



Common Caribbean Foods and Your Health – Part 1


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The Caribbean is renowned for its diversity of cultures that originated from the early settlers. This has transcended into a variety of food choices and habits that have survived throughout the ages while others have been added over the generations.

Staple foods are good examples of this Caribbean diversity. They are the most affordable, easily available and the most widely used. Many individuals do not feel satisfied unless the main meal includes rice while others express a similar feeling about provisions. But achieving and maintaining good nutritional status and health requires eating more than staple foods. Legumes have traditionally been identified as meat extenders primarily because of their contribution to overall dietary protein. Nuts are just as widespread. Caribbean fruits and vegetables are special. They provide more than eye appeal to the plate and the palate. They are endowed with a range of vitamins and minerals and are also important protective foods for maintaining health and preventing many diseases that continue to affect our populations.

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As the global food trade expands an ever increasing variety of foods will appear in the Caribbean market. This issue of **CAJANUS**, and the next, will discuss the nutrient content and health benefits of some commonly used foods in the Caribbean. This issue focuses on: Staples, Legumes and Nuts, Fruits and Vegetables - four of the six Caribbean Food Groups. Foods from these groups comprise a significant portion of the household food basket for almost all Caribbean families. Each article presents a brief historical perspective of the selected food item and then elaborates the health contribution and some dietary uses.

The next issue will highlight primarily the remaining two of the six food groups: foods from animals; fats and oils. The articles in these two volumes are meant to dispel myths and address some health concerns, but more importantly, to show the magnificent and variety of food resources readily available for us to enjoy delicious and healthy meals in the Caribbean. 

Cajanus
Vol 39, No.1, 2006