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## SPECIAL REPORT

# Ancient foods for modern health

*Long before the term “superfood” was coined, South Americans in places like Peru were growing foods renowned for their health and life-giving benefits. With diverse microclimates, advanced agriculture and a focus on plant-based eating, the ancient South American cultures were an ideal crucible for high-quality foods. We look at their top foods available to you today and how you can use them.*

Words SOPHIA AULD

Long before the term “superfood” was coined, South Americans in places like Peru were growing foods renowned for their health and life-giving benefits.

The Incas, for example, combined their knowledge of food production with their country’s wonderful environment for agriculture, producing foods that were nutrient-dense. This helped them have long and healthy lives. Now, contemporary science is meeting ancient wisdom, with foods that have been grown for millennia being recognised for their health-promoting benefits.

### What is a “superfood”?

The term superfood has been used to describe foods ranging from the everyday, like oats, to exotic fruits, vegetables and spices. According to Ricardo Riskalla, a master personal trainer and nutrition coach, a superfood is any food that is rich in antioxidants or provides unique healing properties.

“They are indigenous foods used for centuries to heal the body and mind,” explains the Brazilian-born Australian, who studied vegetarian and vegan diets at Cornell University. “Some of the superfoods have proven properties and like anything they have unknown factors still to be discovered.”

However, caution is needed with the term, warns accredited practising dietician Lisa Donaldson. “The word ‘superfood’ has no official definition,” she explains, “and there are no rules around what foods it applies to, so it pays to be wary of the term. Although many foods labelled ‘super’ are indeed healthy, more accessible and affordable foods are often just as healthy.” For example, broccoli is less

expensive and more available than kale; similarly, blueberries are a more affordable alternative to goji berries.

Most superfoods are plant-based. Common examples include berries, leafy greens, tea and dark chocolate.

### The benefits of superfoods

Generally, a superfood delivers powerful nutritional benefits for minimal calories, with high levels of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants (natural molecules that help to offset the damage to our bodies caused by free radicals).

*A superfood delivers powerful nutritional benefits for minimal calories, with high levels of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants...*

Free radicals are linked with various health problems, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and arthritis. Studies have indicated that eating superfoods high in antioxidants and flavonoids can help to prevent coronary heart disease and cancer, plus boost immunity and reduce inflammation.

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables regularly is associated with a lower risk of many so-called “lifestyle” diseases, such as diabetes, and overall mortality. A nutrient-rich diet also helps with energy and maintaining a healthy weight.

Wherever possible, it’s best to eat real whole foods rather than using a superfood supplement.

Donaldson adds that so-called “superfoods” often have an impressive nutrient profile, but so do a lot of other

“everyday” foods. “What’s important is to enjoy a wide variety of whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, grain-based foods, nuts, seeds, lean meats, fish and dairy, rather than focusing solely on ‘superfoods’ to boost our health,” she says.

Many “ordinary” foods double as superfoods and are easy to find in the supermarket. Buying fresh, local food that’s in season will help to ensure you get the best nutritional content.

It’s important to remember that superfoods are not a magic cure. Nor will adding a few superfoods compensate for a diet that is poor overall.

### Why South American superfoods?

South American agriculture is believed to go back to at least 9000 BC, when potatoes were collected in the highlands of south-central Chile. In Peru, quinoa was harvested by 5500 BC. Squash and peanuts were also cultivated on highland sites in the Andes, while the tropical lowlands of the Amazon basin yielded crops such as avocados, cacao, chilli peppers, corn, papayas and sweet potatoes. Corn remains from Ecuador have been dated to approximately 1500 BC, while lima beans and the common bean seem to have been domesticated in the southern Andes.

Agriculture was important for the Peruvian Inca empire and other South American highland cultures. The Incas controlled a huge empire with four different climate zones, which allowed for diverse growing conditions. The people of the ancient Andes were mostly vegetarian. The Incas cultivated diverse crops such as cacao, beans, grains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes,



peanuts, cashews, squash, cucumber, quinoa, carob, lúcuma and avocado.

