

# 5 “SUPERFOOD” VS. “REGULAR” FOOD COMPARISONS THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU

The claim: “Superfoods” are always the best choice if you're focused on your health.  
The reality: Eating well goes way beyond the nutrition label.



### WHITE RICE

“Bad” because it’s refined, high-carb, and low-fiber.

### THE CLAIMS



### QUINOA

The “superfood” because it’s a whole grain high in protein, fiber, and more.



## BEYOND THE NUTRITION LABEL

### WHITE RICE IS...

- Low in fiber, so may be ideal if you have certain digestive issues.
- Enriched in most developed countries, so many nutrients stripped during processing are added back in.
- Beneficial for people looking to gain weight and athletes with high carb needs, since it’s easy to digest.

### QUINOA IS...

- High in quality protein compared to other grains, so a particularly good choice for plant-based eaters.
- Filling due to more fiber, protein, and resistant starch, so it could be a better option for fat loss or weight maintenance.
- Rich in phytonutrients quercetin, kaempferol, and squalene, which may help fight heart disease and cancer.

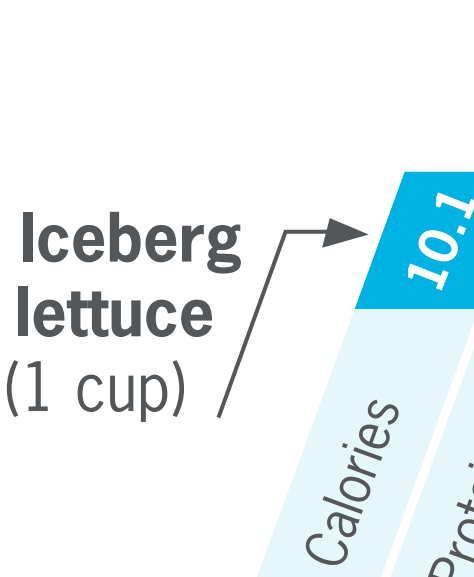
Significant in various cultures.

Naturally gluten-free.

- Possibly easier to overeat because of its low fiber content and easy digestibility.
- Contaminated with arsenic (mostly a consideration for U.S.-produced rice; jasmine and basmati from North India, North Pakistan, and Nepal tend to have lowest levels).

- Sometimes too filling for people trying to gain weight but struggling with appetite.
- A carrier of saponin, phytic acid, and oxalate, which can reduce mineral absorption and increase risk of kidney stones in sensitive people.

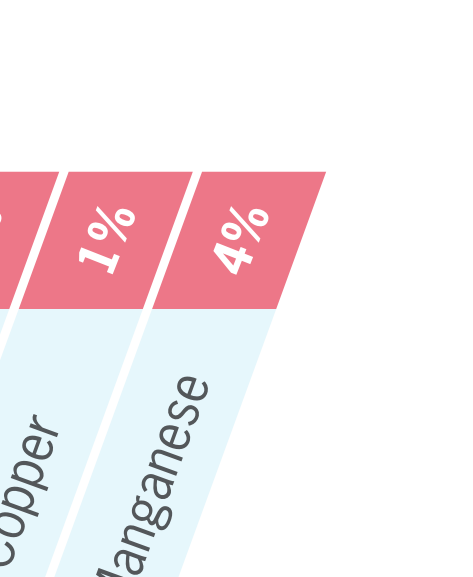
Takeaway: Enriched white rice mostly holds its own in nutrient content; both grains can be good choices depending on context and goals.



