



SPRING HAPPENINGS at the UPMC Western Maryland Wellness Center

Call **240-964-8424** or email leesm9@upmc.edu to register.

NEW IN 2024! RESISTANCE BAND CLASSES provide participants the ability to build strength, increase bone density, and decrease arthritis pain all in one. Classes are held at the Frostburg Library (65 East Main Street) every Monday from 1:30 to 2:00 p.m. throughout the year. These classes are suitable for all fitness levels. Bring water, and a friend. Walk-in registrations are welcome.

FREE YOGA CLASSES at your local libraries! Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. at the South Cumberland Library and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. at the LaVale Library. Join this beginner-friendly class to experience how gentle stretching and mindful breathing can make you feel better fast!

SMART RECOVERY: Every Thursday from noon to 1:00 p.m. online. This is a SELF-EMPOWERING addiction recovery support group. SMART Recovery can help people recover from all types of addiction and addictive behaviors, including alcoholism, drug abuse, drug addiction, substance and alcohol abuse, gambling addiction, and food addiction. This is not a spiritual-based program but a self-empowering, abstinence-based, self-help support group for both men and women. For more information, please contact Carey Moffatt at moffattcl@upmc.edu or call 240-962-8418.

BUILDING BETTER CAREGIVERS: Seven-week course for caregivers of a loved one with dementia, PTSD, brain-related injury, and more. Registration is ongoing. Please contact us for more details.

CHAIR YOGA is offered by UPMC Western Maryland every Monday at the Gilchrist Museum of the Arts at 104 Washington Street, Cumberland, MD 21502, at 2:30 p.m. Please register to attend in person or online via ZOOM by contacting Christina Collins-Smith at collinssmithcd@upmc.edu.

FREE HEALTH COACHING: Have you tried to make changes to your lifestyle only to find yourself falling back into the same routine and/or not-so-healthy habits? A certified health coach can help! Healthy eating habits, exercise plans, stress management, gym fitness plans, relaxation and coping techniques are some of the coaching topics we cover ... and our health coaching services are free.

Activities and events are always being added - for an up-to-date listing, contact the Wellness Center at 240-964-8424 or visit UPMC Western Maryland on Facebook!



SPRING FEVER!



Stacey Blank, MS, BTPS RRT
Manager, UPMC Community Health and Wellness

The phrase spring fever means “the feeling of restless ambition that accompanies the arrival of spring.” For me, that kicks in when we move the clocks forward an hour, and the days get longer and brighter. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly the buds begin to show on the trees once they get a little warmth and sunshine on them. My favorite is the cherry blossom, and this beautiful picture is one that I took of the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C., recently. Spring is a time of renewal, beauty, and purposeful growth – Mother Nature has the best plan. So, get out there and enjoy it. Breathe it all in and feel the power of that renewal.

What can we do to mimic Mother Nature’s renewal plan for our own well-being? Take that walk you’ve been meaning to do, get your garden ready to plant, do some spring cleaning, start that exercise plan, re-think your eating habits, and allow for plenty of mindful reflection on how very lucky we are to be here in this moment living our best life.

Make health a habit; choose one thing you would like to change this spring in your journey to a healthier you!

stacey

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE CUMBERLAND YMCA RIVERSIDE IN APRIL 2024!

Health & Wellness Expo
Thursday, May 2 from 2-7 p.m.

Healthy Kids Day
Saturday, April 6 from 1-4 p.m.

Please plan to join us for informative and fun events as we share health and wellness information to support you in your personal health and wellness goals! Call the Riverside Y at 301-777-9622 for more information.

SAFETY FIRST

Susan Lee, Administrative Assistant



Spring ushers in a season of incredible beauty as the earth awakens from its winter slumber. As the landscape shifts from gray to the colorful hues of spring, we enjoy the sense of renewal that comes with the change in the weather. Spring, however, can be very temperamental as we travel on our seasonal journey toward summer.

As we transition from winter to spring, we often have an overlap of seasonal weather events – snow or freezing rain in April and sometimes May, or a stray daytime temp of 80-90 degrees in March, sandwiched between the waning days of wintertime cold. We also see the return of severe thunderstorms, hail, tornadoes, flooding, and high-wind events. Mother Nature can be very unpredictable.

