

TASTE

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2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Smoke signals spirit of summer

My fondest childhood memories were those eternal summer days where it seemed to never become night ... and the smell of barbecue. I remember I could smell that distinctive aroma down the street at a small corner park where neighborhood children would gather religiously every afternoon to play.

My mother would stand on the front lawn and signal me home. As I biked toward home, I could smell this wonderful scent, which seemed to contain the entire spirit of summer. As I made my way down what seemed to be "the longest driveway in the world," I gazed upon the old red brick barbecue with missing bricks and patches of black - a collection of many summers past.

Dad would be standing there in a faded blue striped apron and an assortment of very important rustic looking equipment, all of which seemed to make this whole magical process transpire. Ingrained in my memory is the scratched-up tin shaker from where magic dust would emanate and settle upon our burgers and steaks.

In later years it struck me as ironic that a man who never mastered the art of toast could be the chef of such a master food plan. It must be part of the male realm which I still don't quite understand.

Barbecuing has jumped light years since my childhood, with hundreds of widgets and gadgets to choose from. Special baskets for fish, ornate metal skewers, so many flavors of wood chips that I sometimes think that I turned down the fragrance aisle. Even dad recently replaced the old brick grill with a King Cooker #3 that has a side burner. It's all quite confusing! As for me, summer still means simplicity, and less is more. I'll keep my \$150 Weber that I stoke with real hardwood briquettes.

With summer grilling it's important to use your imagination - don't get stuck in hot dog land forever. With such an array of interesting foods to choose for the grill - fish, shell fish, poultry, sausage, vegetables, game, pork, many fruits, sauces and unique condiments, the possibilities are endless.

Barbecue tips

■ Approximately 30 coals, on an average, are needed for a successful barbecue. Light the charcoal 30-40 minutes before you plan to cook.

■ The best, and most economical way to start charcoal is in a chimney starter; about 15 minutes for hardwood; 20 minutes or so for standard briquettes. You will end up with a glowing stack of charcoal.

■ Aromatic wood chips such as hickory and mesquite are an especially good idea when using a gas barbecue. Let the chips soak for at least 30 minutes, drain and place 1-2 cups in heavy duty foil to make a small, open pouch. Place on grill stones before heating grill. For regular charcoal grills, scatter freely over briquettes.

■ A simple way to test the heat level is to hold your hand five inches above the coals. If you can hold it there for only one or two seconds, you have a very hot fire, 3-4 seconds a medium fire, and 5-6 seconds a low fire.

■ Fish and seafood fare well with lighter scented wood chips such as apple, peach or cherry.

■ Don't apply sauce until product is almost done to prevent burning.

■ Place thicker food on the grill rack raised to the highest setting so meat can cook slowly.

■ About 6-8 minutes is sufficient for turning most foods.

Local experts

Chef Denise Caudry of Travis Point Country Club in Ann Arbor recommends:

■ Using grill baskets for vegetables so they don't fall through the grate.

■ Clean grates and a hot grill are a must.

■ Start your product skin side down, as a rule of thumb.

■ Steak fish such as swordfish are great. Don't forget a little spice rub, and don't overcook.

Seafood is nature's fast food, having an average cooking time of 10 minutes per inch. Kevin Dean, who owns Superior Fish in Royal Oak with his brother Michael, recommends trying Monkfish (known as poor man's lobster) on the grill. Fish steaks such as halibut, tuna and swordfish are always a crowd-pleaser. Don't forget a little spice rub, or marinade. Citrus flavors seem to be hot.

Chef Peter Loren of "Epic Enterprises" - Trib-

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Flavorful soups

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
REGISTERED DIETITIAN

"Take a chill pill" is a common phrase, but while there may be plenty of reasons for stress, hold on!

Before you take an anti-stress pill, vitamin, mineral supplement, or any medication touted to relieve anxiety, look at what's stressing you out.

We all need a certain amount of stress in our lives to motivate us, to learn, to grow, to change, to solve problems, or take action. Stress is one emotion that gives life depth, flavor and variety.

The only complete freedom from stress is death. It is our response to stress that turns this vital force into a health-threatening "disease." Stress, in itself, is neither positive or negative, it just is.

Research on stress shows that people who have the highest risk of experiencing the negative outcomes of stress are "high responders." They experience any negative emotion more intensely than others. Any little hassle or new situation touches off a negative stress response.

Our reaction to stress is really quite predictable.

First there is alarm. Our body prepares for fight or flight. The heart races to pump blood faster, digestion is slowed or interrupted, the senses are piqued.

Next comes resistance. Our body attempts to repair the damage caused by stress.

Then finally, there is exhaustion when our body looks for relief and rest from stress.

In the short term, stress does not seem to cause problems. However, long-term, unabated stress can cause indigestion and insomnia to become chronic, and strain our heart.

Stress can affect our nutrient status in a number of ways. It changes the level of certain hormones that play a role in regulating the metabolism of nutrients such as glucose. Stress also affects how calories are utilized by the body and may increase the excretion of certain vitamins and minerals.

People handle stress in a number of ways. To cry, scream, run, dance, rest or take a bath are all constructive. To overeat or drink

too much coffee or alcohol can be destructive.

Here are some things you can do to help relieve stressful situations, handle stress in a positive and productive manner and minimize any negative effects:

■ Eat more fruits, vegetables and grains. High fiber can help improve digestion which may be impaired by stress.

■ Remember, supplements will not make up for a poor diet. If you are thinking about taking an anti-stress supplement, be sure that it doesn't contain more than 200 percent of the recommended daily allowance. This is especially important with fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Plus excessive

amounts of certain minerals can actually cause deficiency states of other minerals. For example, excessive zinc can cause iron and copper deficiency. So be careful. Vitamin and mineral concoctions aren't regulated like drugs, but they can cause serious toxicity if abused.