The quality of their food meant the Incas lived long lives, says Mario Vargas, Peru’s Trade Commissioner. He explains that Peru has 90 different microclimates, enabling them to grow different products throughout the year. Countries like Peru continue to grow these ancient superfoods, exporting them to more than 150 countries worldwide.

Their superfoods include varieties of fruit, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds.

### Grains, nuts and seeds

This category includes some of the most popular and best-known superfoods, such as quinoa and chia seeds, and also some that you might not have heard of.

#### Quinoa

Perhaps one of the trendiest superfoods, quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) is grown for its tiny edible seeds, which are high in protein and fibre. It is native to the Andes, where it was a staple food for pre-Columbian Inca, Aymara and Quechua peoples, among others. It is now grown in several countries worldwide, but most still comes from Peru and Bolivia.

Donaldson says she uses quinoa regularly. “It’s one ingredient that I do

suggest to those with gluten intolerance or coeliac disease as a ‘mix-it-up’ alternative to brown rice,” she says. “It’s also a good source of omega-3 fatty acids and contains nine essential amino acids, so it’s a good inclusion for vegans and vegetarians.”

Quinoa is also high in magnesium, B vitamins, iron, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, vitamin E and various beneficial antioxidants. It has a low-glycaemic index, which means it can be helpful for blood-sugar control.

#### Sacha inchi

The sacha inchi plant (*Plukenetia volubilis*), also known as the sacha peanut, mountain peanut and Inca nut, is native to several tropical South American countries, including Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. It is now cultivated commercially in south-east Asia.

When raw, the seeds may be toxic, but the toxic compounds are destroyed by roasting. This turns the seed into a delicious snack that can be eaten like nuts. They are high in protein (27 per cent) and oil (35–60 per cent), including high levels of omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids.

The edible seed oil has a mild, nutty flavour and is a good source of alpha-linolenic acid. A study published in Food and Chemical Toxicology in 2014 found that

LDL-cholesterol was reduced and HDL-cholesterol was increased with sacha inchi oil consumption over four months, with no significant adverse effects.

#### Cacao

Cacao (*Theobroma cacao*, meaning “food of the gods”), is a tropical evergreen tree grown for its edible seeds. It is native to lowland rainforests of the Amazon and Orinoco river basins and was used by the Mayans in a bitter fermented drink mixed with spices. Today, it is processed into powder, cacao butter and chocolate.

Chocolate is made from the seeds of the *Theobroma cacao* tree. However, the use of “cacao” versus “cocoa” isn’t consistent, so don’t assume one brand is better than another.

Cacao is high in plant chemicals called flavanols that may help to protect the heart, and is also rich in iron, copper, magnesium, zinc and phosphorus. Riskalla says raw cacao powder is the most powerful antioxidant known. “It is such a delicious food and easy to prepare,” he says. “I also recommend my clients make raw cacao powder and honey face masks. Just two ingredients that can change your skin.”

Flavanols like those found in cacao have been shown to help relax blood



vessels and improve blood flow, thereby lowering blood pressure. An observational study of Kuna Indians — a native tribe from Panama — highlighted this finding. On average, they drink more than five cups daily of home-grown or Columbian cocoa powder. Hypertension was extremely uncommon in this group, even among older people, despite an extremely high dietary salt intake. Their death rates from heart disease, cancer, and diabetes was significantly lower than their counterparts living in urban areas.

In short-term studies, flavanols from cacao increased insulin sensitivity, which could reduce diabetes risk. Flavanols also appear to have brain benefits, with a review published in *Frontiers in Nutrition* in 2017 showing that consumption may improve memory, brain blood flow, oxygen levels and nerve function.

Dark chocolate and cacao contain significantly more flavanols than milk chocolate or white chocolate.

#### **Chia seeds**

Chia (*Salvia hispanica*) is a flowering plant of the mint family grown for its edible seeds. Native to Mexico and Guatemala, it was an important crop for the Aztecs. It is now grown commercially in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Australia.

