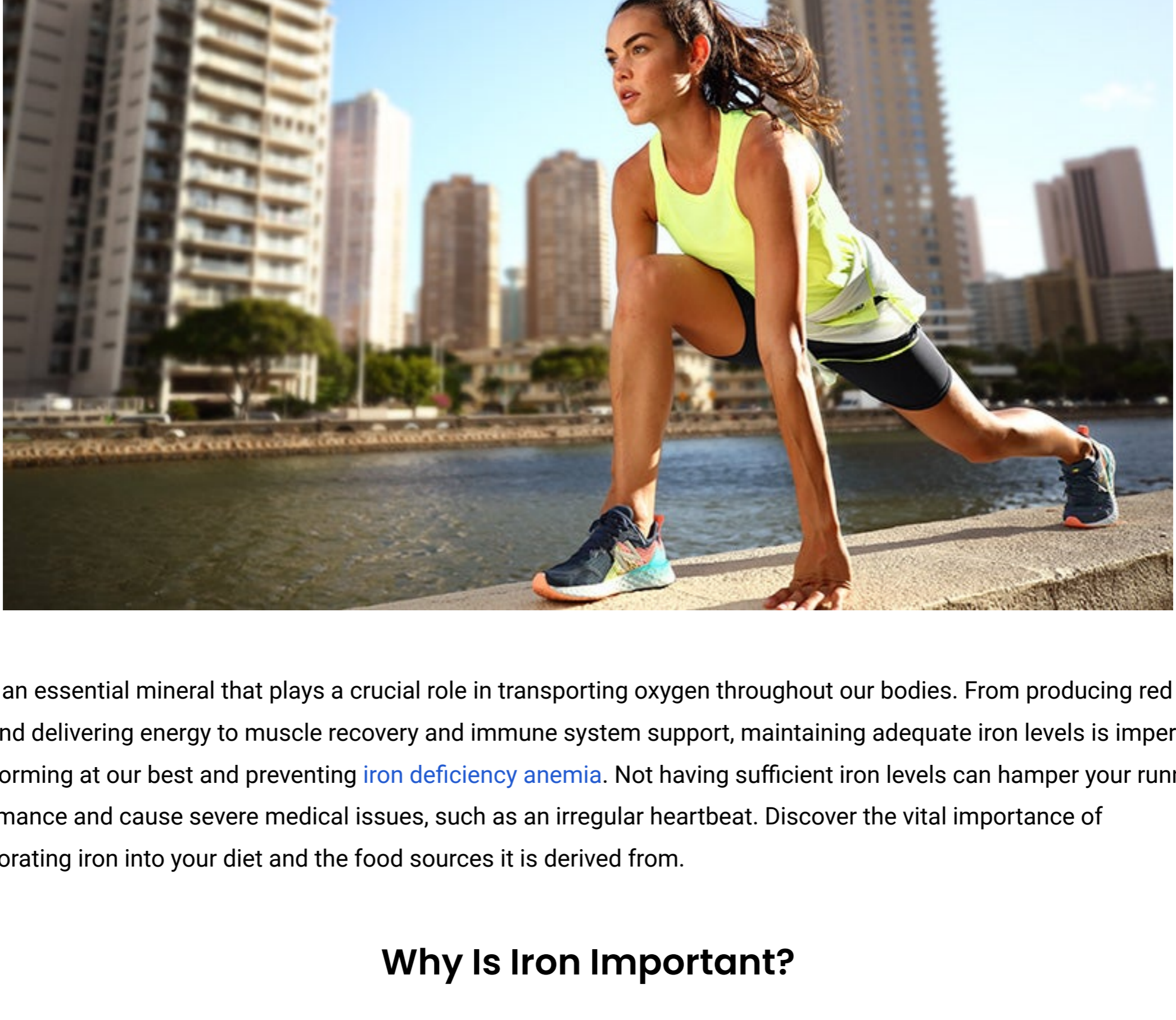


Do You Need More Iron?

Updated: October 1, 2024 by Caroline Cross



Iron is an essential mineral that plays a crucial role in transporting oxygen throughout our bodies. From producing red blood cells and delivering energy to muscle recovery and immune system support, maintaining adequate iron levels is imperative in performing at our best and preventing iron deficiency anemia.

Why Is Iron Important?