### ICEBERG LETTUCE

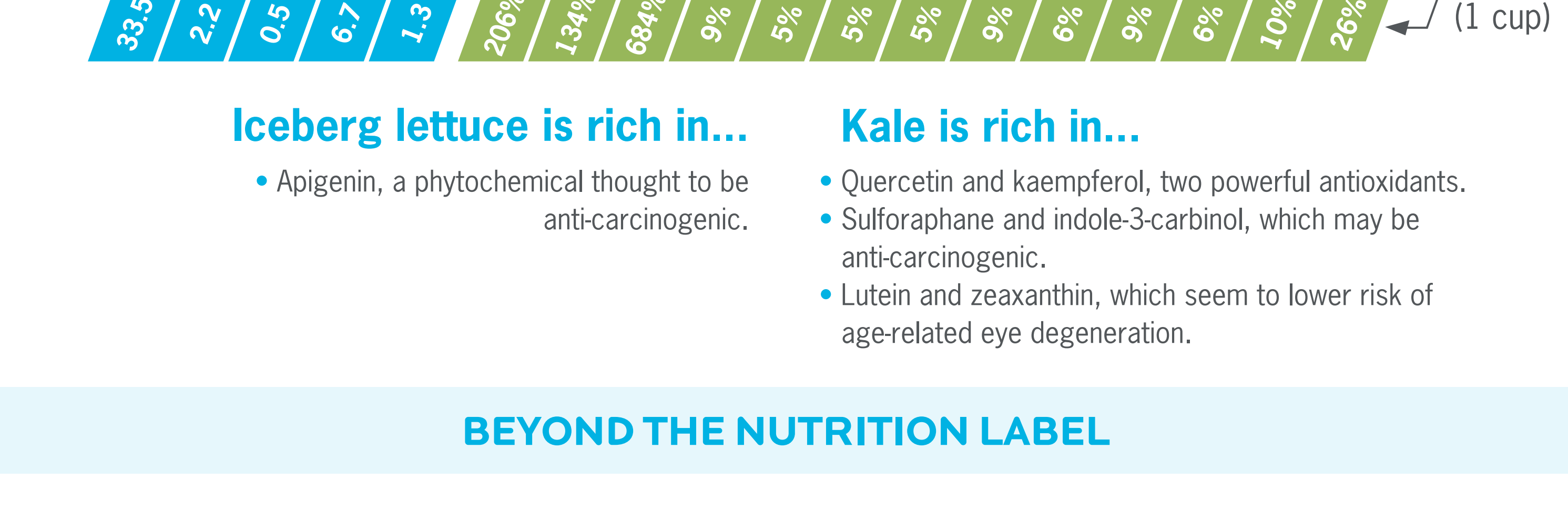
A “total waste” because of its lack of nutrients.

### THE CLAIMS



### KALE

The “superfood” because it’s packed with vitamins, antioxidants, and fiber.



- ### Iceberg lettuce is rich in...

  - Apigenin, a phytochemical thought to be anti-carcinogenic.
- ### Kale is rich in...

  - Quercetin and kaempferol, two powerful antioxidants.
  - Sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol, which may be anti-carcinogenic.
  - Lutein and zeaxanthin, which seem to lower risk of age-related eye degeneration.

## BEYOND THE NUTRITION LABEL


### ICEBERG LETTUCE MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Are more likely to eat a salad if you use it as a base.
- Can only stomach kale with an excessive amount of butter, salad dressing, or oil.
- Will happily eat a large quantity of it, but can only manage a couple of bites of kale.

### KALE MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Like it.
- Want to expand your vegetable repertoire or try a more “exotic” vegetable.
- You enjoy the “meatiness” or thick texture it provides in Super Shakes.

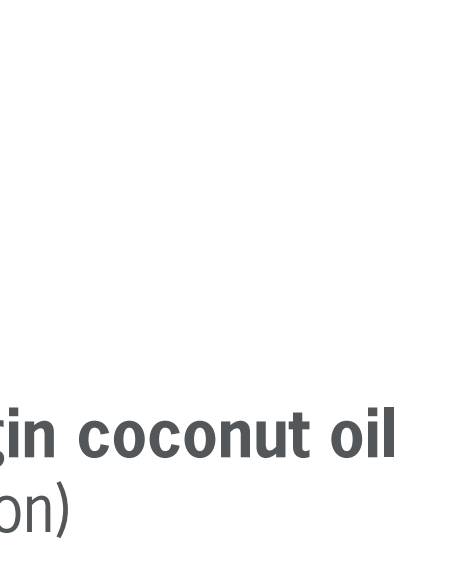
Takeaway: Kale beats iceberg lettuce in nutrient content, but iceberg’s crunch, water content, and mellow flavor also make it a good option for many people.



