



OHIO STATE

A L U M N I

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Beating cancer

Every day, people
across the university
share a singular goal.

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On the cover

Jessica Winter is a survivor, researcher and entrepreneur who is taking on cancer — again. This time on a microscopic level.

Photo by Jodi Miller



Scientists with the Center for Advanced Functional Foods Research and Entrepreneurship explore the benefits of a tomato-rich diet, including the newly developed “tangerine” tomato.

Food science

Eyeing diets to reduce risk

“We see foods as a form of prevention,
not so much as a cure.”

Photo by Kevin Fitzsimons



Steve Schwartz and his team at CAFFRE investigate why certain foods seem to aid in cancer prevention.

Big ideas can come in small packages.

In Steven Schwartz's office, the Ohio State professor of food science and technology keeps several tiny cans of tomato juice on a shelf. The drink — and other foods engineered by Schwartz and his team at the university's Center for Advanced Functional Foods Research and Entrepreneurship — may be a powerful cancer prevention tool.

"We really want to understand why some foods and diets are associated with a reduced risk of certain cancers and what the components of those diets are that really inhibit cancer," Schwartz said.

CAFFRE, as the center is known, wants to take foods "from crops to the clinic to the consumer," and interdisciplinary collaboration is key. The center is part of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences — and is funded by the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center — but also includes 44 researchers and collaborators across campus, including The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center and the colleges of Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine and Public Health, among others.

In addition to the tomato juice project, CAFFRE scientists are exploring the cancer prevention benefits of black raspberries, avocados and newly developed "tangerine" tomatoes. "We see foods as a form of prevention, not so much as a cure," said Jessica Cooperstone, a graduate research associate at the center.

Scientists have long known that people with tomato-rich diets have decreased risk for certain diseases, especially prostate cancer. Studies also have shown that if tomatoes are consumed with soy, compounds in each work together to provide benefits beyond what you'd expect from them individually.

That evidence inspired the center's soy-infused tomato juice. The drink has gone through two clinical trials supervised by Dr. Steve Clinton, an oncologist with the Comprehensive Cancer Center. Clinton and his team looked at how healthy people, as well as men with prostate cancer, absorbed the compounds.

The juice wasn't palatable at first — too gritty and pasty — but food scientists eventually developed a tastier version. "In fact, the prostate cancer subjects wanted to know where they could buy it," Schwartz said. That's not an option — yet. "A number of companies have come to talk to us about it." ✳