

# Targeting Wellness Newsletter

## Good News for Good Health!

December 2020

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIFs

Here we are, the last month of 2020! The month typically packed with running around to dozens of stores buying gifts, filling our pantries with all the ingredients to make that special holiday meal; all the preparation that goes into a busy holiday season. However, most of that changed this year due to the ever lingering pandemic.

2020 has been like no other year any of us have ever experienced. With it came a lot of fear, anger, uncertainty, stress and a sense of loss. Loss perhaps of a loved one or friend to COVID, perhaps financial loss, or maybe a loss of hope. But what if this was a year where we reflect back on all the opportunities we were given to grow. Not having to travel much if at all to work; having more time with our kids, spouse and/or pets. Did you find that with the extra time you could incorporate more exercise, sleep in a few more minutes, eat more home cooked meals, find new ways to communicate with others and even take time for yourself?

Did you start that fun project you had been putting off? Did you learn something new you have always wished you had time to try?

As you look back on this year, try not to focus on all the despair and anxiety. Focus on the fact that you are here which means you made it!! Yes, you survived! As we close the book on 2020, what will you have as your first chapter for 2021? What new routine and level of purpose did you develop that you want to continue and make part of your life going forward? Don't merely focus on getting that vaccine as the magic bullet. You have a choice. Are you going to fall back into those same old habits that put your overall health at risk or are you going to take back control by taking care of YOU?

Many times after a storm, a beautiful rainbow appears. If you don't look for it, often it gets missed. Look for the good that happened this year. Look for that rainbow and then follow it to your pot of gold! You have the power to make the choice....are you merely going to say "I survived" or do you want to say "I thrived"?

Resources: Debby Schiffer (Opinion)

### In this issue

1. Give Yourself The Gift of Health
2. Fuel Yourself Against Sickness
3. Are You Getting Enough Fiber?
4. Plan Some Office Fun This Holiday Season
5. Recipe Corner—  
Spicy Sicilian Soup  
& Mexican Hot  
Chocolate Cookies



"God puts rainbows in the clouds so that each of us – in the dreariest and most dreaded moments – can see a possibility of hope."

[Maya Angelou](#)

## Give Yourself The Gift of Health This Year

A very important component to stress management is self-care. In my opinion, self-care IS stress management. Think about it...hitting the gym a few times a week won't sustain stress reduction if all you're fueling with is junk or processed foods. Managing stress starts with giving your body and mind the attention it needs to stay healthy, focused and strong!



Where do you start? According to an article in *PsychoCentral*, there are three golden rules:

1. Stick to the basics (good nutrition, regular exercise, sufficient sleep, hydration)
2. It needs to be actively planned rather than "letting it just happen". It's a choice only you can make.
3. Be aware of what you currently do, why you do it and how it feels. Now determine what it is that needs to change to help you become the best version of yourself.
4. **BONUS:** This one is my add on. Don't wait until New Year's Resolution Time rolls around. Chances are it will only last a month. Start now, slow and steady, and new healthy habits may stick around for a lifetime!

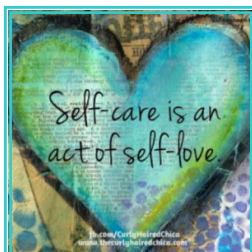


### MENTAL SELF-CARE

Your thoughts will greatly influence your psychological well-being as well as your overall health. Mental self-care includes things that keep your mind sharp like puzzles or learning something new. Maybe reading (or listening) to a book or watching an inspiring movie (or TedTalk, etc.) will fill you with new ways of viewing your life and motivate you to thrive rather than just survive! Ask yourself: Are you making enough time for activities that stimulate your mind? And are you being proactive and engaging in activities that keep you mentally healthy?

### SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

This does not mean religion. It's simply a connection to your true self and purpose in life. It's about nurturing your spirit however you can to develop a deeper sense of meaning, understanding, and link to the universe or higher power (whatever that is for you). Whether it's through meditation, attending religious services or praying, or a walk in nature, spiritual self-care impacts your entire being. Take time just to be! Sit quietly, reflect on what is important to you, connect with your purpose!



### PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

There is a direct connection between your body and your mind. So when you take care of your body through regular exercise, fueling it with healthy food choices, and getting adequate sleep, you also think more clearly and feel better overall! Be sure to keep up with annual wellness visits with your doctor, take necessary medications, and practice focusing on the positive not the negative in your life.



### SOCIAL SELF-CARE

Our relationships with others play a vital role in our overall well-being. Making time for friends and cultivating relationships could be a challenge; however, socialization is such an important component to stress management and resiliency it's worth devoting time in your schedule for this even if it has to be virtual right now. Ask yourself: Are you getting enough quality time with your friends? And what are you doing to nurture your relationships with them? Is there a group that inspires you? Maybe schedule some time to volunteer. Think about this. If you need more interaction, make the time!

### MAKE A PLAN

Everyone's self-care plan will look a little different. We're all unique as are the areas needing improvement. Where do you need to focus? Do you need more mental stimulation? Do you need to focus more on your physical health? Or do you need to get out with friends more and have some fun? Identify one area you would like to start with. What do you want to happen? Set up some small goals and behavior changes that will help you get there. And along with self-care comes self-compassion. Be kind to yourself as you incorporate changes. It won't be easy or quick but it will definitely be worth it!



### EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

How are your coping skills when it comes to dealing with uncomfortable emotions such as anger, anxiety, and sadness? Emotional self-care can include activities that help you acknowledge and express your feelings in a healthy and safe way on a regular basis. It's important to talk to someone if you are struggling with your emotions. Find activities that help you feel recharged and alive! Don't let things build up inside.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/>

## Fuel Yourself Against Sickness

As we all know, one of the best ways to prevent and fight off colds, influenza, viruses, and chronic diseases for that matter, is to keep our level of stress low and under control. **HOWEVER**, there is also direct correlation to the types of foods you typically consume. The foods you eat will either strengthen or weaken your immune system determining your level of resistance in fighting off these risks. Nothing new right? It's still possible that you could catch something, but your ability to fight off the condition and recover quicker is much more likely!

Several nutrients are essential for a healthy immune system. They include iron, zinc and vitamin C. Taking a vitamin supplement does not give you all the benefits consuming the whole food will provide. Everything you eat either feeds the good bacteria in your gut or allows the bad bacteria to grow in number and size, increasing the likelihood of illness and chronic conditions such as IBS and even cancer. If you want to build up your immune system to protect you from sickness and disease or at least fight hard for you if you should get one, make sure you incorporate whole foods that are loaded with fiber, antioxidants, vitamins and essential minerals .

There are thousands of studies and decades of research that have proven this fact: eating less animal products such as red meat, poultry, fish, dairy including cheese, and ultra-processed "foods" can have profound benefits on preventing and even reversing many chronic diseases! Think about it for a moment. All animal products (meat and dairy) have cholesterol and saturated fats but zero fiber. All animal products are loaded with antibiotics and hundreds of other pharmaceutical drugs which get feed to livestock every day in every meal so they get fat faster. This cause inflammation in our bodies, destroying good bacteria not to mention putting us at higher risk for disease.

Fish are tainted with pollutants and toxic materials which get stored in the fatty tissue. Fattier the fish, the more toxins ingested. And then we have the ultra-processed foods. Unfortunately what many of us think simply as processed "foods" are really ultra-processed! These products are typically in shiny packages and have nothing to do with the natural product....mostly found in fast-food restaurants and many middle isles in the grocery store. Deli lunch meats, hot dogs, etc. have now been classified as a Group 1 carcinogens meaning there is sufficient evidence that it causes cancer in humans (right in line with tobacco).