Staying weather aware is important for safety and well-being. Check-in on your favorite weather forecasting source daily. Want to dive a little deeper? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- If you live or work near a water source, you may want to check on rivers and streams data to see if a flood risk will or has increased due to a storm. An easy place to start is on the National Weather Service's Baltimore/Washington home page (Allegany and Garrett County, as well as surrounding counties, are included in this National Weather Service forecast region). Click on [Baltimore/Washington \(weather.gov\)](https://www.weather.gov/baltimore-washington) and scroll down to the icons in the middle of the page. A "Rivers & Lakes" icon is located on the first row. Click on the icon, and a map will pop up that shows the major gauges in our region. Click on one of the dots, and another pop-up will show the current and projected flood risk at that gauge location.
- Wunderground (<https://wunderground.com>) provides forecasts for your specific area; as an example, they provide data from about 15 different weather stations located in and around zip code 21502 (Cumberland). Type your zip code in the "Search Locations" box at the top of the home page, and you will be able to access your local weather data. Wunderground also posts some timely weather articles in the "News & Blogs" section.
- Ventusky (<https://www.ventusky.com>) provides a detailed graphic display of weather data. You can select different weather categories (clouds, wind speed, snow cover, air quality, etc.) and get a snapshot of current weather conditions.

Stay Safe, and Have a Happy Spring!



CHAIR EXERCISE IS FOR EVERYONE

Mike Browning, MA, NBC-HWC



Chair exercise is a form of resistance-based fitness training performed with the safety and stability of a chair. There are numerous benefits to chair exercise that go beyond safety and stability, such as convenience, real strength gain in older adults, increased mobility, and mental health, to name a few. Let's begin by talking about the most obvious: strength gain. In a study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, older adults 50 and above significantly improved their handgrip strength, balance, leg strength, upper limb function, and arm strength. When thinking about our independence later in life through mobility, these benefits cannot be understated. Another great perk of chair exercise is convenience. You can do chair exercise almost anywhere, like at home, work, or even when traveling away from home. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the benefits to mental health. Exercise reduces anxiety and depression, but beyond mood disorders, exercise improves our alertness and ability to absorb information. So, if you are an office worker who sits for hours at a time, take 5-10 minutes, and perform chair exercises, you will increase your alertness and work efficiency. Teachers, have your students perform chair exercises during classroom transitions to boost attention and learning; they will also love it!

Hopefully, by now, you are interested in beginning your own chair exercise routine, so

let's discuss a few basics to get you started. First and foremost, pick a sturdy chair without rollers; it should have some weight to it, but not so much that you can't move it around if you need to. Your chair should also have sturdy arms; this isn't a must but will help with some upper-body exercises and extra stability for the lower body if you have mobility issues. Placement of the chair is also important; if you have stability concerns, you should place the back of your chair against a wall for extra support and make sure you have plenty of space in front of you and to the sides. Choosing a chair program shouldn't be difficult; there are plenty of great ones online, like this one from the YMCA: <https://ymcanyc.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/10ChairExercisesforSeniors.pdf>. Whatever program you choose, aim to perform the entirety of the routine for at least 10 minutes two to three times per week. If you would like more guidance, the community health and wellness team at UPMC Western Maryland can help get you started with free community class offerings and personal one-on-one instruction. Our contact information is in the newsletter, and we hope to hear from you! Finally, we recommend everyone speak to their doctor before starting a new exercise program.

IN ORDER TO APPRECIATE THIS ARTICLE BETTER, BEFORE YOU CONTINUE TO READ AND IF YOU ARE A SKEPTIC, DO 20 STAND AND SITS RIGHT NOW IN YOUR STURDY CHAIR. DON'T FEEL BAD IF YOU'RE BUSY CATCHING YOUR BREATH, AND IF YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE IN SHAPE AND ARE NOW QUESTIONING WHETHER THAT IS TRUE, COULD IT JUST BE THAT CHAIR EXERCISE IS EFFECTIVE? As an avid exerciser and personal trainer for over 20 years, I distinctly remember the first time I taught chair exercise. Admittedly, after unexpectedly feeling my own perspiration and difficulty breathing, I felt a little self-shame at my perceived lack of fitness. However, what I did eventually realize after healing the ego was that chair exercise works! Considering that many exercises have a considerable amount of risk, especially for older adults and or people with mobility difficulties, this was a pretty exciting realization. If you have decided to stick around, in this article, you will learn about the specific benefits of chair exercise and how you might go about starting a routine.

