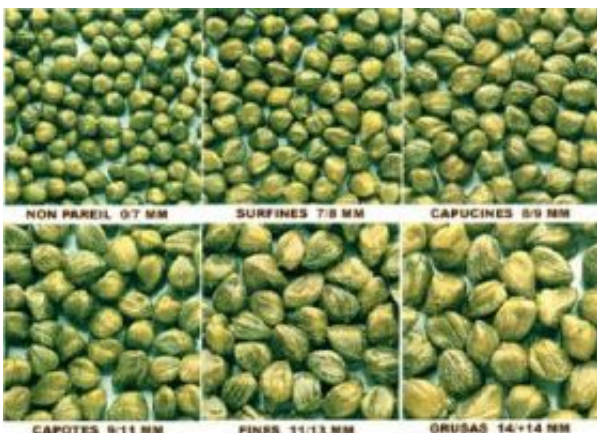


Tiny capers pack big disease-fighting punch

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Tiny capers, shown in different sizes, are rich in disease-fighting antioxidants. Credit: Courtesy of Victoria Packing Corp.

Capers, used in such culinary delights as chicken piccata and smoked salmon, may be small. But they are an unexpectedly big source of natural antioxidants that show promise for fighting cancer and heart disease when added to meals, particularly meats, researchers in Italy are reporting in the current (Oct. 17) issue of ACS' *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

The flower buds of a small bush, capers have been used for centuries in Mediterranean cuisine, where they provide a salty tang and decorative flair to a variety of meats, salads, pastas and other foods.

In the new study, Maria A. Livrea and colleagues note that other foods in

the so-called Mediterranean diet have gotten plenty of attention for their health benefits. Capers, however, have been largely overlooked.

Their laboratory study involved adding caper extracts to grilled ground-turkey, and analyzing byproducts formed during simulated digestion. The scientists found that caper-extract helped prevent the formation of certain byproducts of digested meat that have been linked by others to an increased risk of cancer and heart disease.

That beneficial effect occurred even with the small amounts of caper typically used to flavor food. "Caper may have beneficial health effects, especially for people whose meals are rich in fats and red meats," the study concluded.

Source: ACS

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