Food for Thought: The Gut-brain Axis

One of the biggest buzzwords in current media refers to the smallest subject: the human gut microbiome. This microbiome is a collection of microorganisms living in the human intestinal tract; aka the “good gut bugs.” These good gut bugs help our gut produce compounds needed for digestion and absorption of other nutrients. They also provide protection against harmful “bugs” and support our immune system. These good gut bugs have also been shown to promote brain health.

There is communication between the human microbiome and the brain, called the gut-brain axis. This means the health of your gut microbiome may impact the health of your brain—a healthy gut leads to a healthy brain. The best way to take care of your gut microbiome is to focus on your overall eating pattern.

- Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Choose fiber-rich foods because increasing fiber can promote abundance of gut bugs.
- Try fermented foods and foods with pre- and probiotics to improve the variety of your good gut bugs.
- Prebiotics are plant fibers that promote the growth of healthy bacteria. They are found in many fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, including apples, asparagus, bananas, barley, flaxseed, garlic, jicama, leeks, oats, and onion.
- Probiotics contain specific strains of healthy bacteria. The most common probiotic food is yogurt; other sources include bacteria-fermented foods, including sauerkraut, kombucha, and kimchi.

Sources:

Strawberry S’Mores

Serving Size: 1 s’more | Serves: 1

Ingredients:
- 2 strawberries, sliced
- 1/8 cup yogurt, low-fat vanilla (2 tablespoons)
- 1 graham cracker (broken in half)

Instructions:
1. Rinse the strawberries in water.
2. Slice the strawberries.
3. Add the yogurt and strawberries to 1/2 of graham cracker.
4. Top with the other 1/2 of graham cracker.
5. Enjoy immediately.

Tips:
- Substitute any desired low-fat yogurt flavor.
- Try other fruits like blueberries, bananas, etc.

Nutrition information per serving:
93 calories, 2g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 2mg cholesterol, 87mg sodium, 17g total carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 10g sugar, 3g protein

How Clean Is That Coffee Machine?

Do you wash your coffee pot every morning, or rinse and reuse the next day? What about the inside of the machine? Do you occasionally run a pot of water or vinegar through? Whether you use a single-use coffee-maker or a traditional multicup machine, they can be difficult to clean, so the rinse-and-reuse method is common. Because coffee is acidic, it should prevent the growth of bacteria. Right? Actually, there are bacteria that are not only resistant to the acidity of coffee, but they also use the caffeine as an energy source. Moreover, these bacteria are able to quickly repopulate the machine after rinsing alone, and bacteria continue to grow in number and diversity the longer the machine is in use. To avoid unwanted contamination of our beverages with harmful bacteria, be sure you clean your coffee machines, inside and out, frequently following the manufacturer's instructions.


Live Healthy Iowa 5K

Live Healthy Iowa, sponsored by the Iowa Sports Foundation, is a partner in the Healthiest State Initiative. Live Healthy Iowa offers many challenges and events throughout the year for individuals and communities to get involved in their health. Registration opened on January 14 for the Live Healthy Iowa 5K, scheduled for April 13 this year. The idea of completing a 5K might sound daunting, but it’s easier to do if you approach it slowly. Try a couch to 5K training plan. Here is a link to a sample plan (https://www.shape.com/sites/shape.com/files/media/shape-beginner-5k-training-plan_0.jpg). There is also a [C25K app for your phone](https://www.active.com/mobile/couch-to-5k-app) for a personalized training plan (https://www.active.com/mobile/couch-to-5k-app).

Source: [Live Healthy Iowa 5K](https://www.livehealthyiowa.org/livehealthy-5K)