Iron is a component of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood. It is also a component of myoglobin, which transports oxygen in the muscle tissues. If an athlete is lacking in iron, their performance may suffer, and they may be more prone to getting sick.

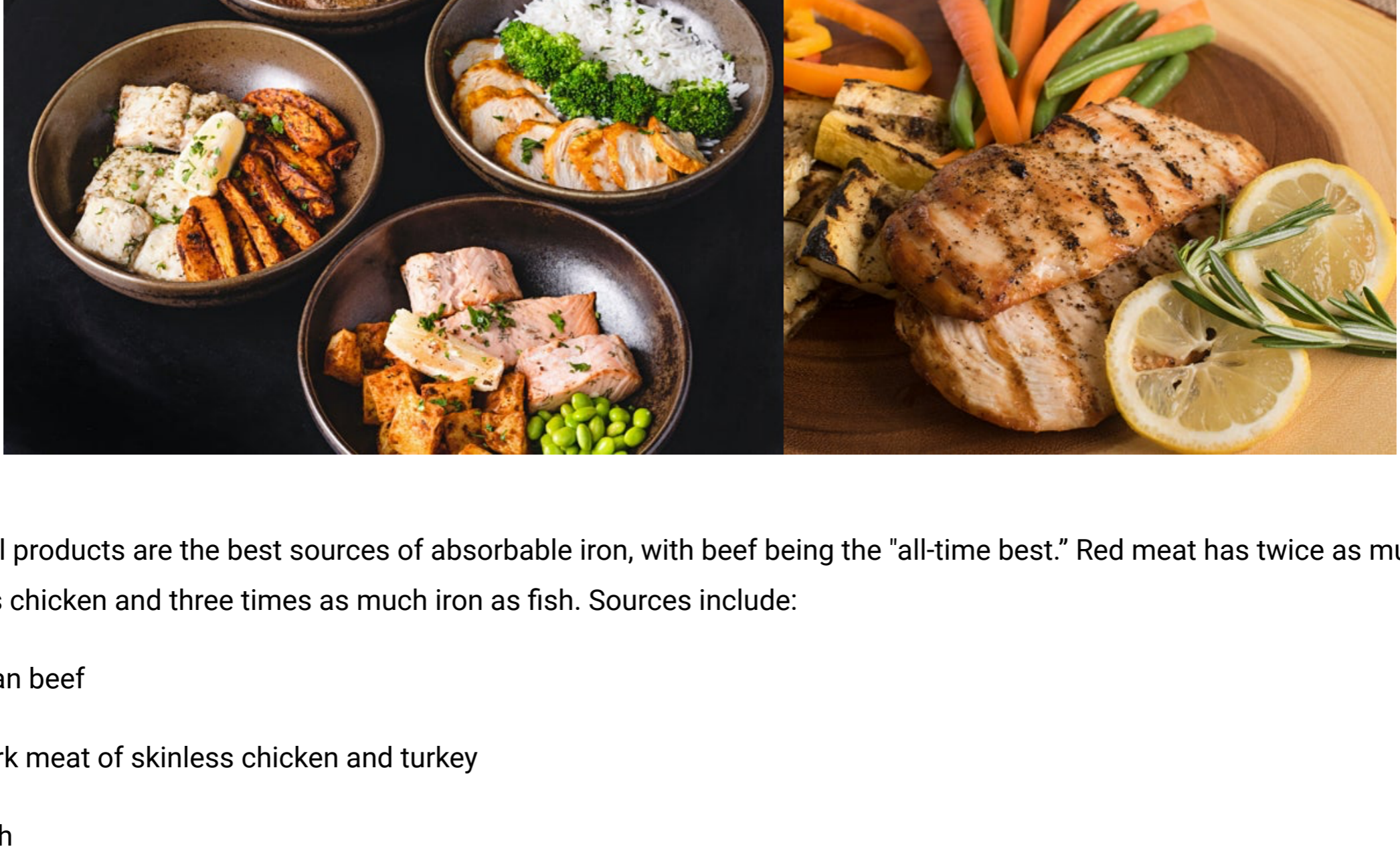
Who is susceptible to iron-deficiency?

Athletes who participate in endurance sports and menstruating women are susceptible to iron deficiency. Iron can be lost through sweat, urine, and blood (with menstruation). In runners, the impact of hard foot strikes may destroy red blood cells and cause a condition called hemolysis, which induces "runner's anemia".

