

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Another reason to love salmon

By Fuad Al Qudsi

EVEN IF you're doing everything "right" — maintaining a healthy weight and exercise — you'll likely begin to experience stiffer arteries as you age, and this stiffness can increase blood pressure, raising the risk of heart attack and stroke. In addition to regular physical activity, good nutrition is one of the best ways to help reduce your risk. Getting unsaturated fats, such as omega-3s, is a great way to achieve this.

Fish-centric diets

Omega-3s include 11 related essential fats. In nutrition, an "essential" nutrient is something the body needs, but can't manufacture it on its own, so you have to get

it from your diet. The three main types of omega-3s are ALAs, found in plants, and DHA and EPA, found in fish and other seafood. According to the National Institutes of Health, most Americans have no difficulty getting enough ALAs in their diets.

Fish-eating communities have been observed to have very low rates of heart disease, and it was discovered that this was because their diets are rich in omega-3s, including DHA and EPA. Omega-3s are thought to help with arterial stiffening in several ways, including being powerful at battling inflammation — particularly the type associated with heart problems.

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text for photo

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T H E K I T C H E N

Pasta Fagioli

Courtesy Chef Brandon Miller, Paella LLC

PREPARED SOUPS are so readily available in so many varieties that it never occurs to most people that they could make a pot for themselves. It's a great meal for beginning and experienced cooks alike — it's about as forgiving as recipes get and often keeps leftover veggies out of the compost bin.

Chef Brandon Miller's pasta fagioli (pasta with beans) is a solid example of soup's simplicity and adaptability. Of course, as every longtime cook will tell you, the first time you make someone else's recipe, you should follow it exactly. This lets you know how it works and where you might want to dial something back, like hot pepper flakes, or add more of something that makes you happy, like fresh thyme.

Then, you can start tinkering. People

who are trying to avoid animal fat might try making it with lowfat turkey sausage or simply omitting the meat and Parmesan cheese. You could add a small box of thawed and drained frozen spinach or some chopped chard.

The beans provide plenty of protein and fiber, and many weight-loss programs encourage people to eat soup before or as part of a meal because it's filling. By making it yourself, you can control the salt content — prepared soups are notorious for their high sodium content. If that's a concern and you use canned beans, choose a low-sodium variety.

If you decide to freeze the leftovers, you can stir in the macaroni, but it has a tendency to get mushy. We'd recommend freezing portions and cooking some pasta while you're reheating the soup.

INGREDIENTS

(Serves 6 to 8)

12 ounces loose Italian sausage or diced pancetta
2 small onions, diced
3 ribs celery, diced (reserve leaves)
3 medium carrots, pared if necessary, and diced
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon chili flakes (or to taste)
3 large cloves of garlic, diced
3 bay leaves
1/4 cup tomato paste
1/2 cup white wine
1 28-ounce can San Marzano tomatoes
2 cups of cooked beans (Chef's favorite is cannellini beans.)
8 ounces cooked macaroni
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese to taste
Italian parsley for garnish



cook for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pour in white wine and cook for 5 minutes more to allow the alcohol to evaporate. Add the canned San Marzano tomatoes, crushing them with your hands. Stir well and allow the mixture to simmer until it starts bubbling. Add the beans and simmer for 30 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper and top with Italian parsley.

To plate, put a handful of pasta in each serving bowl and top with soup. Drizzle with olive oil and add Parmesan cheese to taste. Dunking some bread wouldn't be a bad idea, either.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, sauté the sausage until evenly browned. Add diced onions, celery and carrots. Reduce heat to low and simmer until the vegetables release their juices and become tender.

Add fresh thyme, bay leaves and dried oregano. Stir well. Incorporate diced garlic and simmer for an additional 5 minutes over medium heat.

Stir in tomato paste and continue to

Chef Bio



CHEF BRANDON Miller is a familiar face to local foodies. The proud owner of Paella LLC, a mobile catering operation specializing in his signature Spanish dish, Miller previously helmed kitchens at the former Mundaka in Carmel, a previous incarnation of Stokes Adobe, and Alvarado Street Brewery, to name a few. You can often find him doing cooking demos at local events, where you begin to see he's as much showman as chef.

Miller has been working in kitchens

for more than 30 years. He started as a kid, cracking crabs at San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf as a summer job, and at 20 took over the oyster bar at Pacific Heights Bar and Grill. By the time he'd moved on to the city's famous Fog City Diner — first in the pantry and then as sous chef — he said, "I knew this was the natural thing for me to do."

His culinary education included stints in Amsterdam and France, and he said he "ate his way through Italy."

In his spare time, Miller grows some of his own food, makes a little homebrew and enjoys spending time with his wife, Marci Bracco, and their French bulldogs.

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Omega-3s are among the substances nutritionists sometimes refer to as fatty acids — the building blocks of the fat in the food we eat. These types of fats are divided into four categories: saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated (like omega-3s), and trans fats.

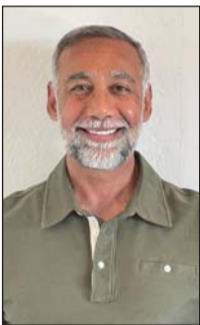
A daily intake of 450-500 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids is recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans published by the U.S.

A good omega-3 supplement should contain EPA and DHA

departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. That increases to 1 gram daily if you have heart disease. So, where can you find this healthy fat in your diet?

The most potent sources are from fish

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Fuad Al Qudsi



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SUPPLEMENTS from page 34A

and seafood, and salmon is the most common. One 6-ounce salmon filet provides 1,800 milligrams of omega-3s. Below is the content for other seafood sources:

1,000 mg per serving

- herring
- sardines
- trout

500-750 mg per serving

- bass
- flounder
- lobster

125-500 mg per serving

- tuna
- shrimp
- scallops
- tilapia

Compared to wild salmon, farmed salmon tends to have more fat per serving — about 10 grams more — meaning it tends to have a higher omega-3 content. Farmed salmon is also usually more affordable than wild. If you're concerned about the

environmental impacts of farmed salmon, check out seafoodwatch.org, the Monterey Bay Aquarium's guide to responsible fish consumption. The site recommends which farmed salmon to purchase and which to avoid.

Read labels

Eating fish every day — particularly salmon — to get enough omega-3s can get expensive. This is why many people decide to take fish oil, krill oil and other types of omega-3 supplements. If you do not eat at least two servings of fatty fish per week, you should think about taking an omega-3 or fish oil supplement.

However, it's important to know what to look for. For example, even though a supplement says it contains omega-3s, doesn't always mean it contains enough omega-3s to provide heart health benefits.

A good omega-3 supplement should contain EPA and DHA, so read the labels. A supplement that contains 900 mg of fish oil may not have 900 mg of EPA and DHA, or actual omega-3s. Make sure the supplement you are purchasing contains both EPA and DHA in quantities that total 250–500 mg.



Tilapia, an inexpensive and quick-cooking fish, is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids.



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