Resources:

[The Effect of Chair-Based Exercise on Physical Function in Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35888888/)
[10ChairExercisesforSeniors.pdf \(ymcanyc.org\)](https://ymcanyc.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/10ChairExercisesforSeniors.pdf)



Stress and the Vagus Nerve

Pam Jan, NBC-HWC

I'll get to the vagus in a minute, but first, let's take a look at the whole nervous system. Our overall nervous system includes two main subsystems: the central nervous system (including the brain and spinal cord) and the peripheral nervous system (everything else). The peripheral nervous system is comprised of the following two subsystems:

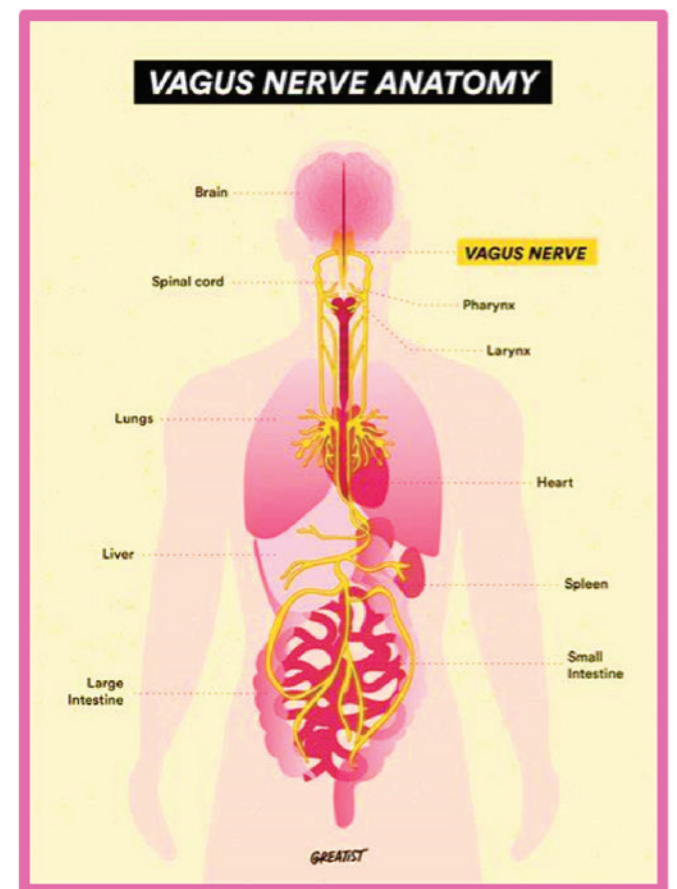
- Somatic carries information to the senses (except for the eyes, which are part of the brain) and includes the muscles we can control.
- Autonomic nervous system regulates many of the internal organs through a balance of these three divisions:
 - Enteric which manages digestion.
 - Sympathetic which activates body processes in times of need like stress or danger.
 - Parasympathetic which is responsible for the body's rest and digestive processes. The vagus nerve is the main nerve in this system and where I'll jump back into the main feature of this article.

The vagus nerve wanders through our bodies, starting in our brain and goes down the right and left sides of the body into the large intestine. As it does, it connects with the neck, chest, heart, lungs, abdominal cavity, abdomen, and digestive tract. The pair of nerves contain 75% of your parasympathetic nervous system's nerve fibers and communicates information between your digestive system, brain, and heart. These signals regulate the heart, taste, speech, skin and muscle sensations, immune response, respiratory rate, blood pressure, mucus, saliva production, digestion, urination, and mood.

The vagus nerve, sometimes called the wandering nerve, is involved in numerous processes throughout our bodies. We can't see, feel, or touch it, and it works automatically, so we don't even have to think about it. So, why am I bringing it up? No, it's not to get on your last nerve, but because it's critical to the harmonious functioning of our bodies. Like a quarterback directs plays on the field, the vagus nerve directs plays in the body, helping to regulate the heart, breathing, digestion, and more. So, knowing a little about what it does and how you can help it function well can be important to your health.