### ✓ 3 stages of food processing

Healthline.com

1. First stage of "processing" involves making sure the food is edible. Harvesting grain, shelling nuts, and slaughtering chickens are all considered primary processing. Foods that have only gone through this stage of processing are often still considered "whole" foods.
2. Secondary steps make a more complex, finished, "processed" product. This includes cooking, freezing, and canning.
3. Ultra-processed foods go through a third stage, when manufacturers inject flavors, added sugars, fats, and chemical preservatives.

eat food.  
not too much  
mostly plants.  
-michael pollan

It always come back to this one question: So what am I supposed to eat? I think Michael Pollan sums it up the best. You may have heard this before: **Eat food, not too much and mainly plants!** It's really as simple as that. Next month, with the start of the new year, we'll look at how this can really be as easy as it sounds. However, you have to be ready to change, it will require some work but it will be so sustainable and especially rewarding! I would love to hear from you if you are interested in exploring this on a more personal level. Just email me at [debby\\_schiffer@targetingwellness.com](mailto:debby_schiffer@targetingwellness.com)

## Are You Getting Enough Fiber?

A 2010 report from the National Cancer Institute found that “three out of four Americans do not eat a single piece of fruit in a given day” and “nearly nine out of ten do not reach the minimum recommendation of daily consumption of vegetables.” (Dr. Greger, NutritionFacts.org). Note that the CDC guidelines recommend about 2 to 3 cups of vegetables a day depending on your age and gender.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an estimated 32% of our calories come from animal foods, 57% from processed plant foods, and only 11% from whole foods which includes whole grains, beans, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Whole foods are loaded with fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, not found in animal or processed products.

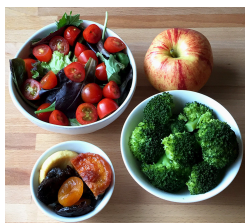
Many people I talk to are concerned about one thing: “getting more protein.” However, it’s clear that most Americans are getting far more than they actually need. (That’s a subject I have touched on in past newsletters and probably will address again in the future.) Instead, we should be concerned with “Did I get enough fiber today?” How much do we need? Men need 38 grams of fiber and women need 25 grams. Yet the average American is getting somewhere between 5-15 grams a day.

A common concern that surfaces when folks think about adding in more fruits and vegetables is that there is “no way they can eat that much in a day without having GI issues” (a.k.a gas and bloating). And you are probably right if you try to do too much at once. If you don’t have any in your diet now, try adding in one or two a day. And start with the non-gassy ones like squash, bell peppers, asparagus, Bok Choy, spinach, carrots, cucumbers, and green beans. Going slow will allow your gut to adjust to the diversity and you’ll start producing the bacteria that will allow you to handle more of these foods in the future. *Remember: Eat food, not too much and **mostly** plants.*

[Nutritionfacts.org/topics/standard-american-diet/](http://Nutritionfacts.org/topics/standard-american-diet/); [CDC.gov](http://CDC.gov); [verywellhealth.com](http://verywellhealth.com)



### What Does a Day of More Fruit & Veggies Look Like?



- 1 small apple (2.5" diameter)
- ½ cup dried fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots)
- 1 cup broccoli, cooked
- 2 cups raw leafy greens + ½ cup cherry tomatoes



- 1 cup diced watermelon
- 1 large peach
- 1 cup baby carrots (about 12 baby carrots)
- 1 cup black beans



- 1 cup pineapple
- 1 medium pear
- 1 cup cucumber
- 1 cup red peppers
- 1 large stalk of celery



- 8 large strawberries
- 1 cup diced plums (about 2 large plums)
- 1 cup green beans
- 1 cup diced onions



- 1 medium (4" diameter) grapefruit
- 1 large banana
- 1 large baked sweet potato
- 1 cup Brussels sprouts



- 1 cup frozen mixed berries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup spaghetti squash
- 1 small raw whole tomato
- 2 cups raw kale



- 1 cup diced cantaloupe
- 1 cup blueberries
- 2 cups salad greens
- 1 cup chopped cucumber
- ½ small ear corn

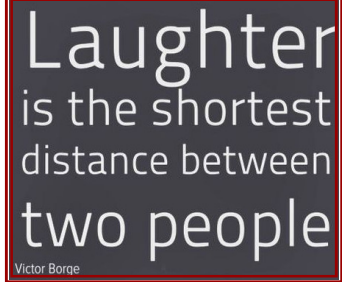
So what do you think? Doable? And think of all the combinations you can make. They look beautiful right? Just think how great they are for your overall health!! Bon Appetite!

