Fruit of the Month: Apricot

How to eat:

- Sliced or cubed apricots can be thrown into a salad mix with sharp cheeses to create a sweet contrast to the salty cheese.

- Apricot halves can be grilled or broiled and served with a scoop of ice cream or a frozen yogurt for a quick sweet treat after a meal.

Apricots are a great source of Vitamin A, C, and Potassium, antioxidants and fiber. This fruit is also packed with iron when dried. A single raw apricot fruit is just 17 calories and 1 gram of fiber. When selecting apricots choose fruits that are bright and colorful with no tinge of green since apricots will not become more flavorful once it has been picked off of the tree. Apricots are very delicate fruits, so apricots must be handled gently to prevent bruising and should be eaten as soon as possible to prevent the fruit from over-ripening. Fully ripe apricots can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Under-ripe apricots that are fully colored can be ripened by leaving them in a paper bag for 1-2 days to soften the fruit. To speed up the process, add a banana or apple to the bag with the apricots.

Broiled Apricots with Ricotta

Ingredients:

- 4 apricots, halved and pitted
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 8 teaspoons fresh ricotta cheese
- 2 tbsp. chopped pistachios

Directions:

Preheat broiler. Place sugar in a small saucer. Dip cut side of apricots in sugar to coat and transfer to a baking sheet. Broil, rotating once, until apricots are caramelized and juicy, 3-4 minutes. Remove apricots from oven. Let cool slightly and top with ricotta and pistachios. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Facts:

73 calories, 3g protein, 9g carb, 1g fiber, 7g sugar, 3g fat, 5mg cholesterol, 20mg sodium.
How to eat:

- There are endless ways to use arugula, such as putting it in a sandwich, in an omelet, on top of pizza, as a bed for fish, mixed into pasta or salad, or as a garnish for dishes.

- Blended with olive oil and spices, arugula can become a great pesto, or if mixed with ricotta cheese for a great ravioli or lasagna filling.

- Lemon pairs nicely with arugula's earthy flavor.

Arugula excels nutritionally in the antioxidants department. It is rich in Vitamin A in the form of beta-carotene, Calcium, potassium, folate, and Vitamin C. Arugula is also high in fiber and phytochemicals.

2 cups of arugula is just 10 calories, and about 1 gram of fiber.

When purchasing arugula, look for firm leaves that do not have any yellow or signs of mushiness.

Arugula is highly perishable, so it must be used within a few days of purchase. To store the arugula, keep the arugula in a damp towel until ready to be eaten. Plastic bags tend to create a moist environment, so the arugula will get mushy faster.

Couscous Salad with Arugula and Cherries

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients:
1 cup whole wheat pearl couscous
1 cup vegetable broth
1/4 cup orange juice
1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
1/2 cup dried cherries
2 stalks celery, finely diced
3 ounces baby arugula, chopped
1/2 cup walnuts, lightly toasted
3 shallots, diced

Directions:
Cook pearl couscous according to package directions. Allow to cool. Whisk together the orange juice, vinegar, diced shallots, salt and pepper to make a dressing. Combine couscous, cherries, walnuts, celery in a large bowl. Add the dressing and mix well.

Nutrition Facts:
332 calories, 9g fat, 4g fiber, 16g sugar, 52g carb, 10g fat, 1g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 224mg sodium