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Simple Sautéed Spinach

Makes 2 servings

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 9 ounces baby spinach

Heat olive oil in a non-stick sauté pan over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until garlic is golden, about 4 minutes. (Tip: Do not burn the garlic — There's no graceful recovery except to start over again) Add spinach and toss with tongs until just wilted.

Garlic contains allicin, which helps to thin the blood, allowing better blood flow through congested blood vessels. Spinach is a good source of iron and many vitamins.

Couscous Pilaf

Makes 2 servings

- 1/4 cup slivered almonds
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup uncooked whole wheat couscous
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

In a small dry skillet, toast the almonds over medium heat. (Watch carefully to make sure they don't burn)

In a medium sauce pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat.

Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the dry couscous and stir to toast evenly, about 2 minutes.

Add water and bring to a boil.

Cover, remove from heat and let sit for 5 minutes.

Add fresh parsley and stir to blend.

Almonds are an excellent source of unsaturated fat, and can help reduce bad cholesterol levels. Onions can help reduce cholesterol

After 15 years racing back and forth in the corporate world, New Canaan resident Lisa Corrado now helps others find the time to eat well and stay healthy with Lisa Corrado Nutrition, formerly Eating Well, LLC.

Valentine's Day

Show love for your heart

By Laura Kenyon
Assistant Editor

Candy hearts and that special someone may be a main theme for many this month, but February is also a time to focus something else you can't live without — literally. Dubbed "American Heart Month" since 1963, February is dedicated to promoting healthy hearts and preventing heart disease. According to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease, including stroke, is the leading cause of death in the United States.

Yet while exercise and a healthy diet

are widely touted as ways to avoid heart problems, like so much else in life, sometimes there just isn't enough time: Not enough time to exercise, not enough time to write that novel or build that model airplane, and not enough time to shop for perishable vegetables instead of grabbing a pizza.

But in the words of local resident Lisa Corrado, "You have to eat anyway, so you might as well make it healthy food."

A nutritionist and executive chef, Ms. Corrado spends her days helping busy people find the time to eat well. Having spent 15 years in the corporate world before earning her master's degree in

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Heart: Simple, healthy meals

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nutrition, graduating from New York City's Institute of Culinary Education and starting her own business — Eating Well, LLC, recently renamed Lisa Corrado Nutrition — she understands the time crunch.

"We have a lot of convenience foods available to us," she said. "They're cheap and they're plentiful."

And they're easy.

Nutrition awareness has increased in recent years, she said, and supermarket aisles are now full of shoppers reading the labels. But the last thing a busy mother wants to do when she comes home after driving the kids around all day, she said, is think about cooking a healthy meal.

One of the things Ms. Corrado does in her business is look at clients' schedules and find time to cut up vegetables, for example, or sauté some black beans for use in a salad "so you can grab that instead."

Calling heart disease her "pet cause" due to family experience, Ms. Corrado said high cholesterol, obesity and high blood pressure often go hand in hand with cardiovascular problems.

While it seems breast cancer awareness receives more publicity, cardiovascular diseases kill nearly 12 times as many American women than breast cancer. Traditionally seen more as a male disease, more women die from heart disease and stroke than the next five causes of death combined, she said.

The silver lining on this storm cloud, according to Ms. Corrado, is that eating well can make a big difference.

Stressing the importance of consulting a doctor before making major lifestyle changes, Ms. Corrado cited exercising, quitting smoking, reducing stress and a healthy diet as ways to improve an existing heart condition or avoid developing one.

"More clients are coming to

Salmon with Orange Sauce

Makes 2 servings

- 2 5-ounce salmon fillets
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
(try freshly squeezed in the produce section)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 seedless orange, peeled and cleaned of white pith, sliced cross-wise into half-inch thick rounds

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Place salmon on a cookie sheet and season with ground pepper. Roast until just cooked through, about 8 to 10 minutes, depending upon thickness of fillets.

Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a non-stick sauté pan over medium heat. Sauté the onion slices until tender, stirring often, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add orange juice and soy sauce. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes until slightly thickened.

Add oranges and gently toss to coat with sauce. Serve sauce over salmon.

Healthy benefits:

Salmon is loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, which can help prevent blood clots and irregular heart beats.

Olive oil is high in monounsaturated fat, which can help lower cholesterol.

Oranges and orange juice contain potassium, a nutrient which makes sure muscles (including the heart) contract properly.

me from their doctors saying, 'I have a window of time to try lifestyle changes before I go on medication,'" she said.

Keeping a food diary is a very important step that applies to everyone, according to Ms. Corrado, especially when it comes to stress eating.

"It's like holding a mirror up," she said. "If you're writing everything down you can no longer deny what you're eating, ignore what you're eating."

Other ways to demolish the roadblocks to a healthy diet include:

- Eat less: "We live in a culture that wants the most bang for its buck," she said, "and everything must be 'supersized.' Learning what an appropriate portion size is can make a significant difference in how we eat."

- Reduce sodium intake:

"Avoid common foods that are high in sodium, especially processed meats; canned vegetables, soups and broths; frozen prepared foods, and salty snacks," she said. Instead, "enhance the natural flavor of foods with lemon juice, fresh herbs, garlic, ginger and other spices."

- Know what you're eating: "Focus on the ingredient list of packaged foods, which tell you the facts about the food," she said, "not the front of the package, which is simply marketing."

- Eat more fruits and vegetables: Naturally low in sodium and fat, fresh fruits and vegetables — or even frozen with no extra sauces or seasonings — are "a vital part of a healthy diet," she said. Homemade soup with chopped or puréed vegetables, especially made by scratch with low sodium broth or water, is "one of the best secrets for eating healthy."

Other secrets include minor changes such as replacing heavy cream with evaporated skim milk, switching butter or margarine for olive oil, taking the skin off chicken and doing some homework before heading to the market.

Some of Ms. Corrado's favorite cookbooks include: "Moosewood Restaurant: Low-Fat Favorites," "Moosewood Restaurant: New Classics" and "The Healthy Hedonist." All three are vegetarian, she said, but chicken can be added to any of the recipes.

"It's easy to make little changes here and there," she said, "and then when it becomes a habit, make some more little changes."

To make those rushed dinners a little easier, Ms. Corrado designed a line of prepared foods available at Walter Stewart's that are low in fat, sodium and calories.

More information can be found at lisacorradonutrition.com.



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