**The Powerful Pomegranate**

1. **What are pomegranates?**
   1. If you're not familiar with the pomegranate, it is a red fruit with a tough outer layer; only the juice and the seeds inside are edible. Pomegranate literally translates to "seeded apple."
   2. Sometimes referred to as the Chinese apple or "jewel of the winter" pomegranates are one of the world's most popular fruits.
   3. In North America, they're often overshadowed by more common fruits like apples and oranges, but once you learn how to eat them (it's not as hard as you might think), this is one fruit that can add valuable nutrition to your regular diet.
   4. The red fruit grows on small trees from pretty red flowers and is between a lemon and a grapefruit in size. The white flesh inside the thick skin is full of several hundred seeds.
   5. Pomegranates are grown as both a fruit crop and as ornamental trees or shrubs for parks and gardens.
2. **History of Pomegranates**
   1. The pomegranate is one of the world's most ancient foods. Native to the East, it can be traced through historical documents as far back as 4000 B.C.
   2. Throughout most of recorded history, our ancestors have had high regard for the pomegranate.Pomegranates have been enjoyed for thousands of years and are a symbol of hope and abundance in many cultures.
   3. The pomegranate originally came from Persia, or modern day Iran, and the western Himalayas.
   4. Pomegranates were highly valued in Ancient Egypt, and were part of the supply of fruits required in a pharaoh's residence. It was revered enough to have been painted on walls and tombs to symbolize life after death.
   5. The pomegranate had many uses, including the fruit as food, the juice as a tonic to kill parasites, the blossom was crushed to make a red dye, and the peel was used to dye leather.
   6. Its twigs were worn on Roman women's headdresses to signify marital status.
   7. In many cases, the pomegranate surpassed its status as a highly celebrated source of food, and became part of the lore and legends of a culture. It was celebrated by the Buddha, and was considered one of the three blessed fruits, often being represented in Buddhist art.
3. **Health Benefits of Pomegranates**
   1. Great source of antioxidants.
   2. May provide anti-inflammatory properties.
   3. Potent anti-cancer and immune supporting effects.
   4. Lowers blood pressure.
   5. May have benefits to relieve or protect against depression and osteoporosis, heart attacks, and stroke.
   6. Seeds are rich in fiber and good source of vitamin C.
   7. Low in calories and fat.
4. **Buying, Storing, Preparing Pomegranates**
   1. **Buying:** Pomegranate juice is available year round, but you can purchase fresh pomegranates in most grocery stores from September through January. How to pick a pomegranate: When picking a pomegranate look for the largest, firmest, shiniest one available. It should feel heavy for its size so you know it's full of seeds. The skin can vary from a deep red to a reddish-brown color.
   2. **Storing:** When refrigerated in a plastic bag, whole pomegranates keep for up to 2 months. When stored in the refrigerator, pomegranate seeds can last a week and in the freezer 3-4 months.
   3. **Preparing:**  If you've never eaten a pomegranate before you may be curious what part is actually edible, and what's not. If you cut a pomegranate in half, you'll find it's filled with juice-filled seed sacs called arils (about 600 of them in an average pomegranate), separated by thin white (and bitter) membranes.
   4. Arils are the "jewels" of the pomegranate, and they're the part you'll want to enjoy. Many people enjoy pomegranates alone as a snack, but you can also sprinkle the arils over salads or cooked dishes. Inside each aril is a crunchy fiber-rich seed. While some people spit them out, you can eat them whole, seed and all. So how do you get out the arils? The POM Council recommends this simple three-step process:
      1. Cut off the crown, then cut the pomegranate into sections
      2. Place the section in a bowl of water, then roll out the arils with your fingers (discard everything else)
      3. Strain out the water, then enjoy the arils whole, seeds and all
5. **Fun Facts**
   1. The Pomegranate Council in California believes that the pomegranate may have been the actual forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden, rather than the apple
   2. Pomegranates appear on many Greek and Jewish tables during the holidays. At weddings and at New Years, Greeks break a pomegranate on the ground for good luck.
   3. In Indian cuisine, dried pomegranate seeds flavor everything from spiced chickpeas to chutneys.
   4. In India the astringent white part is used as toothpaste with salt, pepper, and ginger. The juice, however, is highly tannic (like wine), and will stain teeth rather than clean them.
   5. The rind of the fruit and bark of the shrub are used in some traditional medicines to treat parasites. But unless you find yourself infected with a parasite in an orchard of pomegranates with no access to modern anti-parasitic medicine, you’re better off calling your doctor!