



Significant Food Sources of Iron

Iron is an essential mineral, necessary for the formation of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood, and myoglobin, which carries oxygen in muscle. It is also part of several enzymes involved in energy production and cell diffusion. Iron deficiency is one of the most common nutritional deficiencies.

Iron absorption varies depending on the body's need for it, the form in which it is found in food, and a variety of other factors. Animal products such as liver, red meat, poultry, fish (especially oysters and clams), and eggs contain heme iron, the form known to be better absorbed. Plant foods like peas, beans, nuts, dried fruits, leafy green vegetables, and fortified breads or cereals all contain non-heme iron. However, vegetarians do not have a higher incidence of iron deficiency anemia than do meat eaters.

To enhance absorption of iron, vitamin C may be consumed concurrently. Many vegetables, such as broccoli and bok choy, which are high in iron are also high in vitamin C, so iron in these foods is well absorbed. Cooking in a cast iron skillet will increase iron content of food, particularly when the food is high in vitamin C.

The RDA for iron is 10 mg a day for adult men, and 18 mg a day for adult women.

	Amount	Milligrams
Seafood		
Clams	3 oz (9 large)	23.76
Oysters	3 oz (12 medium)	11.39
Shrimp	3 oz (15 large)	2.62
Trout	3 oz	2.07
Land animals		
Pork liver (organic only)	3 oz	15.40
Chicken liver (organic, only)	3 oz	7.27

Venison	3 oz	3.90
Steak	3 oz	2.60
Ground beef	3 oz	2.36
Chicken breast	3 oz	1.49
Turkey (light meat)	3 oz	1.20

Beans / Peas

Lentils	½ cup	3.30
Kidney beans	½ cup	2.60
Garbanzo beans	½ cup	2.35
Navy beans	½ cup	2.25
Lima beans	½ cup	2.25
Pinto beans	½ cup	2.20
Black eyed peas	½ cup	2.15
Black beans	½ cup	1.80
Soybeans (roasted)	½ cup	1.70
Tofu, firm	4 oz	1.30
Green split peas	½ cup	1.25

Grains

Buckwheat	½ cup	1.35
Wheat germ	2 Tbsp	1.28

Vegetables (cooked)

Swiss chard	1 cup	4.00
Dandelion green (raw)	1 cup	1.89
Brussels sprouts	1 cup	1.86
Bok choy	1 cup	1.76
Green beans	1 cup	1.60
Potato (with skin, baked)	1 medium	1.60
Spinach	1 cup	1.00
Mustard greens (boiled)	1 cup	1.00

Fruits

Pears (dried)	2 halves	1.50
Figs (dried)	3 whole	1.20
Prunes	6 halves	1.20
Peaches (dried)	2 halves	1.05

Miscellaneous

Spirulina, dried	1 oz	8.08
Molasses (blackstrap)	1 Tbsp	3.50
Kelp	1 cup, cooked	2.28
Pumpkin seeds	½ oz	2.12
Baking chocolate, unsweetened	1 oz	1.90
Basil	1 Tbsp	1.89
Sauerkraut	½ cup	1.73
Dill weed	1 Tbsp	1.50
Black olives	10	1.49
Brewer's yeast	1 Tbsp	1.38

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