When experiencing danger or stress, our sympathetic system comes into play and gets us ready to freeze, fight, or flee. Once the stress is over, the vagus nerve comes to our rescue to help us rest and relax. Unfortunately, for many, the stress doesn't end; we carry more and more. This overstimulation can cause dysfunction if we leave it unchecked.

Your autonomic nervous system, particularly the vagus nerve, is a vital part of how you live your life. You don't even have to think about it most of the time, and it will keep doing its job. Taking care of your body, especially your nervous system, is the best way to avoid conditions that can cause autonomic nerve damage. That way, you can keep focusing on what you want to pay attention to in your life. Stay tuned for tips on keeping your vagus nerve healthy in this summer's edition of Real Well.



Resource: Hartmann, Reiner. *Daily Vagus Nerve Exercises*. 2023.



RECOGNIZING THE CONNECTION: Breaking Free from Stress Eating Habits

Carey Moffatt,
MS, NBC-HWC



When stress knocks on your door, it does not just impact your emotional well-being; it can affect your eating habits. Our bodies release hormones that can trigger intense cravings, often leading us to seek comfort in food. While the temporary relief may feel soothing, it often leaves us with a sense of guilt and regret. Understanding the root causes of stress eating is crucial in breaking the cycle and regaining control.

One way to overcome stress eating is identifying its triggers. Are you turning to food in response to stress at particular times of the day, in specific locations, when confronted with negative emotions and/or irrational thoughts, during conflicts, or feelings of boredom or loneliness? Self-awareness is vital for initiating positive change and developing effective coping skills.

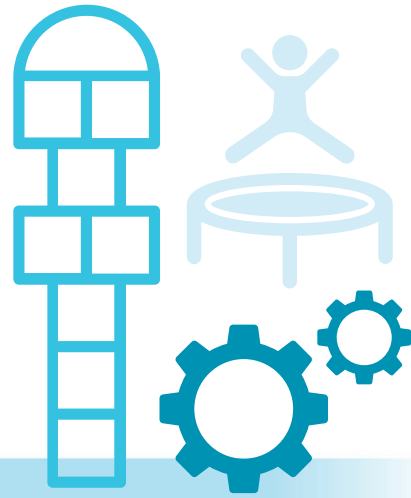
Below are some coping strategies for breaking the cycle of stress eating:

- Keep an urge log to pinpoint patterns and gain insight into your specific stressors.
- When the desire to stress eat arises, delay the action by setting a specific time—say 15 minutes—and use that time to involve yourself in a different activity, such as listening to music, taking a walk, practicing deep breathing exercises, or engaging in a hobby.
- Practicing mindful eating can be a powerful tool in breaking the stress-eating cycle. According to The Center for Mind-Body Medicine, mindful eating is choosing, preparing, and savoring food with intention. One mindful eating tool is a deliberate pause. Pause before reaching for food and ask yourself if you are eating out of hunger or as a reaction to stress. Paying attention to your body's hunger and fullness cues can help you make more conscious choices. Another beneficial mindful eating tool is clearing. The act of "clearing" is taking a small sip of water after each bite of food. Clearing can assist in creating a slower eating pace, increasing awareness of fullness cues, and helping to cultivate a positive relationship with food.

As you embark on this path, be patient with yourself. Change takes time, and setbacks are a natural part of the learning process. Celebrate the small victories and acknowledge the progress you make along the way. Surround yourself with support, whether it is through engaging in activities that bring joy or reaching out to loved ones. Remember, it is not just about overcoming the immediate urge; it is about cultivating a positive relationship with food and nurturing your emotional well-being.

Source: The Center for Mind-Body Medicine (Mindful Eating)





Brittany Friend,
MS, NBC-HWC

PUT THAT SPRING BACK IN YOUR STEP!

We're all sick of that cold, dreary weather and are gearing up for sunshine, flowers, and birds singing. As we break out of our winter slump, it's time to get back to being active. Now, we can get outside and don't feel stuck indoors with nothing to do. Now is the time to get back into gear and get your kids excited about being active as well. Although they THINK that being in front of the TV or tablets with nothing to do is heaven, we know it's not the best thing for their bodies.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says three out of four children don't get the recommended time of physical activity each day, which is 60 minutes. As kids continue to get older, this tends to decrease even more. So, it becomes even more important to get them active and keep them active. This can be challenging - especially if you hear all that groaning from your teenager when they have to put the phone down.

