

## 2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

### Michigan morel mania mushrooms

**A**pril showers bring May flowers, and for many chefs, morel mushrooms.

These prized mushrooms, once served exclusively in sophisticated clubs and French style restaurants, have become more readily available. Picking wild Michigan morel mushrooms has become a popular spring pastime.

Flashy fungi have come to be a mainstay in Michigan dining. In addition to beef, restaurants are serving veggie burgers made with giant "Beef Steak" portabella mushrooms and grilled onions. Portabellas are often referred to as a vegetarian steak.

Mushrooms are finding their way into everything. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago I had some exotic mushrooms scrambled with eggs and goat cheese for breakfast - yum!

#### Mushroom folklore

Ancient Egyptians believed mushrooms were a magical source of immortality. Egyptian pharaohs, intrigued by the delicious flavor of mushrooms, decreed them food for royalty.

The Romans thought mushrooms were delivered by the gods through bolts of lightning cast to the earth during a storm. Many people believed mushrooms had properties that could produce super-human strength, help in finding lost objects and lead the soul to the realm of the gods.

**Good health**  
In addition to being a prized part of most any meat dish, mushrooms have been valued for centuries as an alternative to meat. Many vegetarian and vegan-based diets are loaded with wild mushrooms.

Mushrooms are low in calories, high in vegetable proteins, iron, zinc, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. They are also high in vitamin B, phosphorus and potassium. A handful of domestic button mushrooms will supply all the vitamin B-12 you need for a day.

There are estimates of over 20,000 species of mushrooms. Approximately 2,000 are nutritious and edible. Of the edible mushrooms, 300 are known to have medicinal properties.

Mushrooms have been a vital part of mythology and medical practice for 40 centuries. Studies suggest that mushrooms help strengthen our bodies and boost immunity.

For flavor, health and dinner diversity, seek out wild mushrooms for your next cooking adventure.

**Chef Kelli L. Lewton** is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Look for her column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month. See recipe inside.

**LOOKING AHEAD**  
What to watch for in Taste next week:  
■ Beef on the grill  
■ Focus on Wine

# Are we old yet?

Eat and be well - make the most of what you have

By PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS  
SPECIAL WRITER

**T**here is an old Italian saying, "mangia bene, vivi bene," and it means, "eat well, be well." Aging successfully can better be accomplished by following this adage.

The general makeup of the U.S. population is shifting and greater numbers of Americans are entering their senior years. The "graying of America" has been called the "failure of success," meaning that more and more of us are reaching old age, but don't necessarily have a desirable quality of life.

#### Healthy body

Optimistic seniors work for a sound mind and healthy body. Many are involved in activities that stimulate their minds and bodies. They understand their physical limitations and work at advancing their abilities to improve their quality of life. This is what I call "successful aging."

Our body systems change as we age and, unfortunately, there isn't much we can do about it. Just as we can't prevent the onset of puberty or the natural course of aging. But that doesn't mean we can't make the most of what we have. Learning to alter eating habits and modify menus can help us maintain optimum health and well-being as we age.

There is a normal and progressive decline in the sense of taste and smell with advancing age. This can lead to decreased salivation and decreased enzymes and hormones, which can affect digestion. Be sure food is flavorful and well seasoned. Watch out for salty seasonings if you have high blood pressure. Experiment and seek out new flavors.

#### Sense of thirst

The sense of thirst is also blunted as we age. Drinking only when we are thirsty may not meet body fluid needs. Keep a large container of water handy throughout the day and drink even if you don't feel thirsty. This is good advice for everyone, regardless of age.

The percentage of body muscle tissue, bone mineral and lung capacity decreases with age. Body fat increases and is stored in internal organs such as the liver, heart and kidneys. This can

cause seniors to feel weak, breathless and tired. Remember, food is fuel!

Be sure to eat foods rich in high quality protein such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, cheese, and legumes. Include dairy foods or calcium-fortified foods to keep bones dense. Make sure you are comfortable when eating and take your time. Digestion slows way down as we age and many seniors are prone to constipation and other digestive problems. Include foods high in fiber and drink lots of fluids to keep your body running smoothly.

#### Prescriptions

Older Americans consume a disproportionate share of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Many drugs can impact nutrients, and many foods can affect the bioavailability of drugs. Even herbal medicines and "natural" supplements can have pharmacological effects in the body. Be sure to read all the product literature from the pharmacy, or ask the pharmacist for a recommendation on a book about potential drug and food interactions. Beware of "miracle" drugs and unnecessary supplements. Remember that the companies which make these

products and the people who work in health food stores are there to sell the products and make money. They should not be confused with health care providers who diagnose disease and recommend treatment options.

#### Depression

Depression is not a normal part of aging but affects 30-40 percent of older Americans. With aging comes a series of losses - loss of loved ones, loss of income, abilities and status, and a sense of purpose. This can lead to symptoms of depression, which can be difficult to identify or distinguish, because they can look like other symptoms associated with aging.

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it. A change in appetite or a loss of appetite may be an early sign that something is wrong. Pay attention to your body signals. Eat to stay healthy.

#### Cooking for one

Seniors who live alone may be at risk for malnutrition because of a low quality diet. Cooking for one can seem like more bother than it's worth.

Treat yourself as you would a special guest and get out your best dishes and silverware. Be sure to have small-sized pans, multipurpose cooking utensils and containers to store leftovers. Buy foods in season. Buy only what you can carry, store and use without waste.

Store foods to preserve quality and flavor and use older foods first. Try new foods. Eating properly makes us more alert, improves our outlook, and makes us less likely to get sick.

