

the healthy swimmer



María Brzoskowska

In Season: Cauliflower

Mark Twain once said, “Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.”

Twain’s humorous quote is memorable, but even the best educated health food aficionados sometimes forget about the dignified delicacy.

Cauliflower was first grown in North America in the late 1600s, but was available in Italy prior to the 16th century. It is thought to have originated in Asia Minor.

The vegetable comes from an annual plant that reproduces by seed and is part of the *Brassica oleracea* species. It is the same species as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, kale, broccoli and collard greens, and its name derives from “cole” (also kale) and “flower.” Composed of bunches of tiny florets on clusters of stalks, the flower head (called the “curd”) grows

in purple, green and white – the most popular variety in the U.S.

Cauliflower is naturally low in calories and fat, and is an excellent source of vitamin C and folate, a water-soluble B vitamin. A small serving of just three to four florets can provide approximately 67 percent of the daily recommendation of vitamin C. The folate helps produce and maintain new cells and prevent changes to DNA that may lead to cancer. Cauliflower is also a good source of iron.

Cauliflower is in season from October to April, but is usually available year-round in markets. When selecting fresh cauliflower, look for firm heads with compact flowers and crisp, bright green leaves. Preparation is simple – just wash and cut before eating or cooking. It can be refrigerated raw for three to five days and up to three days after cooking. <<<

reader recipe

Tempted to drown your cooked cauliflower in cheese sauce? Try this simple, easy and elegant recipe for a big-flavored, healthy alternative.

Gingered Cauliflower Mash with Scallions

- 1 medium head fresh cauliflower, washed and cut in bite-size pieces
- 1 T fresh grated ginger
- 3 T fresh chopped scallions
- coarse salt and fresh ground pepper

Steam cauliflower until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain, return to cooking pot, add remaining ingredients, and mash with a potato masher until reaching a smooth consistency similar to mashed potatoes. For a creamier consistency, use a food processor. Serve warm. <<<

Serves 4. 28 calories per serving. 0 grams of fat per serving.

>>> Do you have a recipe our readers would enjoy?

Send it to editor@usms.org, or mail to: Reader Recipe, c/o Bill Volckening, 1220 NW 119th Place, Portland, OR 97229.

Stay Warm

What’s the best way to stay warm at swim meets during the fall and winter? Dr. Jane Katz, author of “Swimming for Total Fitness,” shares some advice based on her years of experience as a swimmer and physician.

“In the Northeast, the fall and winter swim meets have more than six degrees of separation from temperatures in warmer climates,” says Katz, who is also a member of the USMS Sports Medicine and Science Committee. “Statistics from several sources including the American College of Sports Medicine indicate that over 60 percent of body heat is lost from the head.”

To prevent heat loss, Katz recommends wearing a baseball cap or ski hat in colder climates and on chilly pool decks at meets.

“Flip flops might not be the best way to keep your feet warm,” Katz adds. “I suggest closed shoes like sneakers, or fleece-lined boots to keep your entire body relaxed and warm from head to toe. If you are swimming a few events, an extra towel and dry T-shirts and suits are always a plus.” Katz also recommends drinking room-temperature water, rather than ice-cold water, and taking a warm shower between events. <<<



Anthony Rosenberg



Adam Gryko

READERS ASK Water: Bottled vs. Tap

Q: I recently read about the campaign (www.tappening.com) to promote tap water and discourage drinking bottled water. I understand environmental concerns, but is tap water as healthy as bottled water?

A: “In the U.S., tap water is at least as healthy as bottled water,” says Jane Moore, M.D., chair of the USMS Sports Medicine and Science Committee. “Many types of bottled water are actually bottled tap water.” The EPA says the United States has one of the safest water supplies in the world.

“The EPA requires public water suppliers to provide an annual report (available at epa.gov/safewater) on quality, including the water’s source and contaminants,” Moore says. The same stringent guidelines may not affect bottled water companies.

“Tap water must contain no coliform bacteria, and is tested regularly for parasites,” Moore says. “Bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and has less stringent testing and purity standards than city tap water.” The FDA does not regulate bottled water, so it relies on each corporation to police itself.

“Bottled water may contain small amounts of *E. coli* bacteria and does not need to be tested for parasites. Minerals in tap water may affect taste,” Moore says, “but charcoal filters can remove minerals at a lower cost than buying bottled water.” <<<

>>> More information on drinking water safety is available from the Natural Resources Defense Council – nrdc.org.

Heart Age vs. Actual Age

How do you determine your heart age versus your actual age? Masters swimmer Laura Evans, a nurse practitioner from Greenfield, Mass., offers some enlightening information.

“It’s common to wonder whether our cardiovascular age is older or younger than our chronological age,” Evans says. “At 50, we’d all love to have the cardiovascular conditioning of a healthy 20-year-old, but unfortunately there is no definitive test. It’s really all about how you live your life, so it’s better to focus on lifestyle factors that affect longevity and the risk of cardiovascular disease no matter what your age.”

Evans suggests several things most people can do to promote heart health by modifying risk factors that can make a difference in health over the long term.

- Maintain a healthy diet with five servings of fruits and vegetables per day
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Don’t smoke
- Get enough sleep
- Optimally control blood

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pressure, cholesterol and diabetes

Other risk factors such as family history, gender and age cannot be modified.

“Look at your family history,” Evans says. “If several close relatives developed heart disease then take the modifiable risk factors very seriously and make the necessary lifestyle changes — as we all should.” One caveat, according to Evans, is that even if you have all the risk factors in your favor, no one is immune from heart disease. “It is a major cause of illness and death in the United States. Therefore, do the best you can with what you’ve got and, as they say, choose your parents carefully.”

For a basic tool to help determine your risk of developing coronary heart disease within the next 10 years, “Google” Framingham Risk Score and click on “10 Year CVD Risk Calculator” or go to www.hp2010.nhlbhin.net/atpii/calculator.asp?usertype=prof. To use this tool, you will need some personal information including blood pressure, total cholesterol and HDL cholesterol levels. <<<

READERS ASK Good News for SAD Swimmers

Q: I sometimes feel mildly depressed, but only during the winter months. I’ve heard about seasonal affective disorder, and sometimes worry that I may have it. What can I do to avoid it and/or treat it?

A: Joe Weber, MEd, president and director of sport psychology at MindSport mental training systems, and Johanna Marie McShane, PhD, of the South End Rowing Club in San Francisco, offer advice for swimmers with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Complete responses from Weber and McShane are available on the *USMS SWIMMER* website (www.usmsswimmer.com).

“Seasonal affective disorder, often referred to as SAD (affective is another term for mood) is a type of depression caused by a biochemical imbalance due to the shortening of daylight hours and decreased sunlight in winter,” Weber says. “Severity ranges from mild (referred to as sub-syndromal) to severe (clinical).”

“Think of SAD as a point on a continuum,” McShane says. “Everyone experiences blue or down moods at some points. This is not uncommon. And many people feel happier or more energetic in the spring and summer months when the weather is often easier to deal with, and better for outdoor activities like swimming.”

Weber and McShane both recommend daily exercise, exposure to sun and outdoor activities to avoid or alleviate SAD.

“Exercise can increase certain neurotransmitters that elevate mood,” Weber says. “Plus, exercise outdoors will increase your exposure to sunlight.”

“For mild cases of SAD, I recommend people try to spend as much time outdoors (in true sunlight) as possible,” McShane adds. “Obviously, this is easier to accomplish if you winter in Florida than in Maine, but every bit of sunlight can help.” <<<

>>> Go to: www.usmsswimmer.com for bonus content on the subject of SAD.