

## Prunes

Prunes. The word alone can still make me smile.

As kids, Mom would fix stewed prunes for my sister, brother and me whenever we had trouble, well....going! For years, I actually thought prunes were medicine, like aspirin or cough syrup!

By junior high, I knew better, but still laughed hysterically with my friends while singing,

“Prunes, prunes, the musical fruit. The more you eat, the more you toot. The more you toot, the better you feel. So let’s have prunes at every meal.” (Rolling on the floor laughing!)

What else could you expect from a bunch of pre-adolescent goof balls who believed bodily functions were the source of all humor?

The poor prune’s reputation as a laxative may be unfortunate because it overshadows the fact that prunes are not only sweet and tasty, they’re also a rich source of nutrients!

Did you know just one prune contains up to five percent of the recommended daily intake of many essential minerals and vitamins, in addition to its legendary dietary fiber?

Not a fan of prunes? You’re not alone. In fact, women ages 25 to 54 react so negatively to the idea of prunes, the California Prune Board pressured the FDA to change their name to the more appealing “dried plums” (which they technically are!)

And it worked! Sales of the super-healthy purple fruit have hit new heights! But prunes (or shall we call them dried plums?) are proving to be far more than a digestion remedy.

Because they contain high levels of phytonutrients called phenols, prunes can protect the brain from free radical damage and can help prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Prunes and plums help prevent Type 2 diabetes and obesity. They’re high in the soluble fiber that help keep blood sugar levels stable.

The soluble fiber in prunes also helps lower cholesterol, improves bone health and is a good source of vitamin K and beta carotene, nutrients that can actually make you happier! So you see, my childhood song is true! The “more you eat, the better you feel!”

Still, when it comes to constipation, the prune is a rock star--more effective than psyllium, according to recent studies. Only thirty calories, the soluble fiber in a prune also makes you fill up faster.

So for a whole bunch of reasons, I snack on prunes, chop them up in salads and oatmeal and include them in recipes, like this de-LISH dish from my friend, Susan Haber. This one's SO good, I make it for company!

### **Susan's Chicken Marbella**

*(adapted from the "Silver Palate" Cookbook)*

#### **Ingredients:**

½ cup olive oil  
½ cup red wine vinegar  
1 cup pitted prunes  
½ cup pitted Spanish green olives  
½ cup capers with a bit of juice  
6 bay leaves  
1 head of garlic, peeled and finely pureed  
¼ cup dried oregano  
Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
4 chickens (2 1/2 pounds each), quartered  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 cup dry, white wine  
¼ cup fresh Italian (flat-leaf) parsley or fresh cilantro, finely chopped

#### **Directions:**

1. Combine olive oil, vinegar, prunes, olives, capers and juice, bay leaves, garlic, oregano and salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the chicken and stir to coat. Cover bowl and refrigerate overnight.
2. Preheat oven to 350.
3. Arrange chicken in a single layer in one or two large, shallow baking pans and spoon marinade over it evenly. Sprinkle chicken pieces with brown sugar and pour white wine around them.
4. Bake, basting frequently with pan juices, until thigh pieces yield clear yellow (rather than pink) juice when pricked with a fork, 50 min. to 1 hour.
5. With a slotted spoon, transfer chicken, prunes, olives and capers to a serving platter. Moisten with a few spoonfuls of the pan juices and sprinkle generously with parsley or cilantro. Pass the remaining pan juices in a sauceboat.

Soooooo good! Enjoy ☺