■ Follow the food guide pyramid. The better nourished you are before you enter a stressful period, the better you will be able to handle it without getting sick. Watch out for too many foods from the tip of the pyramid. It is ironic that "stressed" is a dessert backward.

■ Limit caffeine. Caffeine is a known cardiac stimulant, just what you don't need. The same



You don't need a stress pill to become a cool cat

goes for tobacco and alcohol.

■ Stock an anti-stress pantry. Keep pasta, grains and breads on hand. Because complex carbohydrates take longer to digest than simple sugars, they may help you keep your moods on an even keel.

■ Eat breakfast. It may be that the simple act of eating releases substances in the brain that calm the body.

■ Use the magic of movement. Exercise is a great stress reliever. Movements help our bodies release endorphins, the natural "feel good" hormone.

■ Be sure your diet includes foods high in folic acid. Dark, leafy vegetables such as spinach, okra, kale, collard greens and turnip greens are good sources of folic acid. Orange juice is also good. Folic acid may help alleviate depression.

■ Get control. Avoid over-generalizing and blowing things out of proportion. Learn to accept mistakes and tolerate a certain amount of disorder. Be reasonable, delegate, adopt a problem-solving approach.

■ Get over it. Sometimes there is no perfect solution, so don't blame yourself. Seeing problems get resolved in 30 minutes on TV really does trivialize and undermine our complex life experiences. Realize that it doesn't happen that way in the real world.

■ Step back. Keep a stress diary and record times when you are anxious or stressed. Figure out what forces really push your buttons, then work on breaking your response. Verbalize your fears, use your support systems, distract yourself, add a little humor to your life.

■ Like yourself. Try to realize that no one is perfect. Accept your weaknesses and learn to live with what you can't change. You've only got so much time. Enjoy it.

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Get into the swim with tuna

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL G. WAGNER

Summer is here - much to my discomfort. I reveled in the cooler than normal temperatures of May and early June. This quirk, though it makes me suffer in the heat, does have a positive side. It prompts me to develop new and revised recipes, not only to modify fat and calories, but to keep shopping and kitchen time to a minimum.

One of these recipes is my version of Tuna Nicoise. This is a hot time in about 10 minutes, and keeps in the fridge two or three days. Like spaghetti sauce, the flavor improves overnight. Those 90 degree F. days with high humidity to match are less disconcerting when a delicious low calorie lunch or dinner is waiting in the fridge. Crispy French bread rolls and a cool slice of summer melon topped with fresh seasonal berries are delicious accompaniments.

The recipe for Tuna Nicoise is said to have originated in Nice, France, as you might guess from the title. It is usually made with anchovies. These are too fishy and salty for most people's taste, but if you like them, they can be added after draining and rinsing. Biot the excess oil and water with paper towels. Even though anchovies have a high salt content, they

also have a lot of those healthy Omega-3 fatty acids that lower triglycerides and cholesterol.

Most Nicoise salads are characterized by potatoes, green beans, and a vinaigrette dressing. These are part of my recipe, too, but I've substituted a ready-made fat-free Italian salad dressing with added capers, wine, garlic, vinegar or fresh lemon juice and a dried herb blend to improve flavor, but not increase fat.

Capers are little flower buds preserved in vinegar. They're expensive, and can be omitted without serious damage to flavor. When fresh herbs are available, I like to substitute two tablespoons each of fresh oregano, basil and thyme for the dried herbs. Sprinkle the herbs over the salad at serving time.

Potatoes for the salad can be cooked in the microwave with the skins left on for added fiber. Add blanched baby carrots, fresh cucumbers, and/or seeded plum tomatoes if the spirit moves you. It helps to increase your intake of those cancer fighting carotenoids. Do leave the vegetables and tuna in larger pieces, and only cook the vegetables until they're crisp and tender. You want to be able to distinguish the salad components - not have mush. Because of my Nicoise recipe, company luncheons or dinners are no event. My Tuna Nicoise Elegante is made a day ahead with fresh grilled tuna, water

TUNA NICOISE A LA WAGNER

- 4 small, unpeeled redskin potatoes, cooked and sliced
- 1/4 pound whole green beans, cooked to crispness
- 1 fresh red bell pepper, cut into rings
- 1 medium red onion, sliced thin into rings
- 10 small yellow pickled peppers, halved, stemmed and seeded
- 2 cans (6 1/2 ounces each) White Albacore Tuna, water-packed, rinsed, drained and chunked
- 1/3 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 cup vinaigrette dressing (recipe follows)

Combine potatoes, green beans, red pepper, red onion, peppers and tuna in a large bowl. Pour the fat-free vinaigrette dressing over mixture. Cover, and marinate four hours or overnight in the refrigerator. The flavor improves with longer marinating. Serve on Romaine, Boston, Bibb or leaf lettuce, garnished with fresh tomatoes and chopped parsley or other fresh herbs. Serves 4.

VINAIGRETTE DRESSING

- 8 ounces fat-free Italian salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine (optional)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice or balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons dried Italian seasoning

Combine ingredients in a bowl and whisk to blend

TUNA NICOISE ELEGANTE

To make the salad into a more elegant dish for company, or just to treat yourself, add a can of water-packed, drained, quartered artichoke hearts, sliced black olives, and one tablespoon capers, drained. Then grill one pound of fresh tuna to substitute for the canned fish. To grill the tuna, brush with Worcestershire sauce and place on a clean, hot grill brushed with oil. Grill 10 minutes per inch of thickness, turning once.

Nutrition Facts: Per serving: 454 Calories; Total Fat 2.5 grams; Saturated Fat 1.0 grams; Cholesterol 25 mg; Sodium 632 mg; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Starch; 3 Lean Meat; 2 Vegetables

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