars actually say it was really a pomegranate, not an apple that got Adam and Eve in trouble in the Garden of Eden.

Pomegranates are a reddish color, vary in size from 2 ½ -5 inches in diameter and have a "crown" at their base. The fruit's skin is tough and leathery. Inside, a spongy membrane separates the compartments of edible, small, juicy, bright red seeds. The membrane is quite bitter and not something you want to consume. Pomegranate juice is also readily available in grocery stores all year long.

Look for pomegranates that are heavy for their size and mostly blemish-free. They store up to 2 months in the refrigerator. To enjoy the fruit, cut the fruit into quarters and scrape the seeds out with a spoon into a bowl. Remember, it is the seed that is so tasty and not the flesh or membrane of the fruit in this case. The seeds are very juicy so you will want to protect clothing or surfaces that may stain.

You may simply eat the seeds right from the fruit, use as a striking garnish, or sprinkle on various salads or fruit dishes. Because they are a fall fruit, they can make a lovely addition to your holiday table. Here is a salad recipe that may encourage you to give the mighty and delicious pomegranate a try:

Pear, Feta and Pomegranate Salad

Vinaigrette:

3 T pure pomegranate juice

1 T unseasoned rice vinegar

1 T minced shallot

½ tsp. Honey

3 tsp. olive oil

½ tsp. Dijon mustard

Salad:

2 large bunches of dark, leafy greens such as spinach, arugula, red leaf lettuce, etc.

1 head butter lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
2 ripe pears, halved, cored and cut into thin wedges
½ cup crumbled feta cheese (or goat's cheese)
½ cup (more if you like!) fresh pomegranate seeds
2 cups mandarin oranges, chilled

Whisk vinaigrette ingredients together in a small bowl. Combine onions, greens of choice and pieces of butter lettuce in a bowl. Pour all but 2 T of the dressing over the greens and toss to coat. Divide greens among 4 plates. Arrange pear wedges and orange segments over greens. Drizzle the remaining dressing over the servings and sprinkle with feta cheese and pomegranate seeds.