How do we engage the groaner? Sometimes, it's as easy as engaging in their favorite sport with them. Other times, it may take a bit of creativity. What is their favorite game on their phone; can you make it into an outdoor activity? Perhaps it's as easy as a reward system for exercise. 60 minutes of exercise = another 20 minutes of screen time.

Plan a fun outing. Sometimes, just walking around a park may seem mundane. So, what else can you do? Are there any trampoline parks that you can go to? Let them take a friend. All that jumping, usually for more than just 60 minutes, is getting them a lot of activity, and they don't even know it.

For the little ones - engage their senses and interests. Can you teach them how to ride that bike they got for Christmas? Do they want to throw a ball outside? Maybe your kiddo loves a good ol' scavenger hunt that you can do while walking in a park. Another great idea for the younger kids is to create a sensory path with chalk, floor mats, or different obstacles. These paths can help kiddos work on fine/gross motor, emotional, and educational skills while also keeping them active. To find out more ideas on sensory paths, visit <https://fit.sanfordhealth.org/blog/helping-your-kids-find-the-joy-in-being-active>.

Another great way to engage kids is to be a role model. When kids see their parents involved in an activity, they are more likely to engage. Engaging in healthy behaviors can go further than physical activity. When they see you making better food choices and incorporating them into mealtimes, they are more likely to adopt these same behaviors as they get older.

Whatever you do, make it fun. Anything fun is sure to be replicated again and again. Wishing you a warm, beautiful spring filled with great activities and no attitude from your groaner!



Spring forward into Wellness

As Spring unfolds and we begin to see the signs of new life emerging, many of us feel the urge to shake off the sluggishness of winter hibernation. We welcome days of warmer breezes, open windows to refresh our living spaces, plan a garden, venture out socially, take longer walks with the dog, or ride our bikes as we savor the delights of nature's delicate colors, carpeting the earth with freshness.

It is a season that invites new energy to our bodies and beings. A time to think about changing heavy winter fare to a lighter diet that includes salads, veggies, and legumes. A time to clear clutter to offer unobstructed space for feet and thoughts. A time to practice focused breathing that calms the mind and movements that encourage maximum balance, flexibility, range of motion, and energy in the body.

Are you ready for some springtime energy? Please join me for any of the following community yoga sessions that are offered as a gift to the community from UPMC Western Maryland and their location partners.

UPMC CHAIR YOGA

**Gilchrist Museum of the Arts
Mondays 2:30 PM**

ZOOM option: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82874339529>

Meeting ID: 828 7433 9529 Passcode: 867013

UPMC GENTLE FUNCTIONAL YOGA FLOW

**South Cumberland Library
Wednesdays 11:00 a.m.**

**LaVale Library
Fridays 10:30 a.m.**

As you allow the spirit of this energizing season to inspire you, please be gentle and kind with yourself as an act of well-being and self-care that is a gift of love not only for yourself but for everyone in your life.

I look forward to yoga-ing with you.

Christina Collins-Smith, MLA, E-RYT, LMT, YACEP
Yoga and Health Coach, collinssmithcd@upmc.edu

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS



A hospital stay is, at the very least, a stressful period; fear, anxiety, and simply facing the unknown overwhelm us during the hospital experience. Our pastoral care staff is here to help and support you and your family while receiving care at UPMC Western Maryland.

Pastor Bruce McBride is our Director of Pastoral Care. Our UPMC Western Maryland team of pastoral care professionals is specially trained to work within the health system to provide spiritual care with deep respect for your own religious beliefs and faith traditions. Chaplains and pastoral care staff are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Available services include:

- Pastoral visitations
- Sacrament ministry
- Religious services
- Support groups
- Chapel
- Bibles
- Religious literature

During a hospital stay, our team can be reached by dialing zero (0) for the operator from your bedside phone, and the operator will then contact the appropriate person. You can also ask your nurse to contact our team; they will be more than happy to assist you. Outside the hospital, please call the operator at 240-964-7000 and ask for the on-call chaplain.