Chia seeds are one of the best sources of omega-3 alpha-linolenic acid, and are also high in fibre, protein, calcium, iron, zinc, magnesium and antioxidants. They are easily digested and can be eaten whole. They can also be sprouted or mixed with liquids to form a thick gel.

"Chia seeds are great added to smoothies and even omelettes," Donaldson says. "They are a helpful boost of fibre and there has also been some research around the benefits of chia and its impact on heart disease, body weight and blood glucose

levels." There is also some evidence they may suppress appetite, lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of cancer and stroke. However, as Donaldson notes, the evidence isn't strong enough yet to make specific recommendations.

#### **Amaranth**

Amaranth covers 60–70 species of flowering plants that are found almost worldwide. Several species were used by Native Americans and pre-Columbian civilisations (like the Aztecs), who consumed the leafy greens and the seeds, and used it as a medicinal herb.

Both the leaves and the seeds are nutritionally dense and are good sources of dietary fibre, calcium and iron; the seeds are also high in protein. The leaves can be eaten fresh or cooked like spinach and are often added to salads or soups. The nutty-tasting seeds can be popped, added into porridge or ground into flour for use in baking (often mixed with other types of flour).

#### **Brazil nuts**

The edible seeds of a large South American tree, Brazil nuts are found in the Amazonian forests of Peru, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador. They are mostly eaten raw or blanched and are high in protein, fibre, thiamine, copper and magnesium.

They are also a good source of selenium, which some studies have suggested may be low in Australian soils. It is believed to be important for liver, thyroid, heart and immune function. Some evidence suggests that selenium supplementation may reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

### **Vegetables**

#### **Asparagus**

The asparagus family has up to 300 species worldwide. As a vegetable, it's grown for its succulent and tasty stalks. Asparagus is grown in Peru and Mexico, as well as China, Thailand and Germany, and usually eaten cooked. It is low in calories, with an impressive nutrient profile that includes fibre and vitamins A, C and E. It is especially high in folate and vitamin K, which is necessary for blood clotting and bone health.

Like other green vegetables, it's high in antioxidants. These include various flavonoids and polyphenols. Purple asparagus contains anthocyanins, which give it the purple colour and have antioxidant effects that may include lowering blood pressure and the risk of heart attacks and heart disease.

#### **Purple corn**

Grown since pre-Hispanic times, purple corn is also rich in anthocyanins. These antioxidant molecules can help to reduce ageing related to free-radical damage and support cardiovascular health.

Purple corn is also rich in phenolic compounds with potential health-promoting effects, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-carcinogenic properties. They have been associated with

*Grown since pre-Hispanic times, purple corn is also rich in anthocyanins. These antioxidant molecules can help to reduce ageing related to free-radical damage and support cardiovascular health.*



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a reduction in lifestyle diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

**Artichoke**

Grown in Argentina, Chile and Peru, the flowers and leaves of artichokes are high in nutritional and medicinal properties that have digestive health benefits. Artichoke is high in fibre, vitamin C and antioxidants, which may help prevent some cancers and cardiovascular diseases. The leaves are rich in magnesium, plant sterols and potassium, which support healthy liver function and elimination of toxins.

It also contains cynarin, an organic compound that stimulates the liver and helps manage cholesterol, triglycerides, diabetes and inflammation.

**Capsicum**

Also called sweet peppers and bell peppers, the capsicum species (*Capsicum annuum* L.) originated in South and Central America. Records report that they have been used in cooking since 6000 BC. Capsicums are an excellent source of vitamins A and C (with red capsicums containing more than green ones).

They are also a good source of dietary fibre, vitamin E, B6 and folate, and the minerals potassium and magnesium. Their exceptionally high vitamin C content may help to boost the immune system.

**Chillies**

Chilli peppers (*Capsicum annuum*) are members of the nightshade family and are related to capsicums and tomatoes. The many varieties are the fruits of capsicum pepper plants.