### OLIVE OIL

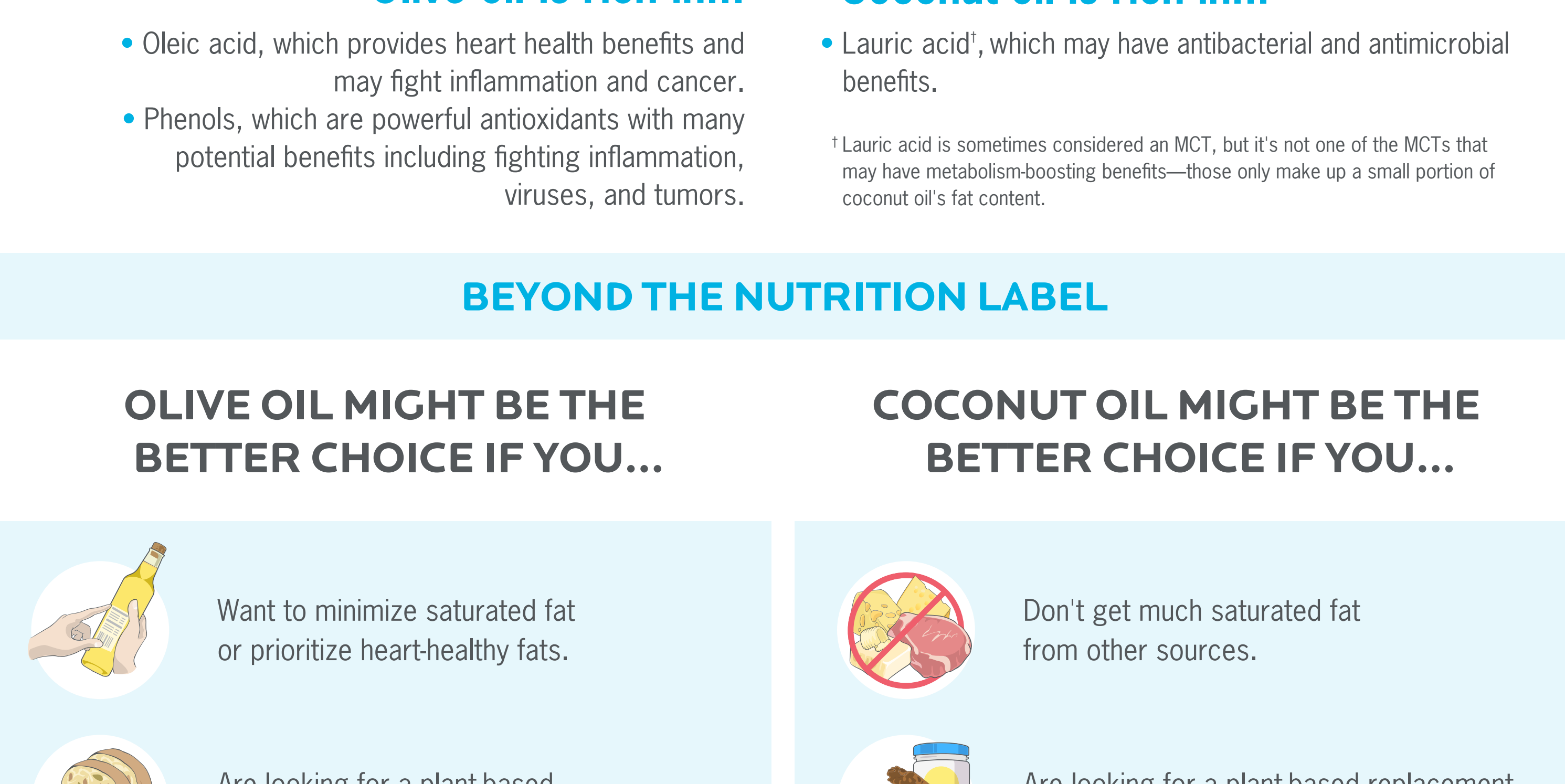
Rich in vitamins, anti-inflammatory compounds, and healthy fats... but it’s “old news.”

### THE CLAIMS



### COCONUT OIL

The “superfood” because it contains metabolism-boosting medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs).



- ### Olive oil is rich in...

