

Faraway Fruit Makes Healthy Splash At Home

(NAPSA)—Some fruits that are common in other parts of the world are quickly becoming the apple of many Americans' eyes.

For instance, one of the hottest new fruit discoveries is acai, pronounced AH-sci-EE. It's the deep purple fruit of a palm tree that people in Brazil have been eating



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for centuries. The ABC news program "Good Morning America" included acai juice on its list, "Then vs. Now: The Next Big Things for 2006."

Acai has an exotic taste some describe as a mix between blueberries and red grapes. While whole acai berries can not be purchased in the United States because they are too fragile for shipping, their juice is available nationwide.

Healthful Benefits

The wild acai berry and its juice have a high concentration of antioxidants that help keep our bodies healthy. Antioxidants are substances found in plants that protect us by neutralizing free radicals, which can damage the body and lead to poor health.

Our bodies naturally produce free radicals, but environmental factors such as cigarette smoke, air pollution and stress can increase the body's free radical count even further. These highly reactive chemicals can damage healthy body tissue and have been linked to changes that can lead to premature aging and even cancer, heart disease and stroke. Antioxidants clean up free radicals and help prevent them from doing harm.



Many substances in fruits and vegetables act as antioxidants. That's just one reason why eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables every day is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Acai in particular contains vitamins A, C and E as well as more than 50 other types of antioxidants, including anthocyanin—the powerful antioxidant also found in red wine and blueberries.

A company called Bossa Nova manufactures a line of pure acai juices made with wild harvested acai berries and lightly sweetened with organic agave nectar, a natural sweetener. The company devoted five years to researching ways to maximize the total antioxidant value of acai juice before releasing its products on the market. The juice is available in the refrigerated section of grocery stores like Krogers, Shaws, Wild Oats, and Whole Foods Market, as well as at specialty and gourmet stores.

To learn more about acai, go to www.whatisacai.com or www.BossaUSA.com. For more information about antioxidants, visit www.5aday.org.

Note to Editors: Eighty-sixth in a series of columns by Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D., R.D., president and CEO of Produce for Better Health Foundation. More stories at www.napsnet.com. Search: "Pivonka."