

Celery and the Evolving ‘Superfood’ Movement

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August 2019

There has been much recent attention and trends favoring celery and celery juice. This is perhaps just the latest in a number of “superfood” trends. Some longer term ones like blueberries, green tea, broccoli or spinach. And, others that have seemed to enter the scene much more recently; like acai berries, goji berries, and kale.

But, with any such trends – beyond the potential economic opportunity – it is worth considering the origins of these trends. Regardless of the apparent benefits of celery juice, it seems clear enough that this “superfood” trend is born of influence from bloggers and celebrities; not medical professionals.

Superfoods: What are they?

Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD provides the following definition of superfoods on Medicinenet.com:

“A non-medical term popularized in the media to refer to foods that can have health-promoting properties such as reducing one's risk of disease or improving any aspect of physical or emotional health. So-called superfoods may have an unusually high content of antioxidants, vitamins, or other nutrients. ...It is important to note that there is no accepted medical definition of a superfood.”¹

The Celery “Movement”

Anthony William is credited with starting the celery “movement”. Of note, Mr. William has no medical license or nutrition certifications. He is a #1 New York Times best-selling author of several books on natural food cures under the series name of “Medical Medium”. Through his many books, his website (MedicalMedium.com), and his presence all over social media ([Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [SoundCloud](#)), William has become a real force in terms of influencing so many on the benefits of celery.

And, what better way to further enhance the strength of a movement than with celebrity endorsements. The growth of this celery trend is further magnified by an impressive list of celebrities, including #1-ranked tennis champion Novak Djokovic, CEO of AT&T Communications John Donovan, and a slew of Hollywood actors such as Sylvester Stallone, Liv Tyler, Robert Di Niro, and Gwyneth Paltrow.

The Science behind the Celery Trend

What William and the celery movement do not have is a ringing endorsement from the medical community. At least not as a superfood.

William is a huge proponent of drinking 16 ounces of the "miracle superfood" first thing in the morning for its "potent healing properties" and "incredible ability to create sweeping improvements for all kinds

¹ Conrad Stöppler, Melissa. “Superfoods definition”. MedicineNet. Reviewed on December 21, 2018. Available at: <https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=125459>. Accessed on August 30, 2019.

of health issues"-including improving gut health, fighting cancer, clearing skin, flushing out viruses, and more.²

Sandra Arévalo is a registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She addressed the topic in a discussion with Shape magazine earlier this year:

'[F]oods that provide 20 percent or more daily value of nutrients are recognized to have high nutritional value.' The only nutrient celery would be considered a 'superfood' for is vitamin K-it contains 23 percent of your daily value. Which is good, but not great-compared to kale and Swiss chard, which have more than 300 percent of your daily value per serving, for example.

'Some of the antioxidant properties of celery extract have been linked to increased fertility and lowering blood glucose and serum lipid levels,' says Arévalo. A 2017 review of celery studies found that celery's flavonoid and polyphenol content may reduce inflammation, cancer risk, diabetes, and more. However, further research (including the amount needed to reap these benefits) is needed to conclude that there is any direct link, she says.³

Regarding William's claim that you should be drinking 16 ounces of celery juice first thing in the morning to gain the most benefits, this really cannot be substantiated by experts. Jessica Crandall Snyder, a registered dietitian and nutritionist at Vital RD notes that "[y]ou are typically dehydrated in the morning when you wake up, so drinking a big glass of celery juice first thing might make it seem like you're getting more benefit than you actually are".⁴

Celery is, in fact, mostly made up of water. One might conclude that a person would experience much the same effects by simply drinking water. Indeed, it is further worth noting that the 'superfood' contribution of vitamin K is better absorbed along with fat. That means that taking it on an empty stomach first thing in the morning may not be as beneficial.⁵

Conclusion

The point here is not to find fault with celery and its likely benefits as a source of key nutrients. One might simply conclude that the trend is worthy of attention, given the attention to the products associated with the newfound interest in celery. Beyond Williams own success and the bandwagon attention from which a host of celebrities have also benefited, there is some clear evidence of commercial success with celery-based products. A brief [search for celery juice on Amazon.com](#) would seem to reveal as much.

One might also conclude that interest in celery as a 'superfood' represents a watershed moment in the role of celebrity and social media in influencing our health choices.

² Shiffer, Emily. "Celery Juice Is All Over Instagram, So What's the Big Deal?" Shape. June 24, 2019. Available at: <https://www.shape.com/healthy-eating/healthy-drinks/celery-juice-food-trend>. Accessed on August 30, 2019.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*