



Getting in Shape for Summer

The weather has warmed up quickly, and I cannot remember a greener spring! Lawn mowers have been buzzing since Easter, and the woods where we live are lush and beautiful. As we cruise into May, it won't be long before we are slipping into bathing suits and more revealing clothing: are you ready?

Re-mineralize and Purge!

Now is the time to purge the wastes and toxins that have been accumulating all winter—with glorious spring greens! Nature provides us with an array of spring plants that are mineral-rich and detoxifying. Wild plants such as dandelion greens, garlic mustard, chick weed and violets are all very nutritious greens, full of cleansing chlorophyll, minerals and phyto-chemicals. And they are free for the picking. My favorite spring green is chickweed, a common weed found literally everywhere. It has a fresh, mild taste and is great to eat by the handfuls

when you are thirsty out on the trail. Here is a picture to help you identify this beauty:



Garlic mustard is another wonderful green, with a bitter quality that is superb for improving digestion. It grows tall quickly, but re-grows all summer long. It is an annoying weed in the garden, but picked and eaten while young, it is truly delicious. So if it is a problem in your area (and it is classified as a noxious, invasive weed!) just pull it up by the roots, pull off the leaves and enjoy! Here is what the greens and flowers look like—you eat the younger, smaller leaves, by the way:



Another delightful “weed” is the dandelion. I know, people pay good money to have herbicides sprayed on their lawns to eradicate this delightful, nutritious weed. The fact is, dandelion greens are tasty, bitter (so it's good for digestion), diuretic, and very high in minerals. In fact, studies have compared the diuretic properties of dandelion greens to the drug, Lasix, and dandelion not only performs as well as Lasix, but it replaces the minerals that were lost! Fabulous! I love to drink dandelion leaf tea in the spring, as it helps to cleanse the body and rid it of unwanted excess fluids. You can find the tea in any health food store, or you can pick and dry your own! Just be sure, with all these greens, that you harvest them from clean environments—not near road sides or where run-off could contaminate the ground they in which they are growing.

Another mineral-rich weed that will also help you cleanse and lose the excess fluids is nettle. Stinging nettle, as the name implies, will sting you if you pick it fresh! You must use gloves to harvest nettles, and then when it wilts, the sting miraculously disappears, and you are left with a nice green to sauté with garlic and oil—much the same with dandelion greens, too. This is a very popular green in English countryside cooking—too bad it is not so popular here in the states! Nettle tea is also said to increase milk supply for breast-feeding women—and it will help replace the minerals that were lost during the pregnancy, and support bone health.

(As with all wild greens, they should be eaten immediately, as they will wilt quickly! They are not like store-bought greens!)

Here is Stinging Nettle:



Exercise like you Mean It!

The days are longer, warmer and there is no reason not to be out there moving your body!! Hiking, walking, jogging, biking: just do it! But before you set out on your first outing of the season, let's set some pre-game rules:

- If you cycle, get your bike tuned up and tires checked—and dig out your helmet as well!
- Invest in a new pair of shoes---either walking shoes, running shoes or trail shoes, good shoes prevent strain on the joints and tendons and keep your feet happy.
- Take 5 and stretch! Before you begin and after you finish, stretch your major muscle groups: hamstrings, quads, back, shoulders. Allow your body to lengthen. Don't bounce or stretch too hard.

Practice interval training this year. It's the best way to target fat loss and rev up your metabolism both while you exercise and afterwards as well. Using walking as an example, if you are interval training, you will walk at a moderately fast pace for 5-6 minutes. Then, increase your pace to as fast as you can go (while still keeping good form) for 2.5-3 minutes. Return to the moderately fast pace for the next 5-6 minutes, and so on. The trick is to go fast for half as long as you go at the moderate pace. Do this for the duration of your workout.

Don't forget strength training! I have been experimenting with soft medicine balls and stretchy bands (Kessler Rehabilitation has been working with me) and I have to tell you that they are awesome! Using a large exercise ball and these fun, inexpensive props are the easiest way to get a good workout with little equipment and little time. The bands are great to help stretch and strengthen, something that is so important. Long, lean muscles protect the joints and help prevent falls. In the event that you do fall, you are much less likely to break a bone because resistance training builds and maintains bone strength. Every woman should exercise with her bone health in mind!



Recipe of the Month:

Breakfasts seem to be difficult for some people who just have no time in the mornings, so here is a terrific, nutrient-dense banana bread recipe that is easy to make and delicious and portable!



Banana Bread – from Laurel's Kitchen cook book (with my adaptations in red)

3 very ripe bananas mashed I use 4

Juice of 1 lemon

1/3 cup oil or butter I use cold-pressed safflower oil

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour I use 1 cup wh. Wheat pastry flour and 1/2 cup garbanzo bean flour

1/2 tsp. each: sea salt, baking powder, baking soda

1/2 cup wheat germ I also add 1/4 cup ground flax seed

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1 cup chopped dates I use tart dried cherries or raisins

1 cup toasted nuts I use walnuts or sunflower seeds, and I don't toast them

Preheat oven to 375. Mash bananas with lemon juice. Cream oil and sugar: add to banana mixture and mix until smooth.

Stir together flour(s), salt, soda, powder. Add wheat germ (and flax). Add to banana mixture and stir in the nuts and fruit.

Dough will be very stiff. Bake in a greased 4"x8" loaf pan for 45 min, or use an 8"x8" pan or 12 -cupcake pan and bake for 30 minutes. Check often, as I know mine bake a bit quicker than this. This is my husband's favorite recipe, and it is healthy and vegan!

Call me for an Appointment!

I can help to get you on track. Sometimes it helps to have a bit of support, and then off you go! For others, just knowing someone is there to help, to be accountable to, to bounce questions off of, well. I am your girl!

I am taking appointments now for individual counseling sessions. Let's see what you need to do to get your health on the right track this summer. Do you need to learn how to shop or cook? Need help making your recipes healthier? Do you want fresh ideas for fresh foods? Got questions about supplements? Just ask. I'm all ears!

Recession Buster pricing:

(formerly 90 minutes for \$95)

90 minutes for \$75! Sign up now!!

herbagem@gmail.com or call

908-377-0773

Please enjoy this newsletter, and pass it along to all who might be interested. As always it is a pleasure to prepare these monthly letters for you. I wish you well!

Namaste,

Diane Lassen, RN, HHC

