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Is juice as good as whole fruit? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

Are juicers as good as whole fruit?

— Joyful Juicer

Answer

Dear Joyful Juicer,

Juicing can be a great and tasty way to get nutrients your body needs. However, depending on what benefits you're looking for, juice doesn't always measure up to eating the original fruit or veggie from whence it came.

Juicers work by extracting the juice and some pulp from fruits and/or vegetables. Freshly squeezed juice is great for getting the vitamins, minerals, beneficial plant chemicals (phytochemicals), and carbohydrates that are extracted from a whole fruit. However, you won't get much of the fiber, and depending on the fruit, you may not get any of it. Fiber aids in the digestive process. It acts sort of like a scrub brush for your intestines and speeds up the movement of waste through your system. It can also fill you up, and may help protect against certain cancers. Fiber in fruit is found in the membranes between sections, the white part around the outside (as in oranges and grapefruits), the seeds, the skin, and the peels. For example, orange juice contains no fiber (even if it has pulp) because the fiber is found in the membrane, which is lost during the process of juicing.

Fresh juice, though nutritious, is also not considered a low-calorie beverage. If you've used a juicer before, you know that it takes a lot of fruits and vegetables to make a full serving. An eight ounce glass of orange juice contains 110 calories — the equivalent of two oranges (each contains about 60 calories). But since it doesn't contain much fiber (or any at all), you might not feel as full from drinking juice. Not only that, many people may find that drinking a calorie-dense beverage, such as juice, just isn't as satisfying as eating the same amount of calories in food. For those who need to increase caloric intake — such as athletes, children, or teens — juice may be a great choice.

If you choose to include juice as part of a healthy diet, fresh juice may be an alternative to its processed, commercially-sold relatives — less stable vitamins, such as vitamin C, are not compromised in fresh juice as they may be in some processed varieties. There's also some evidence to show that your body may process certain minerals — such as carotenoids and flavanones — better through pasteurized orange juice than whole fruit, but that may not be the case for all fruit juices. When juicing or purchasing juice, a healthful choice might be those without added sugar as it can increase caloric content.

In general, juice is just fine. But if fiber's what you're after, go for the whole fruit or veggie over the liquefied form. For more information on the benefits of fruits and veggies and ideas for incorporating them into your diet, check out the [Go Ask Alice! Optimal Nutrition](#) [2] category in the [Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) [3] archives. Happy juicing!

Alice!

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