

# Foods for Ageless Beauty

## Nourishing Skin from Inside and Out

Using naturally effective skincare products and eating foods that fortify and foster healthy cells works to renew, repair and rejuvenate skin for lasting beauty.



by Renée Loux

Many authorities have good reason to champion the fact that food nutrients such as antioxidants, anti-inflammatory compounds and omega oils are now showing up in personal care products. According to studies published in the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, *Food and Chemical Toxicology* and *Environmental Health Perspectives*, skin can absorb up to 60 percent of what we apply to it. So, feeding skin high-quality ingredients may be as critical as the food we eat.

It's common knowledge that drinking a sufficient amount of pure water is essential for overall health and radiant skin. Here is a look at how other recommended foods contribute to ageless beauty.

**Avocados:** Avocados are abundant in skin-beautifying goodies: omega-3 fatty acids, which support healthy, flexible, strong cell membranes to ensure that nutrients can enter cells and waste can be removed; antioxidant vitamins A and E; fortifying B-complex vitamins; lecithin, to protect and strengthen cell walls; and potassium, to support new cell growth. They also host a portfolio of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds—including phytosterols, carotenoids, flavonoids, zinc and folate—that fight free radicals and repair, soothe and renew skin and tissue on a cellular level.



### Blueberries:

The Tufts University Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging reports that blueberries contain some of the highest antioxidant levels of any food, especially when fully ripe, and teem with skin-healing, anti-inflammatory properties. The deep, purple-blue color of these morsels is a reflection of the pigment-rich antioxidant phytonutrients, called anthocyanins, shown to improve the integrity of collagen in skin and inhibit photoaging (sun damage), according to a study in the *Journal of Photochemistry and Photobiology*.



**Chocolate:** Chocolate offers a wealth of antioxidant catechins (like those found in green tea), and according to the National Academy of Sciences and the *European Journal of Nutrition*, works to improve hydration, skin density and circulation of blood to skin tissues, for a more youthful, glowing complexion.

*Scientific American* and the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* report that chocolate is also a supreme source of



procyanidins, which counter skin damage and help protect it while stimulating cellular growth and renewal. Dark chocolate offers the most beautifying benefits per bite, so look for 65 percent or higher cocoa content, and keep the portions small to mindfully manage calorie and fat intake.

### Cruciferous Vegetables:

The crucifer family—including cabbage, broccoli, kale and radishes—is loaded with skin-beautifying compounds. According to studies by the National Academy of Sciences, its sulfur-containing phytonutrients boost the body's natural detoxification enzymes to combat and repair damage to skin. Low in calories, these mineral-dense and antioxidant-rich veggies are packed with carotenoid antioxidants, which help neutralize carcinogens and oxidative stress on skin, reduce inflammation and bolster immune response. They also contain isothiocyanates, which research published by *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* shows, specifically guard against breast cancer.



### Dark Leafy Greens:

Dark leafy vegetables, such as collard greens, parsley, spinach and Swiss chard, offer more nutrients with fewer calories than any other food. Like cruciferous veggies, they're packed with carotenoid antioxidants. Green veggies are also an excellent source of vitamins A and C, which the body needs to produce and regulate the sebum in our skin and hair follicles for healthy, well-conditioned skin and a supple complexion.



**Green Tea:** Green tea is infused with a potent portfolio of age-defying antioxidants. Because green tea is minimally processed, of all the teas, it offers the



most antioxidant polyphenols, including a specific catechin believed to inhibit cancer and also beautify the skin.

### Micro- and Macro-algae:

Micro-algae, including blue-green algae, chlorella and spirulina, are among the most concentrated sources of a full spectrum of beautifying vitamins and minerals for skin and hair and are easy for the body to absorb. These single-celled plants contain one of the highest sources by weight of protein, beta-carotene, nucleic acids (RNA/DNA) and chlorophyll of any food on the planet, according to studies published by the American Society for Microbiology. Micro-algae are available in capsules or tablets, as well as in powder form for powerhouse smoothies.



Ocean-growing seaweed (macro-algae) contains more minerals and trace minerals than any other food, according to research published by *Food Chemistry*—10 to 20 times more than many land vegetables. Long prized for their beautifying effects on skin and hair, sea vegetables are an abundant source of antioxidant vitamins A, C and E, as well as B-complex vitamins, including B<sub>12</sub>, for glowing skin; plus they have the unique ergosterol, which converts into vitamin D<sub>2</sub> in the body to support healthy skin cell metabolism and growth. Look for sea veggies arame, dulse, hijiki, nori and wakame for a concentrated source of age-defying nutrition.