*The yacon plant (Smallanthus sonchifolius) is native to the Andes mountains, and has been valued for its nutritional and medicinal properties for centuries.*

They have been valued since pre-Hispanic times for their high nutritional value, exquisite flavour and exotic aroma.

Chilli peppers are a rich source of nutrients, including vitamins A, B<sub>6</sub>, C, and K1, and minerals potassium and copper. However, because they only tend to be eaten in small amounts, they don't contribute much to daily nutrient intake.

They are also an excellent source of antioxidant compounds, including capsaicin, which is responsible for chilli's heat. High capsaicin consumption may help to desensitise pain receptors, providing relief from conditions such as heartburn.

One study, for example, found that heartburn sufferers' pain initially increased when they consumed 2.5 grams of red chilli peppers per day, but improved over time.

Capsaicin has also been linked with weight loss by reducing appetite and increasing fat burning.

**Sweet potato**

This humble veg, also sometimes called yam, is a tuber native to Peru. It is believed to be one of the world's oldest food crops. With approximately 5000 varieties, it comes in a range of vibrant colours, including white, purple, pink, orange and yellow.

Sweet potatoes are very nutritious, being a great source of fibre, vitamins A, B<sub>6</sub> and C, as well as minerals manganese, potassium and copper. They are also rich in antioxidants.

The fibre and antioxidants in sweet potatoes promote healthy gut bacteria, while the anthocyanins and other antioxidants may help to protect against certain cancers. Further studies are needed to confirm the cancer link.

Sweet potatoes are incredibly rich in beta-carotene, which gives them their orange hue. In the body, beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A and used to support healthy vision. The beta-carotene and anthocyanins may boost eye health and help to prevent vision loss.

Purple sweet potatoes have also been linked with improved brain function in animal studies, probably because the anthocyanins have protective effects by reducing inflammation and free-radical damage.

**Yacon**

The yacon plant (*Smallanthus sonchifolius*) is native to the Andes mountains, and has been highly valued for its nutritional and medicinal properties for centuries.

Most well-known is yacon syrup, which is one of the best dietary sources of fructooligosaccharides (FOS), a type of fructan (a soluble dietary fibre). Because much of yacon syrup isn't digested, it only has one-third of the calories of regular sugar and has therefore been suggested as a good alternative sweetener for people with conditions like diabetes.

The fructans also provide food for beneficial gut bacteria and may therefore help to boost immunity and brain function, among other things. Some evidence also suggests that fructans can reduce levels of ghrelin (the "hunger hormone"), thereby reducing appetite.

**Mesquite**

Mesquite is a common name for more than 40 species of trees in the genus *Prosopis*, native to Mexico and Argentina. It produces fruits known as "pods", which, once dry, are edible and can be ground into flour.

It is high in fibre, glucose, fructose and sucrose. It also has carbohydrates, proteins, vitamin C, vitamin E, minerals and potassium. Because of its high-calorie content, it may be valuable for pregnant and nursing mothers, and athletes or people with physically demanding jobs or people doing mentally taxing activities.

It can be used as a substitute for cacao, even for people who experience intestinal problems.

Mesquite tea is a diuretic and anti-diarrheal. When used raw, the plant can work as a laxative.



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### **Yuca**

Also called cassava, (*Manihot esculenta*), manioc and mandioca, this plant is cultivated throughout the tropics for its tuberous roots, which are made into cassava flour, breads and tapioca. It was probably first cultivated by the Maya in Yucatán.

It is very high in carbohydrates, low in fat and gluten-free, making it suitable for people with gluten intolerance. It also contains folic acid (essential to a healthy pregnancy), and antioxidant vitamins A and C.

By way of caution, most varieties contain varying amounts of a cyanide-producing sugar derivative. Indigenous peoples developed a system of grating and cooking to remove this before eating it. If you happen to be foraging in the tropics, you might want to avoid harvesting wild yuca just in case.

### **Maca**

Considered a gift of the gods by pre-Columbian cultures, maca (*Lepidium meyenii*) is a plant native to Peru. It is related to broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and kale, with a long history of use for boosting libido, fertility and energy.

