

# June Bloom

I love the month of June for so many reasons. First and foremost, it reminds me of my grandmother. She was born on June 1<sup>st</sup> and I always think of her this time of year. My daughter once asked me if I think of colors when I think of people, because apparently everyone she meets she associates with a color. I think that I must do that a little too, because when I think of my grandmother I think of the color apricot. Not too orange, not too pink, but somewhere right in the middle. Do you ever wonder what gives an apricot this deep golden hue? It's the beta-carotene, an antioxidant that helps strengthen the immune system. Apricots are loaded with this nutrient and many more.

Apricots provide a good amount of our daily fiber, iron, and even potassium needs. That's why there is more to this little fruit than meets the eye. Coincidentally, they just so happen to bloom in June. They make great jam too, especially if you wait until the end of the growing season, when the fruit is at its peak of ripeness. That way, you can get away with using fruit juice and low or no sugar pectin. Jam not your jam☺? You can simply dice them up and freeze them to be used later in smoothies, on top of yogurt, in muffins, or even cookies. You can also pit, quarter, and sauté this fruit with olive oil and garlic and pair them with poultry or grilled meats. They can even be added to stews!

Dried apricots are extremely versatile as well. I ate my weight in dried apricots as a kid. Unbeknownst to me, the dried version of this fruit had sulfur dioxide in it. As a kid, you don't really pay attention to the ingredients in your food, but now I think this might have been a contributing factor to the development of my sensitivity to sulfites later in life. Thankfully, I have found a dried apricot at my local grocers that is sulfite-free. I like to dice them up and add them to stuffing, rice pilaf, or any grain dish. Toss them in a bowl with an assortment of seeds and nuts and you've got yourself some

*Nutrition Notes by Natalie*

trail mix. Fun fact, the act of drying this fruit allows your body to absorb its nutrients better.

On that note, here's a great recipe to try:

## **Apricot Chicken with Minty Pesto**

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts

½ cup sliced almonds

2 ounces of goat cheese

3 Tablespoons of dried apricots cut into ¼ inch pieces

⅓ cup plain breadcrumbs

1 large egg, beaten

1 Tablespoon olive oil

***Preheat oven to 375°***

***Combine almonds, goat cheese, and apricots. Stuff each breast with ¼ of the mixture.***

***Season with salt and pepper***

***Dip in egg and dredge in breadcrumb/remaining almond mixture***

***Cook chicken in olive oil on the stove top for 3-4 minutes until golden brown then transfer to the oven until cooked through, around 15 minutes.***

## **Minty Pesto**

3 cups lightly packed fresh mint

¼ cup sliced almonds

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a food processor, combine all the ingredients and process until finely chopped.

Summer is fast approaching and so are all of the wonderful seasonal harvests at your local farmer's market. Make sure to take advantage of the fresh fruits and vegetables available, including our featured fruit, the apricot.