**Omega Oils:** Healthy oils, including omega fatty acids, grow and nourish healthy, glowing skin, strong nails and lustrous hair. They act as a conditioner for skin, maintaining and supporting healthy, flexible, strong cell membranes to ensure that nutrients can enter cells and waste can be removed.



Uncooked oils offer many beautifying benefits; because many nutrients are damaged and destroyed by heat—the fresher and less refined the oil, the better. Foods rich in omegas include flax seed and oil; olives and olive oil; pumpkin seed and oil; walnuts; and winter squash.

**Raw Honey:** With an ample spread of vitamins and minerals, such as antioxidant vitamins A, C and E; skin-supportive vitamins D and K; amino acids; and fortifying, reparative B-complex vitamins, raw honey's combined flower nectar and enzymes are laden with beautifying nutrients, antioxidants, anti-inflammatory and healing compounds. The benefits are largely determined by the honey's source and the environmental conditions in which the bees live.



**Red Wine:** Loaded with beneficial antioxidant and anti-inflammatory flavonoids, red wine is a well-known source of cell-protecting resveratrol. Concentrated in the skin of grapes and championed for anti-aging and anticancer properties in studies published by the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology and Anticancer Research*, resveratrol appears to protect the skin against the sun's ultraviolet radiation, notes research in *Neoplasia*. Cabernet Sauvignon grapes contain some of the highest concentration of age-defying antioxidants.



So, eat and drink up!

*Renée Loux is a celebrated green expert, organic chef, restaurateur and media personality and the co-founder of Andalous Naturals. She has authored four books, including Easy Green Living and The Balanced Plate. Visit ReneeLoux.com.*

# Recipes for Ageless Beauty

by Renée Loux

Beautify your body and skin from the inside out with these recipes that pair age-defying nutrients and nourishing ingredients with incredible taste and texture.

## Chocolate-Avocado Parfait with Blueberries & Mint

Chocolate and avocado may sound like an unusual couple, but when these antioxidant- and omega-rich champions get together, the results are scrumptious.

Yields: 4-8 servings

*2 cups diced avocado*  
*½ cup plus 2 Tbsp maple syrup*  
*2-4 Tbsp organic evaporated cane juice or sugar (optional)*  
*2 Tbsp coconut oil (optional; look for a mild aroma)*  
*1-2 tsp alcohol-free vanilla extract*  
*1 tsp balsamic vinegar (aged is best)*  
*½ tsp shoyu (organic soy sauce)*  
*1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder*  
*1 pint blueberries*  
*Handful of fresh mint leaves*

1. In a food processor, blend avocado, maple syrup, organic sugar, coconut oil, vanilla extract, balsamic and shoyu until smooth and creamy.

2. Sift the cocoa powder to remove lumps, using a simple metal strainer. Add cocoa powder to the avocado mixture and blend until very smooth. If time allows, let the mixture rest, covered in the fridge for an hour, for flavors to marry and develop.

3. Serve slightly chilled or at room temperature. Place a few blueberries in the bottom of a wine, parfait or martini glass.

Top with a generous dollop of chocolate-avocado mixture and garnish with more blueberries and chopped mint.

## Green Tea Chai Frappé

Green tea and chai spices blend together for a delicious boost of antioxidants and liquid nourishment. Fresh almond milk is easy to make, calcium-rich and highly digestible; just blend soaked almonds with water and strain. In a pinch, raw almond butter may be used.

Blend with ice to make a frozen frappé or warm gently on a cool, crisp day.