The main edible part is the root, which is commonly dried and used as a powder, but also comes in capsules and liquid extract form. It is commonly added to smoothies and cereals.

Maca root powder is very nutritious, containing high quantities of carbohydrates and a reasonable fibre content. It is rich in several nutrients, especially vitamin C, copper and iron. It also contains plant compounds including glucosinolates and polyphenols.

Maca's reputation as a libido-enhancer was borne out by research, with a 2010 review concluding that at least six weeks of consumption upped sexual desire. In men, there is some evidence that it may bolster fertility.

It has also been linked with improving menopause symptoms, reduced anxiety and depression (especially in menopausal women), and improved exercise performance. Furthermore, some evidence suggests it may enhance learning and memory.

People with thyroid problems may need to be cautious about using maca, as it contains substances that may interfere with thyroid gland function. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should talk to their doctor before using it.

## **Fruits**

### **Açaí berries**

These little superfruits hail from the rainforests of Central and South America, where they grow on açai palms. They have exploded in popularity worldwide, with many claims being made about their health-boosting benefits. They are usually processed into a pulp or paste before being exported.



Açaí berries are relatively high in fat and low in sugar for a fruit. While they contain modest amounts of vitamins and minerals, many of their benefits come from plant compounds. One of the most important is the anthocyanins responsible for their deep purple colour.

Anthocyanins are antioxidants, helping to reduce the damaging effects of free radicals in the body. Açaí berries are an incredibly rich source of antioxidants, with higher amounts than blueberries or cranberries.

Animal studies have suggested that açai berries may help to improve cholesterol levels, fight certain types of cancer and boost brain function. However, more work is needed to confirm these effects in humans.

### **Soursop**

This large, spiny fruit (*Annona muricata*), also called graviola or Brazilian pawpaw, grows on a tree of the custard apple family in the American tropics. The creamy, white flesh, said to combine the flavours of mango and pineapple, is delicious eaten fresh or used to make smoothies, custard and ice cream.

It is low in calories and nutrient-dense, providing good quantities of fibre, vitamin C and antioxidants, plus small amounts of niacin, riboflavin, folate and iron.

Soursop has been touted as an anti-cancer food, but studies are yet to confirm the connection.

Test-tube and animal studies have suggested that soursop may help to kill cancer cells, reduce inflammation, fight bacteria and stabilise blood sugar. However, these studies have used concentrated soursop extract rather than the whole fruit, so researchers stress that further research on humans is needed before recommendations can be made.

### **Lúcuma**

This green-skinned, golden-fleshed fruit of the *Pouteria lúcuma* tree is native to South America and is known as the "gold of the Incas". It has been used for centuries for its health benefits.

Lúcuma's sweet flavour has been compared to a combination of sweet

potato and butterscotch. It can be eaten raw but is most commonly used in powder form as a supplement or sugar alternative. It can be used as a sugar substitute in baking.

It contains about 75 per cent less sugar than regular table sugar, plus extra nutrients such as soluble and insoluble fibre, and small amounts of calcium, iron, potassium, niacin and vitamin C.

Furthermore, lúcuma contains various antioxidants, including polyphenols and carotenoids (which have anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and heart-healthy properties), as well as xanthophylls (believed to promote healthy vision).

Because lúcuma is high in complex carbohydrates and contains soluble fibre, it may help with blood-sugar control. Test tube studies have suggested it may lower blood pressure, but further research is needed to confirm the heart health benefits in humans.

### **Pomegranate**

Grown on a bush or small tree, pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), are a sumptuous fresh fruit, and the juice is used to make grenadine syrup. They are espoused as one of the healthiest fruits available, being a rich source of dietary fibre, folic acid, vitamins C and K, and beneficial plant compounds.

There are two unique compounds in pomegranates that account for many of their benefits. One is punicalic acid, found in the seed oil. It's a form of conjugated linoleic acid — a type of omega-6 fatty acid that has been touted to help with weight loss. The second is punicalagins — potent antioxidants found in pomegranate juice and peel, with reportedly triple the antioxidant power of red wine or green tea. These have been associated with anti-inflammatory effects. A 2014 study of people with diabetes, for example, showed that drinking 250ml of pomegranate juice per day lowered inflammatory markers CRP and interleukin-6.