  - Oleic acid, which provides heart health benefits and may fight inflammation and cancer.
  - Phenols, which are powerful antioxidants with many potential benefits including fighting inflammation, viruses, and tumors.
- ### Coconut oil is rich in...

  - Lauric acid<sup>1</sup>, which may have antibacterial and antimicrobial benefits.

<sup>1</sup> Lauric acid is sometimes considered an MCT, but it’s not one of the MCTs that may have metabolism-boosting benefits—those only make up a small portion of coconut oil’s fat content.

## BEYOND THE NUTRITION LABEL

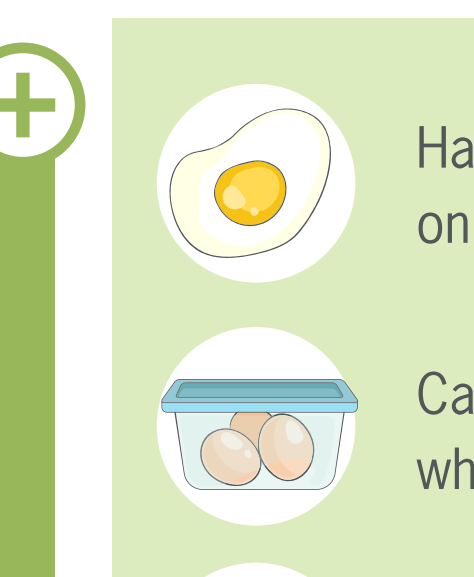
### OLIVE OIL MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Want to minimize saturated fat or prioritize heart-healthy fats.
- Are looking for a plant-based replacement for butter.
- Want to replace other vegetable oils in salad dressings or for oven roasting.

### COCONUT OIL MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Don’t get much saturated fat from other sources.
- Are looking for a plant-based replacement for butter or shortening in baked goods.
- Want to add a coconut flavor to a savory dish.

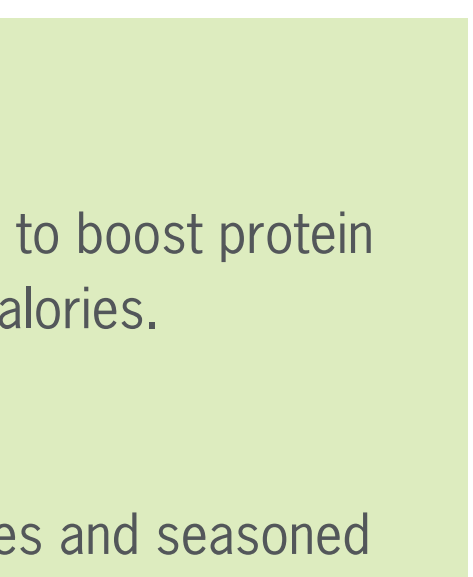
Takeaway: Olive oil wins out over coconut oil nutritionally, but the best choice depends on your overall fat intake and how you’re cooking.