How much iron should I be eating everyday?

The recommended daily amount of iron is 10 mg for men and 15-18 mg for women, but some suggest that athletes need more. When monitoring your iron intake, it is important to note that 18 mg is used as the Daily Value labeled on food items.

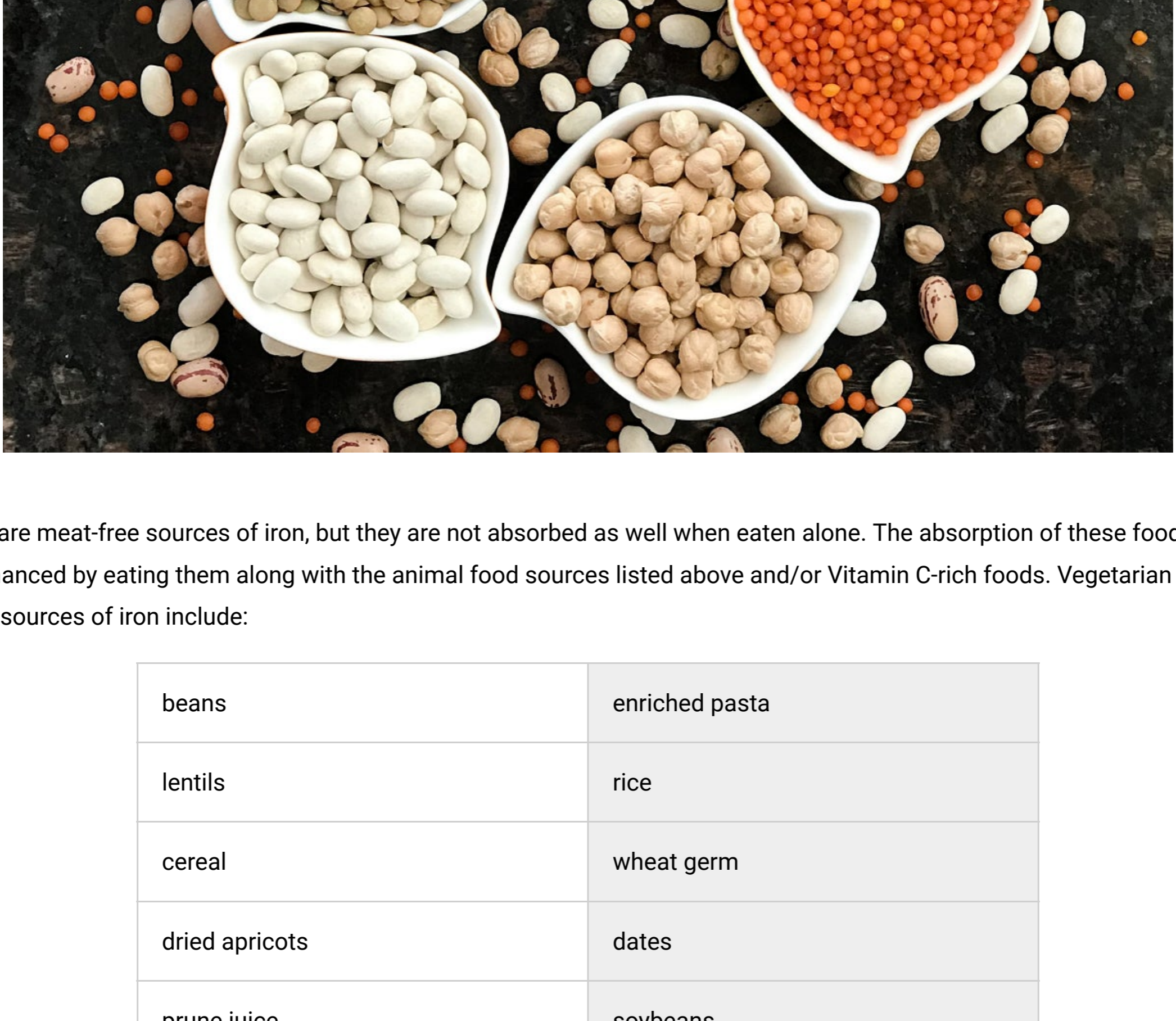
What are the best food sources of iron?