Early studies also suggest that drinking pomegranate juice may help to fight



prostate and breast cancer, possibly by inhibiting the reproduction of cancer cells.

It has also been linked to lowering blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, relieving arthritis and improved memory.

#### **Cherimoya**

Also known as custard apple (*Annona cherimola*), this fruit has scaly, green skin encasing sweet, creamy flesh. It is believed to have originated in the Andes mountains, and is rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals, as well as the antioxidant compounds kaurenoic acid, flavonoids, carotenoids and vitamin C. These help to fight the free radicals that contribute to numerous diseases.

It's a great source of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine), which is important for the production of neurotransmitters that help to regulate mood. The lutein in cherimoya may help to maintain eye health, while test tube evidence suggests cherimoya's flavonoids may stop the growth of cancer cells. More research is needed to confirm this in people.

On a cautionary note, cherimoya contains annonacin, a toxin that can affect the nervous system. While it is most concentrated in the skin and seeds, all parts of the plant may contain some annonacin, so it may be best to avoid cherimoya if you have a nervous system condition.

#### **Avocado**

This delectable fruit, made infamous as a spread for toast, is sometimes also called an alligator pear. The fruit of the *Persea americana* tree, avocados are native to the region from Mexico to the Andes. Their green or yellow flesh is often eaten in desserts in various parts of the world.

Avocados are an excellent source of healthy fats and potassium, plus good amounts of folate and vitamins B<sub>5</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, C, E and K.

They are chock-full of heart-friendly monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs), the majority of which is oleic acid — also found in olive oil. Oleic acid has anti-inflammatory properties and has been linked with beneficial effects on genes linked to cancer.

Studies have shown that avocados can significantly reduce total cholesterol, LDL ("bad") cholesterol and blood triglyceride levels significantly, while increasing the HDL ("good") cholesterol. Other studies have shown that people who eat avocados regularly tend to be healthier.

A massive US study, for example, looked at the dietary habits of 17,567 participants. They found that avocado consumers had significantly higher intakes of fruit and vegetables and much higher nutrient intake. They also had significantly lower body weight, BMI, and waist circumference, and were only half as likely to have metabolic syndrome.

Another study showed that people who ate approximately half of a Hass avocado with lunch felt 23 per cent more satisfied, plus had a 28 per cent lower desire to eat over the next five hours, compared to those who didn't. This may help people who want to lose weight.

#### **Herbs**

##### **Cat's claw**

Cat's claw (*Uncaria tomentosa*) is a tropical vine that grows in the Amazon rainforest and other tropical parts of South and Central America. For centuries, the bark and root have been used as a traditional medicine.

Cat's claw supplements may come in a liquid extract, capsule, powder or tea. Many claims have been made about its healing powers, but they have not necessarily been substantiated by research.

Cat's claw has been linked with boosting the immune system, with two small studies showing that men given cat's claw extract for six to eight weeks had increased numbers of white blood cells (which help to fight infection).

It also seems to have anti-inflammatory effects that may help to relieve the pain of arthritis. Studies have indicated that taking cat's claw extract for several weeks may ease pain in people with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. More studies are needed to confirm these findings.

Many other claims about cat's claw's healing powers — such as in cancer, AIDS, asthma, allergies and viral infections — have yet to be substantiated.

Furthermore, cat's claw contains high levels of tannins, which may cause side effects such as nausea and diarrhoea if too much is taken. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid using it due to a lack of safety information. People with some medical conditions such as bleeding disorders, autoimmune diseases, kidney disease, leukemia, or those awaiting surgery should also steer clear of cat's claw. It can also interact with some medications, so consult your health professional before using it.