### WHOLE EGGS

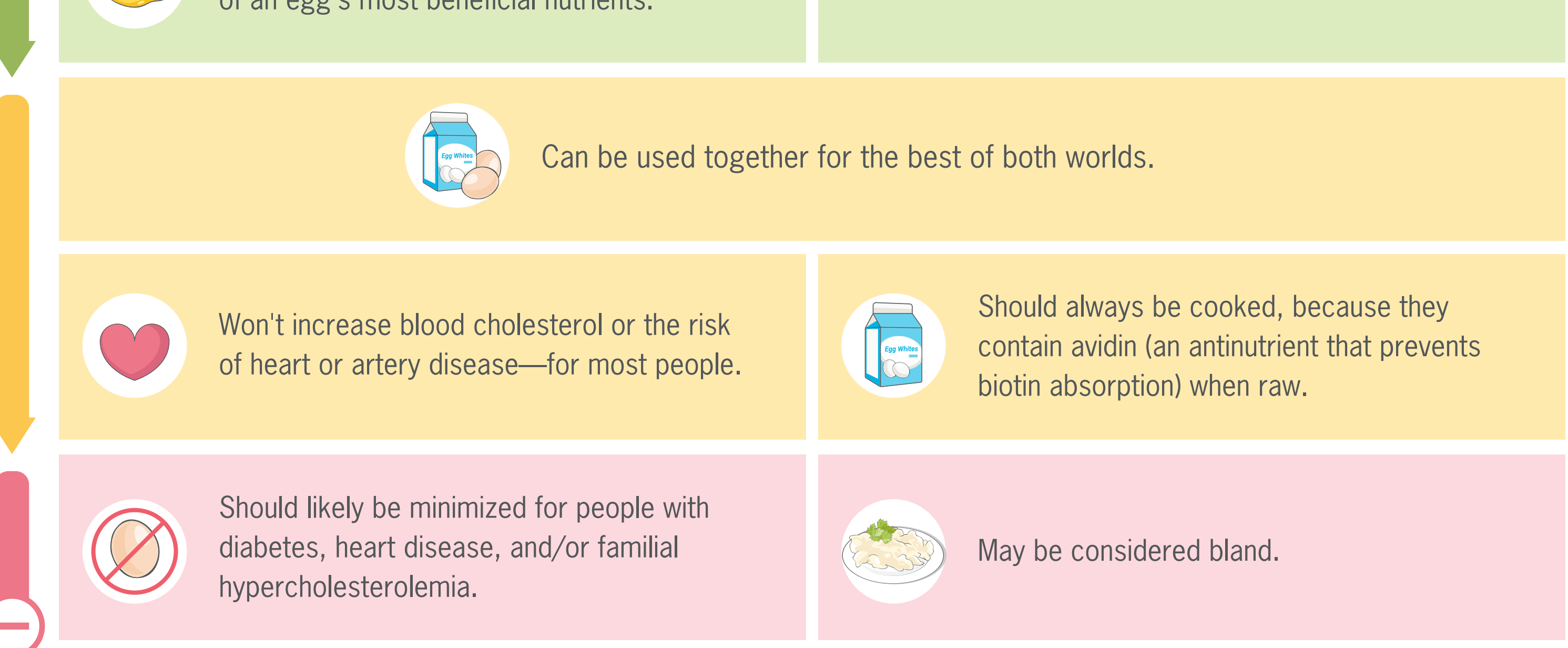
Whole eggs raise your cholesterol and are bad for your heart.

### THE CLAIMS



### EGG WHITES

Since they’re basically pure protein, it’s always better to choose egg whites.



- ### Egg yolks are rich in...

  - Choline, which plays an important role in brain function and eye health.
  - Lutein and zeaxanthin, which seem to lower risk of age-related eye degeneration.
- ### Egg whites are rich in...

  - Very high quality protein—one of the absolute best sources.

## BEYOND THE NUTRITION LABEL

### WHOLE EGGS...

- Have a distinct flavor and are tasty on their own.
- Can be hard-boiled for an easily portable whole-food snack.
- Include the yolk, which contains the majority of an egg’s most beneficial nutrients.

### EGG WHITES...

- Are ideal for anyone looking to boost protein intake with minimal added calories.
- Can be added to many dishes and seasoned creatively because their taste is neutral.

Can be used together for the best of both worlds.

- Won’t increase blood cholesterol or the risk of heart or artery disease—for most people.
- Should likely be minimized for people with diabetes, heart disease, and/or familial hypercholesterolemia.

- Should always be cooked, because they contain avidin (an antinutrient that prevents biotin absorption) when raw.
- May be considered bland.

Takeaway: Egg whites have fewer nutrients than whole eggs, but unless you have specific health conditions, the choice comes down to personal preference.



