



Executive Chef Paul Marks shares recipes and cooking tips with members.

THE POWER OF PINEAPPLE

I came back from my recent trip to Hawaii with more than sunburn. Over the course of our time in Kauai, I developed an obsession with a sticky, sweet tropical fruit that I've known all my life.

I always knew that I liked pineapple, but I didn't really know how much until this trip. While exploring the farmers' markets on Kauai, I was amazed at the size and weight of the pineapples we found. I ended up eating my weight in pineapple.

When I returned, I decided to do some more research on this tasty fruit and came up with a pineapple salsa recipe that goes great with grilled mahi mahi or ono.

Pineapple is a favorite with people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. Perfect as an integral part of sweet-and-sour sauce or a myriad

of other ethnic recipes, the pineapple is wonderful in the kitchen.

Pineapples are a member of the Bromeliaceae family and are composed of many flowers whose fruitlets are fused around a core. Each fruitlet has an eye, which is the spiny part on the pineapple's surface. Pineapples are both sweet and tart with a beautiful, tropical golden yellow color, reminiscent of warm days spent on the beach.

Health benefits of pineapples

One of the most important enzymes in pineapples is bromelain. Bromelain is a mixture of sulfur-containing, protein-digesting enzymes and holds the key to many of the pineapple's health benefits.

Bromelain has been found to be a useful anti-inflammatory, effective in reducing swelling and assisting in the treatment of conditions such as acute sinusitis, sore throat, arthritis and gout. For increased effectiveness, pineapple should be eaten between meals without other food. If eaten with other food, some of bromelain's digestive benefits will be used to help digest other food.

High in antioxidants, pineapple is a great source of vitamin C, offering your body excellent protection

against free radicals, substances that attack healthy cells. A buildup of free radicals can lead to atherosclerosis and diabetic heart disease, an increase in asthma attacks and an increased risk of developing certain cancers, such as colon cancer. Free radicals have also been shown to accentuate problems associated with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Pineapple is also an excellent source of manganese, a mineral essential in some of the enzymes that are necessary in the body for energy production. It also has a thiamine (vitamin B1), which is also important in these energy-producing enzymes.

There are even some beneficial molecules hidden in the stems of pineapples, according to a recent Australian study. These molecules act as a defense against certain types of diseases, such as ovarian, breast, lung, colon and skin cancer.

Selecting and storing your pineapple

Pineapples should feel heavy for their size, otherwise they might be dry and tasteless inside. They should look, feel and smell clean, with no bad or moldy marks on the outer surface. Pineapple stops ripening when picked, so choose carefully and don't select one that looks immature.

Pineapple Salsa

- 1 cup finely chopped, chilled, grilled pineapple
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped green onion
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped red bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped, fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Dash ground red pepper, cayenne pepper or chipotle powder
- 2 teaspoons finely minced jalapeños, seeded (optional)
- Juice of 1 fresh lime (1-2 tablespoons)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Combine all ingredients. Cover and refrigerate for an hour or more to blend flavors. Serve with grilled or broiled fish, or chicken. Makes about 1½ cups.

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