Three meals a day may not suit your needs or lifestyle. If possible, eat your largest meal at midday. Or, you may prefer smaller meals spaced out during the day. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as a goal for how much from each food group to eat. Focus on the foods that are the most nutrient dense and eat chips, cake, cookies, pie and candy only if you're still hungry.

#### Eating out

If you eat in restaurants, choose steamed, grilled, roasted, stir-fried or baked foods. Limit the amount of foods

## Food Guide Pyramid for the over 50 crowd

The Food Guide Pyramid for older adults is designed to help healthy older adults stay healthy longer and improve their quality of life.

If you or someone you care for has an illness that requires a specialized diet, then it is important to follow the recommended guidelines from your health care provider.

■ Eat sparingly - fats, oils and sweets. Examples: jelly, candy, gelatin, mayonnaise, salad dressing, margarine/butter, gravies, cream sauces, cake, pie, cookies and pastries.

■ Eat 2-3 servings daily - milk, cheese and yogurt. Examples: 1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1 cup pudding, 1 cup milk shake, 1 1/2 cups ice cream, 1 1/2 ounces Swiss cheese, 2 cups cottage cheese.

■ Eat 2-3 servings daily - meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, nuts. Examples: 1/2 cup tuna, 2 ounces meat loaf, chicken leg/thigh, 2 fish sticks, 2 eggs, 1 cup baked beans, 4 tablespoons peanut butter.

■ Eat 3-5 servings daily - vegetables. Examples: 1/2 cup corn, 1/2 cup carrots, 2 spears broccoli, 1 cup salad greens, 1/2 cup vegetable juice, 1/2 cup mashed potatoes.

■ Eat 2-4 servings daily - fruit. Examples: 1 orange, 1 banana, 3/4 cup fruit juice, 1/2 cup apple sauce, 5 prunes, 1/2 cup fruit cocktail, 1/2 cup strawberries, 1 cup watermelon.

■ Eat 6-11 servings daily - bread, cereal, rice and pasta. Examples: 1 orange, 1 bagel, 1/2 cup cooked rice, 1/2 cup cooked hot cereal, 1 dinner roll, 1 small muffin, 1/2 English muffin, 1/2 cup cooked noodles, 1 slice bread, 2-3 graham crackers, 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal.

What about water? Adults need six to eight 8-ounce cups of water or liquid a day. Sources of liquid, in addition to water, are fruit and vegetable juices and milk. Caffeine-free coffees and teas and herbal teas are also good sources.

that are fried, or served in a heavy sauce.

Choose fruits, vegetables and salads; ask for dressings on the side. Watch out for foods high in sodium such as barbecued, pickled, smoked and marinated items. Choose skim or low-fat milk rather than soda or coffee. Eat what you can and take the rest home to enjoy at another meal.

Am I old yet? Perhaps eating well will help to keep us healthy and younger than our chronological age. It would be great if the only reminders of getting older would be a first grandchild or a senior citizen discount!

Remember, "eat well, be well."

Written in loving memory of my father, Mario Martinelli.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts of Clarkston is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills based food service and hospitality management and consulting company, specializing in food service management for hospitals, long-term care facilities, businesses, private clubs and private schools. HDS Services has approximately 230 management accounts throughout the United States and Japan. See recipe inside.

## Fiber intake

Here's a quick method to check your fiber intake:

■ Servings of fruit (not juice) x 1.5 grams =

■ Servings of vegetables x 1.5 grams =

■ Servings of refined grains x 1.0 grams =

■ Servings of whole grains x 2.6 grams =

■ Servings of legumes x 4.0 grams =

Total =

Shoot for a goal of 20-30 grams of fiber each day. Also, be sure to drink plenty of water.

## Sweet and sour works with chicken, shrimp or pork

### MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL WAGNER

If you're looking for a versatile quick fix dinner dish, include this sauce in your recipe repertoire. It can be used with cooked chicken, cooked shrimp, or even rinsed, drained and chunked tuna. Leftover strips of pork or turkey work well, too.

The sauce has a distinct Chinese restaurant flavor due to the soy sauce. My favorite sodium-reduced soy sauce doesn't come ready prepared in a bottle. I make one by mixing equal parts of inexpensive dry sherry and Tamari. This is Japanese soy sauce that is thicker and richer than Chinese soy.

Though I've used green peppers, pea pods, bok choy or other oriental vegetables can add interesting variety. I like to serve it with Chinese Lo-Mein noodles, not the fried ones in a can. They cook quickly and

add 5 grams of fiber to your daily intake instead of the one gram from American style noodles.

Look for Main Dish Miracle on the second Sunday of the month in Taste. Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check for \$13.50 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069.

### SWEET AND SOUR CHICKEN

12 ounces cooked, skinned chicken breasts, cut in strips

3 green bell peppers, cut in squares

1 medium onion, chopped

1 (16-ounce) can, pineapple chunks (drained, but save juice)

### Sauce:

1/4 cup water

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1/2 cup orange juice

1/2 cup reserved pineapple juice (from pineapple chunks)

2 tablespoons tomato paste

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

1/4 cup brown sugar or honey

2 teaspoons sodium-reduced soy sauce

For sauce, mix water and cornstarch. Combine remaining sauce ingredients. Blend well and heat until thickened.

To prepare dish, spray skillet with nonstick spray. Sauté pepper and onion until tender crisp. Add chicken, pineapple chunks and the sauce.

**Nutritional information per serving:** Calories, 258; total fat, 2.5 grams; saturated fat, 0.2 g; chol, 73 milligrams; and sodium, 134 mg.