Animal products are the best sources of absorbable iron, with beef being the "all-time best." Red meat has twice as much iron as chicken and three times as much iron as fish. Sources include:

- Lean beef
- Dark meat of skinless chicken and turkey
- Fish
- Oysters

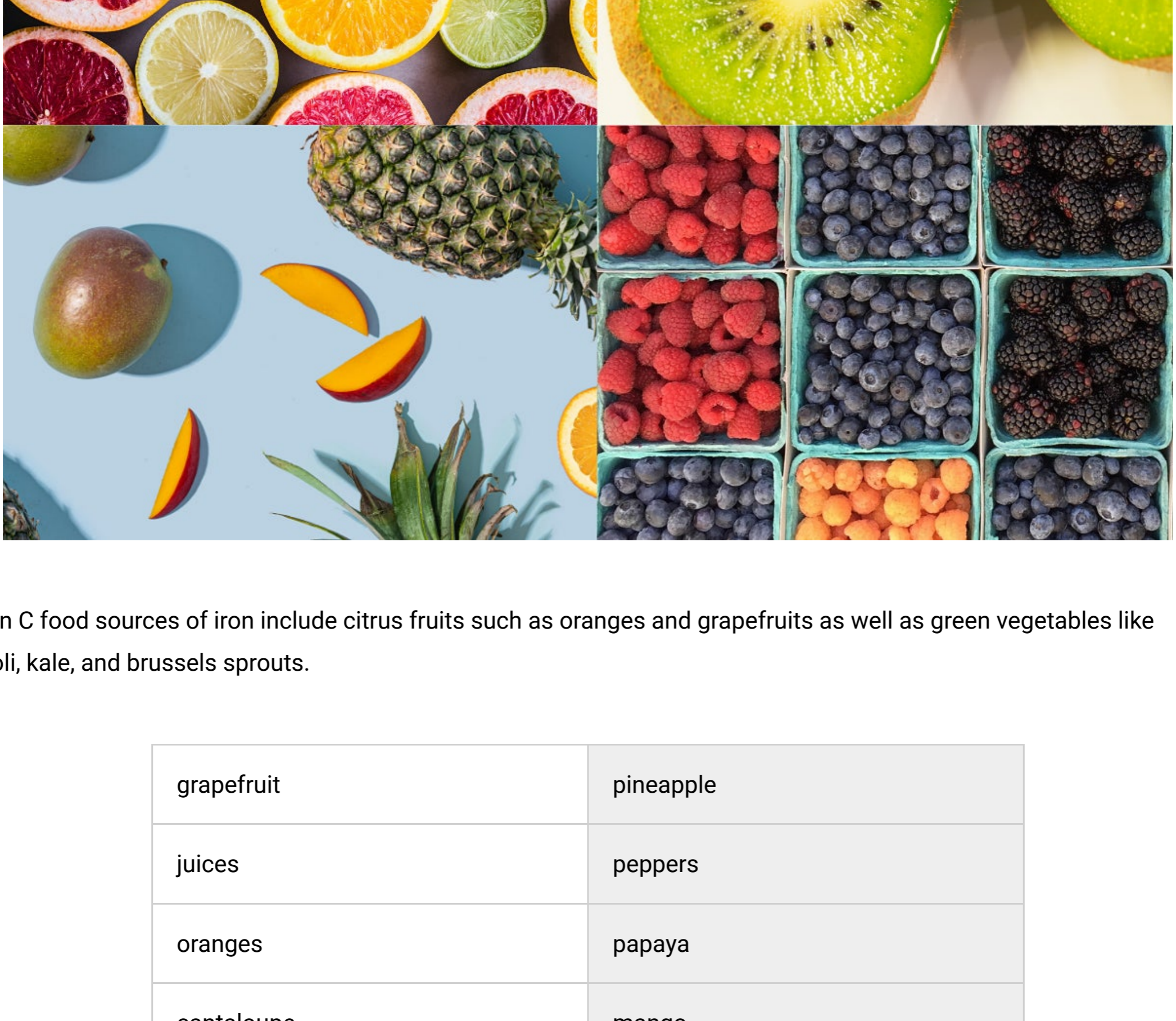
Are there other sources of iron besides animal products?



