A Classic Puerto Rican Condiment May Help Reduce Breast Cancer Risk

It may be time to add some sofrito to your diet.

September 30, 2019 By Casey Halter

Looking for a tasty way to reduce your cancer risk? Eating sofrito, an oniony, garlicky condiment popular in Latin American cuisine but particularly so in Puerto Rican cooking, may help, suggests a new study published in Nutrition and Cancer.

The study found that women who ate sofrito—a popular foundation for stews, beans and rice dishes on the island––more than once a day had a 67% reduced breast cancer risk compared with women who didn't consume any. Consuming sofrito less frequently—for example, a couple of times a week, was also linked to breast cancer prevention, although not as dramatically. Researchers studied more than 600 women between 2008 and 2014 on the island of Puerto Rico.

According to study authors, the idea for the study stemmed from previous research suggesting that eating onions and garlic may have a protective effect against cancer. Researchers conducted their research in Puerto Rico specifically because, thanks to the condiment, many women already eat a lot of both vegetables. Onions and garlic are rich in flavonols and organosulfar compounds, which have been shown to have anticarcinogenic properties in both animal and human studies.

In addition, "Puerto Rico has lower breast cancer rates compared to the mainland U.S., which makes it an important population to study," said lead study author Gauri Desai, PhD, an epidemiology student at the University of Buffalo's School of Public Health and Health Professions.

This is the first population-based study to examine the association between onion and garlic consumption and breast cancer in Puerto Rico. Moving forward, researchers hope to conduct further cancer studies in Puerto Rico to get a better understanding of why rates for a variety of cancer-related diseases are so low on the island nation.

Want to give sofrito a try? It's a simple puree of onions and garlic, usually with sweet peppers and cilantro and sometimes other ingredients. You can make batches in advance and store it in the fridge for up to a month, or you can freeze it in ice cube trays, as in this recipe for authentic sofrito on the food blog, Island Girl Cooks.

For further reading, check out some other delicious ways to possibly ward off cancer.

To read the study, click here.

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