**Always consult with your doctor before making any changes that could interfere with current medications or food restrictions due to allergies or sensitivities.**



## Plan Some Office Fun This Holiday Season!

*Maybe your disappointed that you can't have that holiday luncheon with all your co-workers/employees this year due to social distancing. Why not plan to bring some fun to the office instead? Laughter can lift all our spirits and help us feel connected in times of unrest. Here are a few ideas that you might consider:*



**"You don't stop laughing because you grow older.**

**You grow older because you stop laughing."**

**Maurice Chevalier**

- **Joke of the Week** – We all need to laugh, and this is something everyone can take a turn at. Take turns finding a joke each week to help start Monday morning off right. Make sure it stays clean and appropriate. ☺

- **Caption the GIF** – More and more people are having fun with GIFs. Choose one a week and ask your team to come up with a clever caption for it.

- **Best Pet Photo** - There's no doubt our pets love having us around, so why not share their good looks? Ask your team to send in their best animal photo and offer a prize to the winner. Maybe make it themed (best holiday outfit?) Display these photos for all to see. Maybe ask each pet owner to share a little something special about their furry friend.

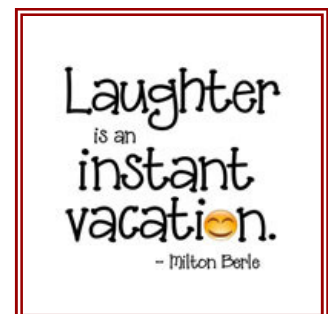
- **Story Time** - The idea is to have the entire team work together to tell a story that (mostly) makes sense. The organizer starts things off by emailing a sentence to a co-worker. Each person along the chain has to add a line. Hopefully laughs ensue. And it's up to the last person to wrap it up. Maybe post the final story to share the chuckles with everyone.

- **Two Truths and a Lie** - This game is always a great way to get to know each other while having a little fun. Ask each person to submit two unique things about themselves and a third thing that isn't true. Have their coworkers try to figure it out.

- **Express Yourself** – Most of us have gotten used to using emojis to communicate, and your phone keeps track of the ones you use the most. Have each person submit a screenshot of their most-used emojis and see if you all can guess which screenshot belongs to which employee.

- **Make a Meme** – Pick an image and have your staff attach a funny clean phrase to it. Here's one site that you can use <https://makeameme.org/>. Post them in a common place and ask folks to vote on their favorite phrase. Offer a small prize to the winner.

*This may sound silly to some, but if it brings laughter to the office and helps everyone stay connected, isn't it worth a few minutes?*





I made this over the weekend and it was very tasty. This flavorful, easy, and whole-some oil-free Spicy Sicilian Soup is a whole food nod to the popular Carrabba's Spicy Sicilian Chicken Soup

Recipe from: *Monkey & Me Kitchen Adventures*

VEGAN | GF | OIL FREE | REFINED SUGAR FREE

## SPICY SICILIAN SOUP

www.monkeyandmekitchenadventures.com

### Base Ingredients:

- 1 cup yellow onions, fine dice
- 2 Tablespoons minced garlic
- 3 celery ribs, diced
- 3 medium carrots, diced
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 3 cups water (or broth)
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth \*
- 1 – [ 14 oz. can ] petite diced tomatoes
- 1 Tablespoon reduced-sodium tamari \*
- 1 Tablespoon white miso \*
- 1 – [ 15 oz. can ] kidney beans, drained and rinsed \*
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda \*

### Spice/Herb Ingredients:

- 1 ½ teaspoons onion powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 Tablespoons dried minced onions
- 1 Tablespoon dried parsley
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika (+/-)
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin (+/-)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ – 1 teaspoon sea salt (+/-) \*
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes \* I think it could have used more.

### Other Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup dry ditalini pasta, cooked (or elbow macaroni)



Fill a large stock pot full of water. Add some sea salt to the water. Bring the water to a boil then add the pasta. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Boil the pasta *until almost* el dente, drain, rinse with cold water to remove any excess starch, shake well, set aside, then transfer the cooked pasta into the soup in at **Step 5**.

