

Underrated Foods People Overlook

Iron, Magnesium, Protein, Biotin, Folate, Vitamin C & Vitamin A

Most people default to the same handful of foods for each nutrient — spinach for iron, oranges for vitamin C, chicken for protein. But plenty of everyday, affordable foods quietly deliver just as much (sometimes more) and get skipped simply because no one talks about them. Here are 5 overlooked foods for each of 7 key nutrients.

Iron

People reach for spinach and miss these stronger, easier sources

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Black Sesame Seeds (Til)	One of the richest iron sources around, but mostly limited to chikki or festival sweets.	Roast and powder, sprinkle over curd, rice, or smoothies daily.
Dried Figs (Anjeer)	Treated as an occasional sweet snack, rarely eaten for its actual iron content.	2-3 pieces a day, soaked overnight or eaten as-is.
Amaranth Leaves (Thotakura/Chaulai)	Often skipped for the more familiar spinach, despite having more iron per serving.	Cook as a simple sabzi or add to dal, just like palak.
Jaggery (Unrefined, Karupatti)	Used only as a sugar substitute, rarely recognized as an iron source.	Swap white sugar for a small piece in tea or desserts.
Quinoa	Known for protein, but its decent iron content usually goes unnoticed.	Use as a rice substitute 2-3 times a week.

Magnesium

Beyond almonds and dark chocolate, these are regularly thrown away or ignored

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Foxtail Millet (Thinai/Navane)	Overshadowed by rice and wheat, despite being a strong magnesium source.	Use in place of rice for a few meals a week.
Jackfruit Seeds	Usually thrown away with the fruit instead of being eaten.	Boil or roast and eat as a snack, or add to curries.
Raw Banana (Unripe)	Eaten only in sabzi form occasionally, rarely valued for its mineral content.	Use in curries or as a boiled side dish.
Drumstick Leaves (Moringa)	Grows in many backyards but rarely makes it to the plate regularly.	Add to dal or sabzi 2-3 times a week.
Tamarind (Puli)	Used purely for sourness in cooking, its mineral content goes unnoticed.	Use in regular cooking as your souring agent instead of avoiding it.

Protein

Beyond chicken and eggs, these everyday foods get dismissed as “not real protein”

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Chana Sattu	A Bihar staple that rarely travels to other regions' diets despite being protein-dense.	Mix with water and lemon as a drink, or use in parathas.
Hemp Seeds	Barely used in Indian cooking despite being a complete plant protein.	Sprinkle over salads, curd, or smoothies.
Foxtail / Little Millet	Seen as a “diet food” rather than recognized for its real protein content.	Cook like rice or use in upma.
Moong Dal Sprouts	Most people cook moong dal but skip sprouting it, which boosts its usable protein.	Sprout overnight and add to salads or a light stir-fry.
Peanuts (Groundnuts)	Dismissed as “just a snack” despite being one of the cheapest protein sources available.	A small handful daily, or as peanut chutney with meals.

Biotin

Most people only think of eggs — these everyday foods are skipped entirely

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Sweet Potato	Eaten occasionally as a snack, rarely recognized as a biotin source.	Boiled or air-fried as a side, 2-3 times a week.
Mushrooms	Not a regular part of most Indian diets despite being easy to cook.	Sauté lightly and add to sabzi or as a side dish.
Cauliflower	Usually just “gobi sabzi” — rarely thought of as a nutrient-dense choice.	Steam or roast lightly instead of deep-frying as pakoras.
Bananas	Eaten for quick energy, almost never thought of for biotin.	Keep as a regular daily fruit.
Almonds	Well known as a snack, but rarely connected to biotin specifically.	A small handful daily, soaked overnight if preferred.

Folate

Beyond leafy greens, these common foods are rarely eaten for folate

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Beetroot	Used mostly for color in salads, its folate content is rarely the reason people eat it.	Add raw to salads or lightly cooked into sabzi.
Sunflower Seeds	Treated as an occasional snack rather than a regular folate source.	Roast and sprinkle over salads, curd, or poha.
Black-Eyed Peas (Lobia/Alasande)	Used far less often than chana or rajma, despite being just as nutritious.	Use as a curry base 1-2 times a week, in place of your usual legume.
Papaya	Eaten for digestion, rarely recognized as a folate-rich fruit.	Keep as a regular breakfast fruit option.
Avocado	Still new to most Indian kitchens, so its folate content goes unnoticed.	Add to salads or toast, 1-2 times a week.

Vitamin C

Beyond oranges and lemons, these Indian staples are often overlooked

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Amla (Indian Gooseberry)	Grown locally and has more vitamin C than an orange, yet rarely eaten regularly.	Eat raw, as juice, or as murabba a few times a week.
Raw Mango (Kairi)	Mostly used for pickles, rarely valued for its vitamin C content.	Add to chutneys or eat with a pinch of salt as a snack.
Guava	Often skipped in favor of citrus fruits despite having more vitamin C.	Keep as a regular seasonal fruit snack.
Drumstick Leaves (Moringa)	Rarely considered a vitamin C source despite being nutrient-dense overall.	Add to dal or sabzi a few times a week.
Green Chilies	Used only for spice, but they're surprisingly high in vitamin C.	Use generously in cooking rather than avoiding them.

Vitamin A

Beyond carrots, these foods get passed over despite being just as rich

FOOD	WHY IT'S OVERLOOKED	HOW TO INCLUDE IT
Sweet Potato	Overshadowed by carrots as the go-to vitamin A vegetable.	Boiled or roasted as a side, swapped in for regular potato sometimes.
Pumpkin (Kaddu)	Underused as a vegetable despite being very rich in vitamin A.	Cook as a sabzi or add to sambar.
Dried Apricots	Rarely chosen as a snack compared to other dry fruits.	A few pieces as a snack, in place of biscuits.
Red Bell Pepper (Capsicum)	Used more for color in dishes than recognized for its vitamin A content.	Add to stir-fries or salads regularly.
Egg Yolk	Often discarded by people avoiding fat, losing out on a strong source of usable vitamin A.	Eat the whole egg, not just the egg white.

Note: This guide is for general education, not a prescribed diet plan. If you have a diagnosed deficiency, consult a doctor or dietitian for guidance specific to your needs.