Our pastoral team is here to help. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for your spiritual needs.

UPMC Spiritual Care Conference is at UPMC Western Maryland on April 19, 2024 beginning at 8:30 AM

A message from Pastor Bruce McBride about the event.

What a blessing to have all the chaplains, volunteers and spiritual staff travel to Cumberland and see our amazing medical services. We expect around 100 spiritual leaders to come to UPMC Western Maryland for this conference. What an open door to bless other hospital leaders.

We will have general sessions teaching Spiritual care leaders to focus on the future, Palliative Care and Support, No One Dies Alone, and Reaching the Non-religious. Our featured Speaker is Samette George from Harrisburg, PA. She is a lung cancer survivor and will bring her book, "Few are Chosen: it's an honor to be selected by God." You will hear how she trusted God to meet her health needs. We are excited to display our staff and exhibit our beautiful campus.

**LAUGHTER
IS THE BEST
MEDICINE**



From *Country Living* online ...

What did the snail riding on the turtle's back say?
Wheeeeeee!!!

Why don't we see elephants hiding in trees?
Because they're really good at it!

ALLEGANY COUNTY HEALTH PLANNING COALITION “SPOTLIGHT”

Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission, Inc. (HRDC)

The Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission, Inc. (HRDC) is a private non-profit Community Action Agency founded in 1965. The purpose of HRDC, which was originally mandated by the Allegany County Commissioners, was to combat poverty and the problems of the disadvantaged in Allegany County. To meet this end, HRDC's Board of Directors, representing various sectors of the community, has identified problems experienced by disadvantaged individuals, families, elderly, and disabled populations. HRDC's goals are centered on developing a wide variety of notable and honorably mentioned programs and activities designed to alleviate those problems, most recently named "Agency of the Year" by TAM (Transportation Association of Maryland) in 2023 for our Mobility Management Program. The Mobility Management Program provides coordinated transportation services to low-income and elderly Allegany County residents.

HRDC aims to eliminate social and economic barriers to promote individual and community stability through services, advocacy, and collaboration. HRDC, under the direction of its Board of Directors, designs, staffs, operates, and assembles funding for a wide range of programs. These programs improve the lives of the young, the low-income, the elderly, and

those with disabilities in Allegany County, Maryland. When a need is identified, HRDC creates effective public-private partnerships to help people to help themselves.

HRDC envisions a community where individuals and families have the opportunities and resources to live with dignity, achieve their fullest potential, maintain long-term independence, become economically stable, and operate under the Core Values of Teamwork, Honesty and Integrity, Respect, Trust and Dignity, Innovation and Growth, Value of People, and Effort and Commitment.

Based at 125 Virginia Avenue in Cumberland, the agency currently employs 155 individuals and operates 32 programs from 16 different sites with funds generated from over 40 different sources while maintaining very low administrative costs. It utilizes hundreds of volunteers and a fleet of 30 vehicles and coordinates its services with many other agencies in the county, thereby leveraging even more resources. HRDC's coordinated approach provides vital linkages that allow HRDC staff to link clients to programs and services they need both internally and externally. In 2023, HRDC's programs provided services to over 27,000 individuals through affordable housing, meals and activity centers for senior citizens, transportation services, daycare programs for disabled

adults, weatherization, pre-school and childcare programs, free tax preparation and filing, and special services for county nursing home residents and incapacitated adults.

HRDC strongly believes that providing and connecting persons to financial resources and services will increase families' financial well-being. Our Whole Family Approach continues to consider the needs of both vulnerable children and parents together in the design and delivery of services and programs to support improved economic, educational, health, safety, transportation, and other outcomes. The family and their needs continue to be front and center with Quality Early Childhood services, Post Secondary Education and Employment and Career Pathways, Economic Supports, Asset Building, Housing, Transportation, Health, Well-being, and Social Capital.





IN THE KITCHEN with RACHEL

Rachel Sproat, RDN, LDN



Creamed Asparagus and Mushrooms



This vegetable side dish combines mushrooms with crisp but tender asparagus. Asparagus is a versatile, nutrient-packed vegetable. Pair this flavorful side dish with a protein food, such as fish, to make this a more balanced meal.

