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Oprah puts weight behind sardines

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Something very big happened for sardines: Oprah Winfrey's Web site named the fish one of its "25 superfoods to eat this year."

Although sardines and superfood aren't usually mentioned in the same breath, Winfrey's site declared: "Rich, delicious sardines not only contain more of the good stuff (omega-3s, calcium) and less of the bad (mercury) but are a sustainable choice -- i.e., these little guys are not on the verge of extinction."

Akin's registered dietician Mary Ann O'Dell said she understands why sardines are a worthy superfood.

"Well, I'm no sardine fan, but I know they are a very good source of those beneficial omega-3 fatty acids that have been in the news so much," O'Dell said about the often-canned fish available in most grocery stores.

"Increased intake of omega-3 essential fatty acids has been linked to reduced risk for heart disease, improved mood and brain function, and they are anti-inflammatory. They also contain some coenzyme Q10, an antioxidant that supports the heart. I could not find a level (how much CoQ10 they supply), but they are one of a few food sources for this nutrient. I think they are pretty low-calorie, low-carbohydrate and supply protein."

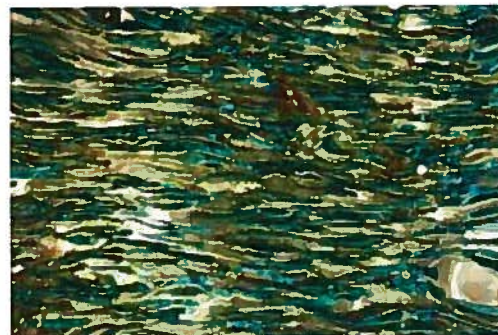
Cece Davis, dietitian and owner of Nutrition Consultants of Tulsa, Okla., called sardines "a little powerhouse."

"It's got quite a bit of calcium in it," she said. "Three ounces, which is typically about six (sardines), is 325 milligrams of calcium -- that's more than a cup of milk has in it."

Beyond the omega-3 benefits, Davis said sardines are "pretty darn high" in vitamin D. "Two sardines is 46 IUs," she said. "That's more than a cup of milk."

Overall, Davis said, "there's really no down side" to sardines.

"It's very reasonable in sodium and a good source of potassium. It's got six grams of protein in each two sardines. If you eat six sardines, then you're eating 18, 20 grams of protein. That's great. And two packed in oil is only 50



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