There are meat-free sources of iron, but they are not absorbed as well when eaten alone. The absorption of these foods can be enhanced by eating them along with the animal food sources listed above and/or Vitamin C-rich foods. Vegetarian and vegan sources of iron include:

beans	enriched pasta
lentils	rice
cereal	wheat germ
dried apricots	dates
prune juice	soybeans
raisins	molasses
tofu	potato
peas	bagel

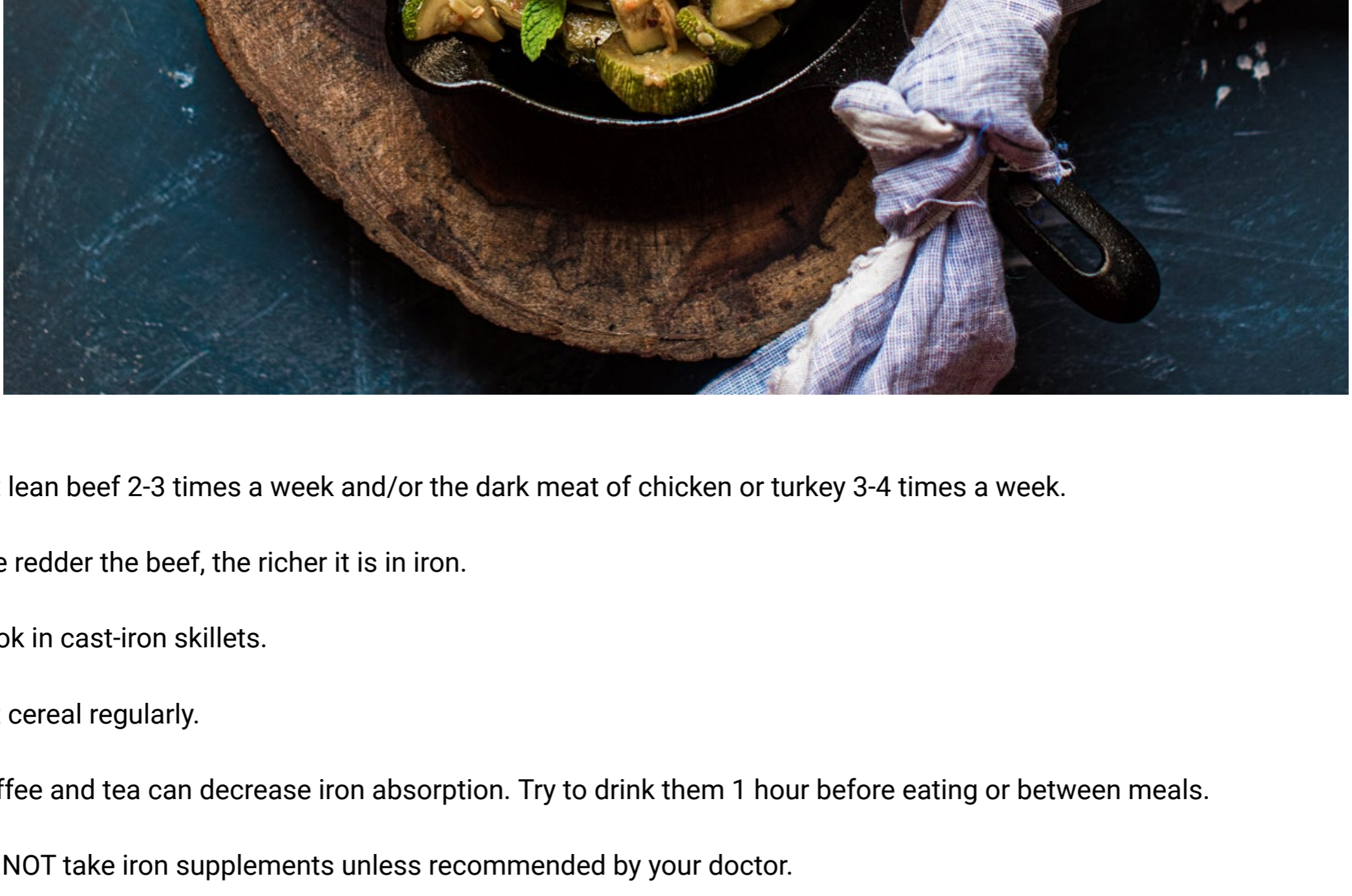
Vitamin C Food sources:



Vitamin C food sources of iron include citrus fruits such as oranges and grapefruits as well as green vegetables like broccoli, kale, and brussels sprouts.