Place the **Spice/Herb Ingredients** (except the red pepper flake) into a small bowl, mix well. Set aside.

Place the diced onions, celery, carrots, and red bell peppers into an enamel-lined/ceramic lined pot, sauté over medium-high heat until softened, approx. 7 to 9 minutes, then add the minced garlic, sauté for one minute.

Then add all the remaining **Base Ingredients** and the **Spice/Herb Mix**. Bring to a boil, then immediately lower to simmer. Simmer for 20 minutes.

Add in the cooked ditalini, stir well to combine, boil on low for a couple minutes. Then remove from the stove, put a lid on the pot, and allow to set for 10 minutes. Discard the bay leaves, add the red pepper flakes. Stir, then serve and enjoy.

**Macaroni/Pasta:** We *prefer* cooking/boiling the pasta *separately* then adding the cooked pasta at the end to avoid losing any liquids much like most restaurants do. This helps preserve the soup flavor, reduce broth cloudiness, and eliminates the pasta from drinking up too much broth while it cooks.

**Gluten Free Macaroni/Pasta:** If using a gluten free macaroni/pasta, we recommend cooking the pasta *separately* as gluten free pastas tend to release a lot of starch which makes the soup cloudy.

**Amount of Pasta:** While it is tempting to use more than the recipe amount of 2/3 cup of pasta, we recommend you stick to this amount otherwise the pasta will soak up all the liquids and the soup will no longer be "soup."

**Red Pepper Flakes:** We recommend adding the red pepper flakes at the end in order to get a good base flavor. Or if you wish, you can add it to individual servings.

**\*Vegetable Stock:** We use [Pacific Organic Low Sodium Vegetable Stock](#). We love this brand because it is Whole Food Plant Based compliant, as it does not contain MSG, has no oil, and does not contain any highly-processed ingredients.

**\*Tamari:** We used [San J Tamari Soy Sauce, Gluten Free, Reduced Sodium](#). You can substitute the tamari with reduced sodium soy sauce, Braggs Liquid Aminos, or Braggs Coconut Liquid Aminos.

**\*Miso:** We used [Miso Master Organic Mellow White Premium Lite Miso, Certified Gluten Free](#). Miso really lends itself to balancing flavors when you don't use oil. You can also use chickpea miso for a soy free version.

**\*Baking Soda:** Baking soda is often used as a neutralizer for dishes that contain a lot of acidity, typically from tomatoes. We use it in this dish to remove some of the tomato acidity (from the petite diced tomatoes) without losing the tomatoey flavor. When you add it, the mixture will bubble up, then settle down as it neutralizes the acidity.

**\*Beans:** We kitchen tested with both chickpeas and kidney beans. Both worked great. You can pretty much use any type of bean you want into this soup. We preferred the kidney beans for this soup.

**\*Sea Salt:** Please adjust the sea salt based upon your family's sea salt preferences and/or based upon dietary needs.

**\*Makes:** Serves about 3 – 4 (makes about 7 ½ cups)

Ingredients:

Instructions:

Tips for success:

\* Notes:



## MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE COOKIES

These decadent, chewy chocolaty Mexican Hot Chocolate Cookies are pure cookie heaven with warming cinnamon spice and a little kick of cayenne pepper. These fudgy cookies really deliver with a slightly crispy exterior and a deliciously dense, chewy interior like a brownie in cookie form. They are easy to make and have quickly become one of my new favorites! Perfect for any holiday cookie swap! And they are healthy to boot!

### Dry Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups **almond flour**
- ½ cup **unsweetened cocoa powder**
- ¼ cup **maple sugar** \*
- ¼ teaspoon **baking soda**
- 2 teaspoons **baking powder**
- 1 Tablespoon **cornstarch**
- 1 ½ teaspoons **cinnamon** \*
- ¼ teaspoon **sea salt**
- ¼ teaspoon **cayenne pepper** \* (optional but I'd suggest it)

### Wet Ingredients:

- ½ cup **unsalted almond butter**, softened \*
- 1/3 cup **organic maple syrup** \*
- 1 Tablespoon **molasses**
- 1 teaspoon **vanilla**
- 2 Tablespoons **unsweetened plain plant milk**

\***Serving:** Makes approximately 14 to 16 cookies.