##### **Muña**

A medicinal plant grown in the high Andes from Venezuela to Bolivia, muña (*Mintostachys mollis*) is a member of the mint family. It has been used as a tea in South American traditional medicine as a carminative (to relieve flatulence) and an aphrodisiac. It is also said to be high in calcium and phosphorus, so it may be helpful for healthy bones and teeth. Its benefits are yet to be confirmed by research.

#### **Superfoods without the super expense**

Some of these superfoods are readily available, while others are likely to be more difficult to find and are expensive. Donaldson stresses that "exotic" superfoods won't necessarily be any more beneficial than everyday ones. "What is important is a range of colour and varied choices," she explains.

"My best advice is to eat a large variety of whole fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, seeds and lean proteins in a broad range of colours. This will ensure that you are consuming a range of vitamins and minerals. My personal philosophy is to eat close to nature and minimise your intake of processed foods. When you nail this, your body will reap the rewards."

*Sophia Auld is a physiotherapist and Pilates instructor with three decades of experience in the health field. She is passionate about helping people achieve good health, using a holistic approach and believes that small changes can have a big impact for achieving wellness.*





## SOUTH AMERICAN SUPER RECIPES

Here, Donaldson shares two recipes from her website.



### Chickpea Quinoa Patties with Lemon Tahini Dressing

Makes: 10 patties

#### Patties

1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
1 green shallot, chopped  
1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained & rinsed  
1 cup cooked quinoa (½ cup dry), cooked in chicken stock  
½ cup parmesan (or tasty) cheese  
½ cup wholemeal bread crumbs (substitute with gluten-free crumbs for gluten-free recipe)  
1 medium carrot, grated  
Small tin corn kernels

1 tbsp chopped parsley  
3 eggs, beaten  
Cracked black pepper, to taste

#### Lemon Tahini Dressing

1 garlic clove, finely minced (optional)  
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
2 tbsp tahini paste  
Juice ½ lemon  
Pinch salt  
Water (optional)

To make the patties, heat the extra-virgin olive oil in a non-stick frypan and sauté the chopped green shallot over medium heat to release their fresh and sweet fragrance, and then remove from heat.

In a large mixing bowl, mash the chickpeas with the back of a fork.

Combine all remaining ingredients, including the green shallot.

Using your hands, gently form patties to your preferred size (I use ½ cup handfuls).

Heat a non-stick frypan and cook patties for about 4 minutes on each side, or until lightly golden brown.

Now, make the lemon tahini dressing: Finely mince garlic (if using) and place in a small mixing bowl.

Combine all ingredients and mix well.

If desired, stir in a little water to help bring the dressing to your desired consistency.

Serve patties with lemon tahini dressing.

Enjoy!

## Gluten-Free Anzac Biscuits

Makes: 12–15 biscuits

1½ cups buckwheat flour  
¾–1 cup sugar (brown or caster)  
1½ cups shredded desiccated coconut  
1 cup quinoa flakes (rolled quinoa)  
1 tbsp psyllium husks

125g coconut oil (or same weight of alternative fat/oil)  
2–3 tbsp golden syrup  
1 tsp bicarb soda (baking soda)  
3–5 tbsp warm water

Heat oven to 180°C.

Line two baking trays with non-stick baking paper. Place flour, sugar, coconut, quinoa and psyllium husks in a bowl and stir to combine. Make a well in the centre.

Place coconut oil and golden syrup in a saucepan (or microwave in a bowl) to melt. Dissolve baking soda in 3 tbsp of warm water. Add melted ingredients and dissolved baking soda to dry ingredients and mix to combine. Add more warm water if necessary, to make the dough stick together.

Roll spoonfuls of the mixture into balls.

Press balls onto prepared baking trays, allowing space for biscuits to spread while cooking.

Bake for 15 mins or until golden brown.

Remove to a wire rack to cool. Enjoy!

**Note:** Riskalla says he recommends that his clients never heat up any superfood because their properties are destroyed with heat. For a delicious and powerful superfood shake, he recommends blending one cucumber with a tsp of açai, raw cacao powder, the juice of one lemon and a shake of stevia powder.

