

# the healthy swimmer



©iStockphoto.com/diane39

## Asparagus: A Roman Classic

*Asparagus officinalis*, native to most of Europe, western Asia and northern Africa, is a flowering plant that has been used from early times as food and medicine. Asparagus has a delicate flavor and diuretic properties. According to many reports, there is a recipe for asparagus in the oldest known cookbook, “Apicius de re coquinaria, Book III,” which is believed to have been written in Rome in the 4th or 5th century A.D. Although the popularity of asparagus lagged somewhat during the Middle Ages, this nutritious gem returned to the tables of Europeans in great numbers by the 1600s.

Asparagus contains no fat or cholesterol, and is low in calories and sodium. It’s a good source of potassium, folic acid, fiber, the amino acid asparagines, and rutin, a natural blood thinner and anti-inflammatory drug. The medicinal value of asparagus is sometimes debated but few deny its flavor appeal. Asian chefs often stir-fry their asparagus – sometimes with chicken, shrimp or beef. Many American barbecue cooks grill asparagus over charcoal. The French are credited as the first to serve asparagus with hollandaise sauce. Some cooks use tall, narrow cooking pots designed especially for asparagus. The pots allow the tips to stay above water level.

Early-growth stalks are the most tender and tasty, so the harvest season for gardeners and domestic producers is spring. But imported asparagus is available in North America year round, with Peru, Mexico and China leading the exporters. Asparagus is also available pickled or marinated. Green asparagus is eaten throughout the world, but white asparagus, sometimes called “white gold,” is gaining popularity. <<<

## Your Brain on Sports Drinks

Researchers have discovered that the performance-enhancing properties of sports drinks may have something to do with activation of the brain via receptors in the mouth. A study conducted at England’s University of Birmingham suggests there may be specialized receptors in our mouths, in addition to the “sweet” taste receptors, that are activated by carbohydrates such as glucose or maltodextrin, both used in sports drinks.

Led by physiologist Ed Chambers, the research team asked endurance-trained cyclists to complete a challenging workout on stationary bikes. During the workout, the cyclists were asked to swish, but not swallow, one of three laboratory-concocted sports drinks: either

glucose or maltodextrin, or water with artificial sweeteners added.

The cyclists who swished with glucose or maltodextrin performed slightly better than the cyclists who swished with the artificially sweetened sports drink. Chambers and his team also used magnetic resonance imaging technology on the athletes after they had swished one of the three drinks, and found that the specific areas of the brain associated with reward or pleasure were triggered by the drinks containing glucose or maltodextrin, but not by the artificially sweetened drink.

The research team speculated that activation of the brain by the carbohydrates allowed the cyclists to push harder without feeling like they were working harder. In other words, it blocked the negative



©iStockphoto.com/Hemiks000

messages received by the brain during exercise, the ones that control the amount of power supplied to the muscles.

Chambers is quick to point out, however, that swishing alone is not advisable during

extended exercise. It is still necessary to replenish fluids and electrolytes during exercise. This study merely makes the connection between the brain, the mouth and power output to the muscles. <<<

## reader recipe

Bronwyn Lewis of the Virginia Masters (see “Practitioner Profile”) contributed this delectable side dish, which she has flagged as the perfect complement to grilled salmon. Lewis adds that asparagus, a perennial plant of the lily family, is rich in fiber and vitamins A and C; and oyster mushrooms contain carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins B1 and B2, and minerals, especially iron. Oyster mushrooms are also rich in antioxidants and believed to have cancer-fighting and cholesterol-reducing properties.

### Roasted Asparagus and Oyster Mushrooms

- 1 lb. **asparagus, ends trimmed**
- 4 oz. **oyster mushrooms**
- 3 tsp **lemon-flavored olive oil**
- ½ cup **dry white wine**
- 3 Tbs **butter**
- 1 Tbs **fresh Italian parsley, minced**
- ½ cup **sweet onion, cut up**
- 1 tsp **fresh tarragon, minced**

If you do not have fresh herbs, smaller amounts of dried herbs will suffice. Also, you may substitute water for wine and coconut oil for butter.

Preheat oven to 475 degrees. Arrange asparagus on baking sheet. Drizzle lemon-flavored olive oil and turn to coat. Sprinkle with sea salt and pepper. Roast until just tender, about 10 minutes.

Melt butter in large skillet over medium heat. Add sweet onion and sauté until almost translucent. Add mushrooms; sauté until beginning to brown, about four minutes. Add wine and cook until wine is absorbed, about two minutes. Stir in parsley and tarragon; season with salt and pepper. Divide asparagus over four plates and top with mushrooms.

»» **Do you have a recipe our readers would enjoy?** Send it to [editor@usms.org](mailto:editor@usms.org), or mail to: USMS/Reader Recipe, 655 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236.



### Proton Pump Inhibitors and Nutrient Depletion

Proton pump inhibitors such as Prilosec, Prevacid, Aciphex, Protonix and Nexium, block enzymes in the stomach wall that produce acid, helping to prevent and heal ulcers in the esophagus, stomach and duodenum.

Pharmacist and Masters swimmer David Smith says that while making the GI tract less acidic, ulcer medications also can inhibit the absorption of vitamins and minerals. “Two out of 10 men taking these medications can develop osteoporosis,” Smith says. Smith recommends that anyone taking PPIs long-term discuss supplementation with their doctor or pharmacist.

Be sure to check with your individual practitioner regarding amounts of vitamin and mineral supplements.

#### DAVIS'S SUGGESTED DOSES OF SUPPLEMENTS:

- **Folic Acid:** 600-800 mcg daily
- **Vitamin B12:** 1000 mcg daily or methylcobalamin 300-600 mcg daily
- **Vitamin D:** 2,000 – 5,000 IU daily
- **Vitamin C:** 1,000 mg daily
- **Calcium:** 1,000 mg daily

Smith swims with Santa Cruz Masters in California, and owns A&O Compounding Pharmacy in Salinas, Calif.

### Practitioner Profile

**Bronwyn Lewis**, contributor of this issue’s “Reader Recipe,” started swimming seriously six years ago. As a child, she swam for fun and so she could be water safe for sailing.

“I am not a decorated Masters swimmer by any means,” Lewis says. “I swim because I love it, because it helps me get in touch with my spirit and brings me joy.”

Lewis, a nurse practitioner, owns a holistic medical practice in Richmond, Va., and works with clients of all ages. Her clients generally suffer from fatigue, metabolic imbalances that have not been helped with traditional medicine, dysbiosis (increased intestinal permeability), and other issues. Left unattended, those minor imbalances can become huge problems, Lewis says. She blends traditional medicine with energy medicine, homeopathy, functional and regenerative medicine.

“It’s fun, it’s always interesting, and it’s exciting to see people get better,” Lewis says. “I rarely use pharmaceutical medications. I find that diet and lifestyle changes, organic foods, pharmaceutical-grade supplements and homeopathic remedies will fix most things.”

Lewis and her husband have four children,



two in college, one in graduate school and one completely independent. In addition to swimming, she enjoys biking and trail running.

The information in this department is not intended as a substitute for professional or medical advice. It is not intended to provide medical advice on personal health matters. For personal medical advice, consult your healthcare provider. If you are concerned about a particular medical condition or injury, see your healthcare provider for evaluation and care.