\***Storage:** Use within 5 days. Freezes well.

**Recipe from: Monkey & Me Kitchen Adventures**



### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Place oven rack in the center position, avoiding the lower oven rack placement.
2. Line a baking sheet with a silicone mat (or parchment paper).
3. Place all the **Dry Ingredients** into a bowl, whisk well to combine.
4. Add the **Wet Ingredients** to the dry ingredients, stir well to combine (no electric mixer required).
5. Take 2 tablespoons of cookie dough and roll it in your hands to form a ball (see recipe notes), then place the ball onto the silicone mat (or parchment paper) lined cookie sheet. Try to keep the cookie size uniform. Space them apart as they do spread. Continue until you have rolled all the dough into balls and placed on the baking sheet.
6. Then flatten each ball into a round disk about 1/2 inch thick, then place the baking sheet into a preheated 350 F oven and bake for 11 minutes.
7. After 11 minutes, remove from the oven, allow the cookies to sit on the baking sheet(s) undisturbed for 1 minute to firm up, then transfer to a wire cooling rack. Enjoy warm, soooo delicious!

### Notes:

1. **\*Maple Syrup and Maple Sugar:** We get tons of questions about sweetener substitutions. We totally get it. Some folks want to use all Medjool dates, while others want to use all maple syrup. We've tried these cookies using all Medjool dates, they turned out gummy. We also tried using all maple syrup, they just didn't hold up. Honestly, the best sweetener for this cookie recipe is the combination of maple syrup and maple sugar. Additionally, using date sugar is not recommended either as it just doesn't have the same flavor and texture needed for this recipe. \*\*\* We also get lot questions about using coconut sugar, if your diet permits, you can substitute coconut sugar for the maple sugar. However, we have not tested with coconut sugar, many of our readers have let us know that coconut sugar works well as a substitute for maple sugar.
2. **\*Cayenne Pepper:** You will get a little kick of heat on the back end of your palate from the cayenne pepper. The chocolate somewhat tempers the heat, but it really adds this beautiful dimension to the cookies. If you are concerned, you can totally leave out the cayenne pepper for a beautifully chocolatey brownie-tasting cookie.
3. **\*Cinnamon Spice:** Some cinnamon spices are stronger than others. For example, some brands have a very strong cinnamon flavor that can become bitter whereas Penzeys has a beautifully bold sweet cinnamon flavor without the bitterness. I think individual personal preference really depends upon what you are most familiar with and what type of cinnamon spice brand you enjoy. The cinnamon in this cookie recipe is used as a beautiful accent flavor.
4. **\*Unsalted Almond Butter:** You want the almond butter softened, but not melted. Almond butter at room temperature is best; however, if you store your opened jar of almond butter in the fridge like we do, just spoon out the recipe required amount and microwave it for 4 to 5 seconds to soften it without melting it. You can substitute other nut or seed butters that have the same consistency as the almond butter with the understanding that the flavor will slightly change. We do not recommend tahini as a substitute. Additionally, use only a nut/seed butter where the only ingredient is the nut or seed. Do not use a nut/seed butter where the separated oil has been pour off; instead any of the oil that separates on the top should be stirred back in for a smooth consistency.
5. **\*Rolling Cookie Balls:** The dough is very sticky. Tip: wash your hands between every 5 cookies or so, so you can roll a smooth round cookie ball. If you leave your hands very slightly damp, you will get a smoother, glossier cookie. The cookie photos do not show the glossier cookie as we dried our hands and did not leave them a little bit damp. We were divided over the glossier versus natural look of the cookies.

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIF

E-mail: debby\_schiffer@targetingwellness.com Office: 856-322-1220

Cell: 856-520-9908



***Wishing everyone a healthy and safe holiday season!!!***