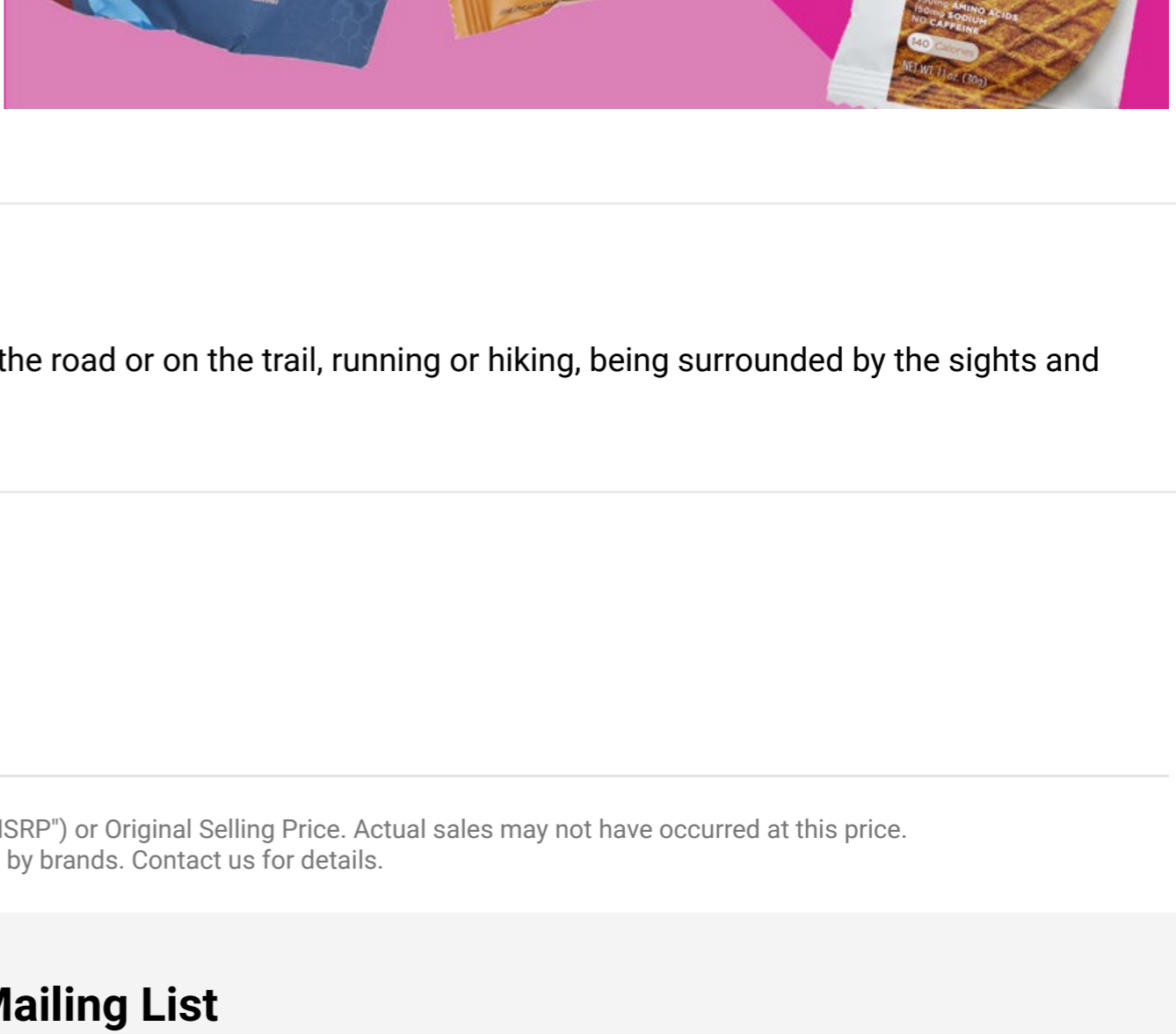
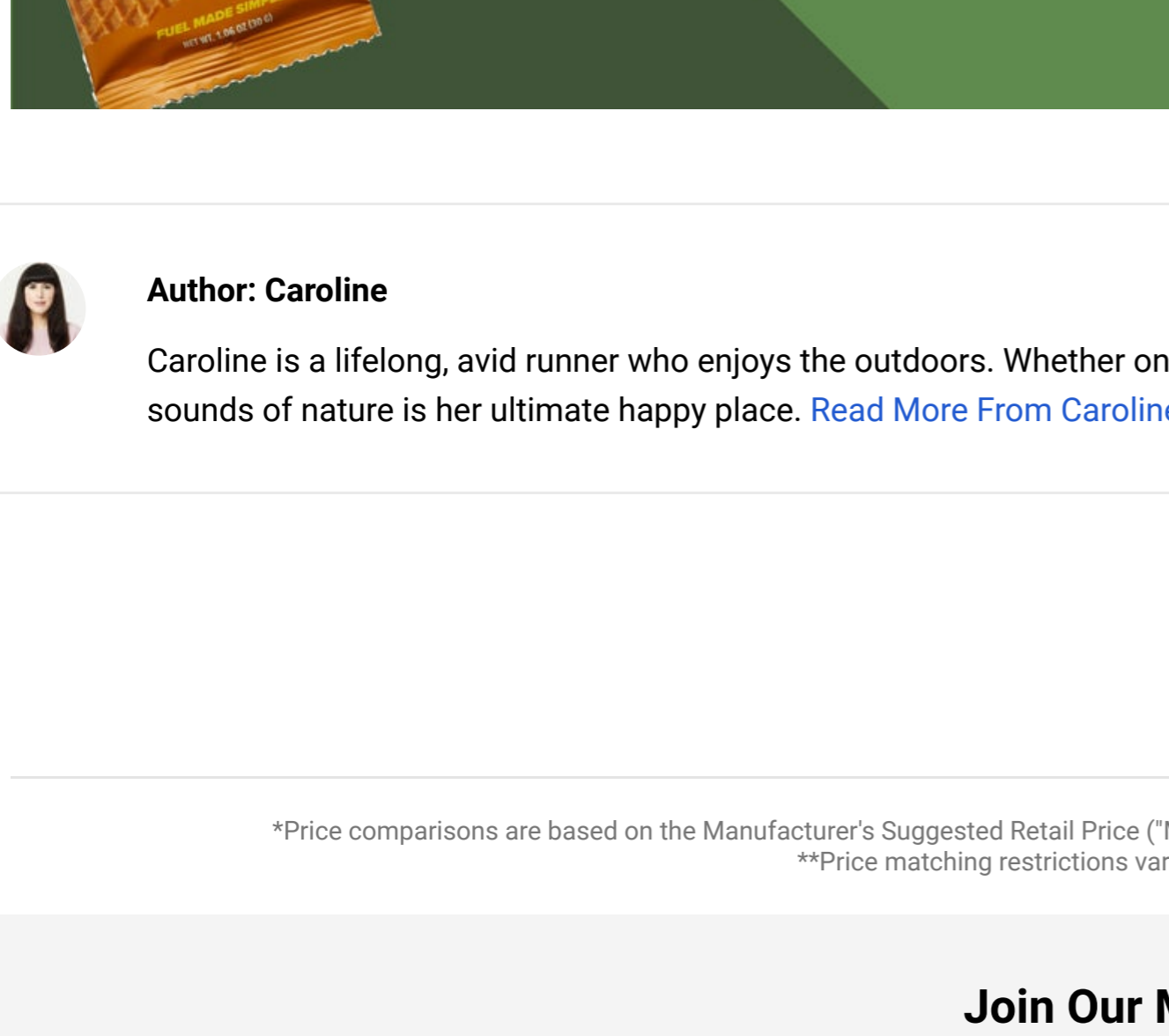
grapefruit	pineapple
juices	peppers
oranges	papaya
cantaloupe	mango
tomatoes	most berries
kiwi	cauliflower

Tips:



- Eat lean beef 2-3 times a week and/or the dark meat of chicken or turkey 3-4 times a week.
- The redder the beef, the richer it is in iron.
- Cook in cast-iron skillets.
- Eat cereal regularly.
- Coffee and tea can decrease iron absorption. Try to drink them 1 hour before eating or between meals.
- Do NOT take iron supplements unless recommended by your doctor.
- Eat Vitamin C rich foods with each meal.
- Look for "iron enriched" cereals/breads.
- Choose a daily multivitamin. If you are taking calcium supplements, take the multivitamin at a separate time of the day.

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Author: Caroline
Caroline is a lifelong, avid runner who enjoys the outdoors. Whether on the road or on the trail, running or hiking, being surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature is her ultimate happy place. [Read More From Caroline](#)

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