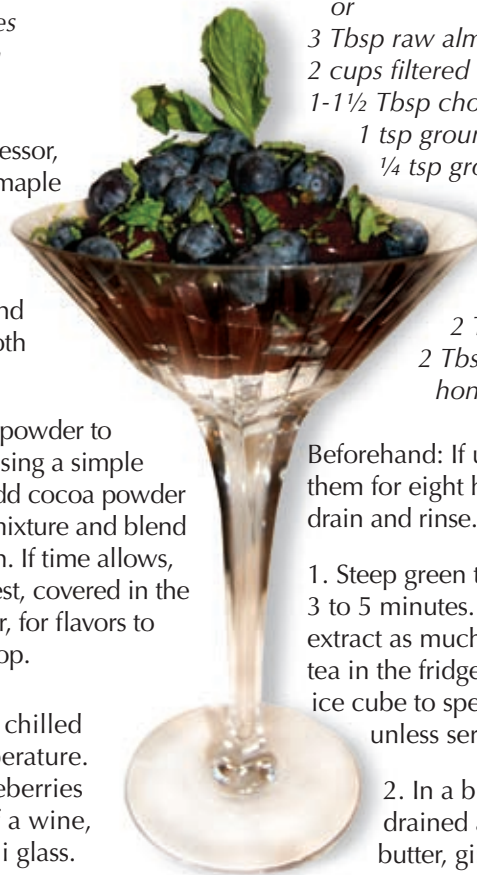
Yields: 2-4 servings

*2 green tea bags*  
*2 cups hot filtered water*  
*1 cup raw almonds, soaked eight hours in filtered water, drained and rinsed*  
*or*  
*3 Tbsp raw almond butter*  
*2 cups filtered water*  
*1-1½ Tbsp chopped ginger*  
*1 tsp ground cinnamon*  
*¼ tsp ground nutmeg*  
*Pinch of ground cloves*  
*Pinch of sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste*  
*2 Tbsp maple syrup to taste*  
*2 Tbsp agave nectar or raw honey to taste*

Beforehand: If using raw almonds, soak them for eight hours in filtered water, drain and rinse.

1. Steep green tea bags in hot water for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove and squeeze to extract as much liquid as possible. Cool tea in the fridge or freezer (or drop in an ice cube to speed the cooling process), unless served warm.

2. In a blender, add cooled tea, drained almonds or almond butter, ginger, spices, maple,



and agave or honey and blend all until super-smooth. Start with less sweeteners and add more to taste.

3. Pour through a strainer or sieve to separate pulp. Press with the back of a large spoon to extract as much liquid as possible.

4. Return to blender and blend with ice for a frosty frappé, or warm over low heat to warm the spirit.

## Massaged Greens

Leafy greens respond well to a good rubbing with oil, with a pinch of salt and seasoning. Fresh herbs always taste great. Keep it simple or add green onion, garlic and ginger for a tasty variation.

Yields: 2-4 servings

*6 cups chopped greens: any type of kale, spinach, chard or mixture*  
*2 Tbsp olive oil*  
*1 Tbsp flax oil or additional olive oil*  
*1 Tbsp umeboshi plum vinegar or lemon juice*  
*2 tsp shoyu*  
*1 tsp agave nectar or maple syrup (optional)*  
*2-3 green onions, chopped (optional)*  
*1-2 cloves garlic, pressed (optional)*  
*2-3 tsp ginger, finely grated (optional)*  
*Sea salt to taste*  
*1½ cups or more of chopped basil or parsley*  
*Pinch of fresh oregano, thyme or marjoram (optional)*

1. Wash the greens and remove any tough stems.

2. Chop finely and toss with olive oil, flax oil, umeboshi plum vinegar and/or lemon, shoyu, agave or maple, green onion, garlic and ginger.

3. Use freshly cleaned hands to massage with love, paying attention to tougher parts.

4. Allow to stand and marinate, rubbing now and again for an hour or two.

5. Toss in herbs and allow to stand 10 minutes to absorb flavors; stores well for a day or two.

*Recipes are courtesy of Renée Loux. For more recipes, visit ReneeLoux.com.*

## Honey Avocado Masque (for normal to dry skin)



Honey and avocado are a luscious blend to nourish skin. As an emollient, avocado is rich in oils, vitamins and minerals, and the honey supplies antioxidants and enzymes. Lemon juice is a natural source of alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) for skin renewal. Together, they yield velvety skin.

*1 avocado*  
*1½ Tbsp raw honey*  
*1 Tbsp lemon juice*

1. Mash avocado and blend with honey and lemon juice in a small food processor or blender until smooth.

2. Cleanse the face.

3. Steam face to open pores over a hot pot of water; or drench a washcloth with steaming hot water, wring out, let cool to a comfortable touch and cover cleaned face with it for two minutes.

4. Apply avocado honey mixture evenly over all parts of the face, avoiding the eyes. Let stand for 15 minutes.

5. Wash off with warm water, followed by a cool water rinse. Apply natural toner or face spray and moisturizer.

### Variations on the theme

Exfoliation for dry skin: Mix 2 Tbsp rice flour thoroughly with the avocado and honey. Apply as directed.

Exfoliation for oily skin: Mix 2 Tbsp ground oatmeal thoroughly with the avocado and honey. Apply as directed.

For both, wash off gently with warm water and a cloth, being mindful not to rub too hard, followed by a cool water rinse.

*Recipe courtesy of Renée Loux. For more recipes, visit ReneeLoux.com.*