INGREDIENTS

4 pounds asparagus spears
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup chopped onion (1 large)
1 tablespoon bottled minced garlic (6 cloves)
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ cup reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
¼ cup dry sherry or dry white wine
¼ cup reduced-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel)
12 ounces assorted sliced fresh mushrooms, such as white button, shiitake, cremini, or oyster mushrooms
1 ½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
2 teaspoons snipped fresh thyme or 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed

DIRECTIONS

- 1.) Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Prepare a large bowl of ice water. Snap off and discard woody bases from asparagus. Cut spears into 2-inch pieces. Cook asparagus in the boiling water for 4 to 6 minutes or just until crisp-tender. Drain asparagus. Plunge asparagus into the ice water; let stand until cooled. Remove asparagus; pat dry with paper towels. Set aside.
- 2.) In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, salt and pepper; cook until softened. Stir in broth, sherry and cream cheese; bring to boiling. Add mushrooms; cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until mushrooms are softened and the sauce thickens slightly. Stir in Parmesan cheese and thyme. Add the cooked asparagus; heat through, stirring to coat. Drain and put hot noodles in a large mixing bowl.

<https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/267525/creamed-asparagus-and-mushrooms/>

Pineapple Pork



Pineapples are available all year round, but their peak season is March through July. The sweet and tangy pineapple combined with the tender and juicy pork will take your tastebuds on a tropical vacation.

INGREDIENTS

2-3 lb. pork loin roast
1 sliced onion
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
½ cup dark brown sugar
¾ cup apple cider vinegar
½ cup honey
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tsp salt
3 minced garlic cloves
2 cups diced fresh or canned pineapple chunks
Optional: 1 tsp crushed red pepper flakes

DIRECTIONS

- 1.) Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the pork loin roast and sear it on all sides until browned. This will help seal in the flavors and juices.
- 2.) Transfer the seared pork loin roast to a slow cooker. Add the sliced onion around the roast. (If you want, you can also sear the onions before putting it in).
- 3.) In a mixing bowl, combine the apple cider vinegar, soy sauce, honey, dark brown sugar, minced garlic cloves, salt, and crushed red pepper flakes (if using). Mix well to create a marinade.
- 4.) Pour the marinade over the pork loin roast and onions in the slow cooker. Make sure the roast is well coated with the marinade.
- 5.) Add the diced fresh pineapple chunks to the slow cooker, distributing them evenly around the roast.
- 6.) Cover the slow cooker and cook on low heat for 6-8 hours or high for 4-5 hours or until the pork is tender.
- 7.) Optional: Once done, make a cornstarch slurry and pour into the slow cooker to further thicken the gravy sauce.

<https://cooktopcove.com/2023/07/07/slow-cooker-pineapple-pork/>

Artichoke, Spinach, Jalapeno Cream Cheese Dip



This recipe features spinach and artichoke, which are in-season produce. Enjoy this dip warm or cold with whole-grain bread, whole-grain crackers, or fresh vegetables (carrots, celery, etc.).

INGREDIENTS

8-ounce reduced fat cream cheese
1 cup fat-free Greek yogurt
2 cups of fat-free fresh mozzarella cheese, shredded
½ cup of shaved reduced fat Parmesan Cheese
1 14-oz canned artichoke, drained, cut in bite size pieces
3 ½ cups of frozen spinach, thawed
2 cloves or 2 teaspoons of garlic, minced
2 stalks of or ½ cup green onions, chopped
5 pieces or ½ cup of canned jalapeño, minced

DIRECTIONS

- 1.) Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2.) In a large bowl, electronically beat the cream cheese, yogurt, 1 cup of mozzarella cheese and Parmesan cheese until mixed throughout, evenly.
- 3.) Add other ingredients and then mix evenly.
- 4.) In a quarter-sized casserole spread dip.
- 5.) Add 1 cup of mozzarella cheese on top before baking for 40-45 minutes or until mozzarella cheese is browned.
- 6.) Serve hot with whole grain bread or whole grain crackers. Or serve cold with vegetables such as carrots.

<https://fruitsandveggies.org/recipes/artichoke-spinach-jalapeno-cream-cheese-dip-spread/>