### BANANAS

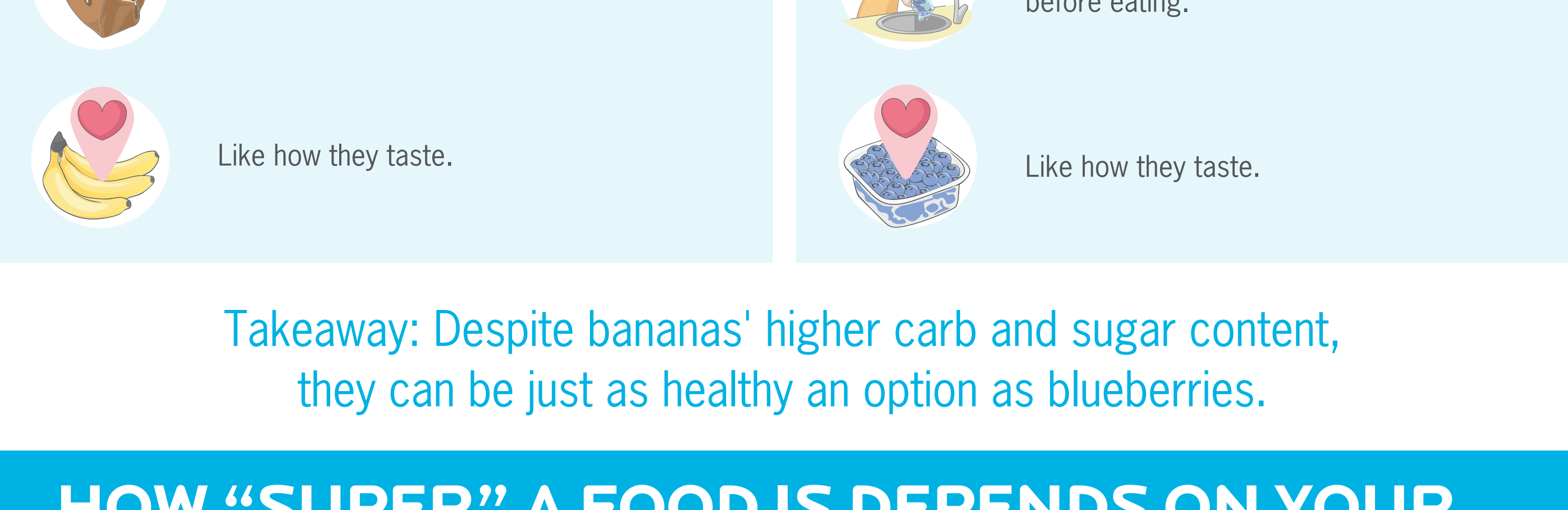
Are “fattening” because they’re higher in calories and carbs than other fruits.

### THE CLAIMS



### BLUEBERRIES

The “superfood” because of their cancer-fighting antioxidants.



- ### Bananas are rich in...

  - Catechins, which may reduce risk of heart disease.
  - Dopamine, which acts as an antioxidant.
  - Resistant starch, which can improve insulin sensitivity, lower blood sugar levels, and reduce appetite (the greener the banana, the more resistant starch).
- ### Blueberries are rich in...

  - Anthocyanidins and anthocyanins, both powerful antioxidants.
  - Flavonoids, which promote protective enzymes in the liver and have antiseptic properties.
  - Resveratrol, which may protect heart health.

## BEYOND THE NUTRITION LABEL

### BANANAS MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Need easily-digestible carbs before, during, or after a workout.
- Are looking for a good source of potassium and vitamins C and B6.
- Want an on-the-go snack.
- Like how they taste.

### BLUEBERRIES MIGHT BE THE BETTER CHOICE IF YOU...

- Are on a lower-carbohydrate diet.
- Are looking for a good source of vitamin C or K.
- Have time to wash and dry them before eating.
- Like how they taste.

Takeaway: Despite bananas’ higher carb and sugar content, they can be just as healthy an option as blueberries.

## HOW “SUPER” A FOOD IS DEPENDS ON YOUR...



### Goals



### Priorities



### Individual body

(allergies, intolerances, illnesses, medical conditions, etc.)



### Preferences



### Current diet

This is why we don’t deem foods “good” or “bad.”  
It’s about choosing more or less optimal foods FOR YOU.

## NO SINGLE FOOD WILL TRANSFORM YOUR DIET. BUT THESE TIPS MIGHT.



Eat slowly to 80% full.



Eat a wide variety of minimally-processed whole foods.



Consider how food preparation may affect nutrition.



Think “a little bit better.” Small improvements, done consistently, add up.

Pay attention. What foods make you feel good, and what foods don’t? Build your personal menu based on the foods that work for you—not whatever’s the “superfood” of the month.

\* Source for nutrition data: nutritiondata.self.com  
\*\* Nutrients with less than 5% of RDI for both foods have been omitted