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New Research Shows Wild Blueberries Promote Better Gastrointestinal Health, a Key to Maintaining the Body's Immune System Health

Portland, Maine - Research conducted by scientists at the University of Maine's School of Food and Agriculture led by Vivian Chi-Hua Wu, associate professor of microbiology and food safety, Dorothy Klimis-Zacas, professor of clinical nutrition and Robert Li, a molecular biologist of USDA ARS, reveals Wild Blueberries promote better gastrointestinal and digestive health, a significant finding due to gut health's key role in overall immune system health.

"These findings are good news for people dealing with obesity, allergy, headaches and inflammation," said Vivian Chi-Hua Wu.

The team of researchers examined how Wild Blueberries affected digestive health in rats. For six weeks, they fed one group of rats a control diet and the other group a diet rich in Wild Blueberries.

In the study, researchers found that the rats fed a diet of Wild Blueberries showed an increase in bacteria beneficial to overall gut health. Researchers attribute the increase in the beneficial bacteria to the potential of Wild Blueberries to act as prebiotics. Prebiotics are plant substances that promote the growth of probiotics in the digestive tract.

According to Klimis-Zacas, "These beneficial bacteria, called probiotics, are critical to helping the body maintain good digestive and immune system health."

The University of Maine research also discovered that rats fed a Wild Blueberry diet showed a reduction in Enterococcus, a potentially harmful type of bacteria often credited with causing infections. Additionally, the research indicated a number of other harmful substances were potentially reduced or eliminated from the digestive tract in the rats fed a Wild Blueberry diet.

"Approximately 70% of the body's immune functions are located in the digestive tract," said Susan Davis, MS, RD and Nutrition Advisor to the Wild Blueberry Association of North America. "By promoting better digestive health, Wild Blueberries in turn contribute to a healthier immune system."

“Eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other plant-based foods is necessary for a healthy gut and immune system, and this research shows that regularly including Wild Blueberries as part of a healthy diet can have a positive effect on digestive and immune health.”

The research team included: Vivian Wu, Dorothy Klimis-Zacas, Alison Lacombe, Aleksandra Kristo, Shravani Tadepalli, Emily Krauss and Ryan Young from the University of Maine, as well as Robert Li with the United States Department of Agriculture.

The University of Maine findings were recently published in the peer-reviewed scientific journal PLOS ONE. The study is available on the website of the Wild Blueberry Association of North America at <http://www.wildblueberries.com/health/research.php#guthealth>.

About the Wild Blueberry Association of North America
(<http://www.wildblueberries.com>)

The Wild Blueberry Association of North America is a trade association of growers and processors of Wild Blueberries from Maine and Canada, dedicated to bringing the Wild Blueberry health story and unique Wild Advantages to consumers and the trade worldwide.

For news, recipes, and related health information about Wild Blueberries, visit www.wildblueberries.com, www.wildblueberryhealthblog.com, and follow www.facebook.com/wildblueberries and www.twitter.com/WildBBerries4U.