A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

Food as medicine

This week’s “Good Stuff” is devoted to food, and who better to discuss the importance of food as medicine than Sarah Louie MD and Katren Tyler MD.

Sarah Louie MD
Clinical Medical Director-UC Davis Health-Elk Grove

Sarah Louie with kids, and a meal of vegan white lasagna soup with cashews
With the weather warming up, it is the perfect time to embrace all the opportunities to be outdoors, connect with local growers and enjoy healthy and delicious foods. When working with patients I often remind them that focusing on what they can ADD to their diet – and not just take out – can have a huge impact. Food really is medicine and here are a few ways to increase your physical and mental health while enjoying the warmer weather.

**Eat local and in season**
Shopping at farmers markets and purchasing fruits that are in season at the grocery store give you the best of the bounty to enjoy and may even lead you to trying some foods you have never had before.

**Make a rainbow on your plate**
Adding more color to your meals in the form of fruits and vegetables is sometimes easier than figuring out how to take things out of your favorite dishes.

**Grow your own**
Planting your own garden, even in a small container on your porch or windowsill, is a great way to connect with nature and grow some of your favorites. Nothing tastes better than a tomato you grew yourself.

**Beans and greens for the win!**
With so many varieties and so many ways to add them to all sorts of dishes, increasing your intake of beans, legumes and dark leafy greens is easier than ever.

What you put in your body and even where it comes from can have a tremendous impact on your physical and mental health. There is no time like the Spring to eat more whole plant foods and try something new.
Katren Tyler MD  
Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine  
Medical Director of Physician Wellness

Katren Tyler’s family enjoys a picnic, and a veggie bowl with golden beets, grilled mushrooms, butternut squash, peas, grilled radicchio on a bed of polenta

**Getting kids to eat veggies**
One of my greatest successes as a parent when my kids were younger was a tray of bright fresh vegetables as a pre-dinner snack. They were starving and would eat whatever was put in front of them, and I did not mind if they were eating in front of a screen. It ended up being very healthy for all of us and always looked beautiful.

**Beans and rice**
There is a reason that beans and rice are an important part of many cuisines. Other legumes like lentils count too. The combination provides almost every essential amino acid, and with only a little practice are easy to cook and freeze well once cooked. They are also super cheap, especially if you start with dried beans and uncooked rice. Add some frozen vegetables of your choice and you have a great healthy meal. Add a fried egg on top if you like. So delicious.
**Frozen fruits and vegetables**
Ironically, some of the freshest vegetables are the frozen kind. Many fruits and vegetables are freshly picked and snap frozen and these are a fantastic way to bring variety into your eating life. One of my favorite dips is: 1 bag partially defrosted peas, 2 tablespoons olive oil. Salt to taste and a few leaves of fresh mint. Pour the whole thing into a food processor, blender, or pulse with an immersion blender. Totally delicious.

Frozen vegetables are also a great way to offer everyone what they want in a make-your-own-bowl kind of way: start with cooked pasta, rice, or other grains, and set out a variety of bite-sized vegetables, sliced hard-boiled eggs, shredded cheese and add salad dressing, hot sauce, pesto, hummus, whatever you like. Everyone gets to choose what they want. This is also a great way to use leftover grilled vegetables.

**Herbs in pots**
Lots of people do not have the time or space for a vegetable garden. But almost everyone has a sunny spot that you can grow a pot of herbs in. Basil is beautiful and fragrant in the summer. Mint is delicious and almost completely indestructible. Cut it back in the winter and it will pop back up in the spring. Warning – do NOT plant mint in an open space or it will take over.

With a little more space, the beautiful rosemary shrubs are easy to look after – so easy that rosemary is often used in commercial landscaping. The magic of rosemary salted potatoes – true alchemy.

**Eat in the hospital cafeteria**
Hospital cafeterias are usually appropriately derided as having terrible, mass-produced, over-salted food that is about as unhealthy as you can get. Not at UC Davis Health.

Those of us on the main campus are fortunate to have Chef Santana Diaz at the helm, who delivers “food as medicine” to all of our staff and patients. We are fortunate to be able to get healthy, delicious, local, freshly grown and cooked foods from our very own hospital cafeteria. So wonderful.

Also check out this incredible bag of fresh vegetables available from the cafeteria over the last few weeks. Thank you, Chef Diaz!

*Editor’s note: Also check out the “Good Food is Good Medicine” blog for more tasty and healthy meal ideas and tips.*
UC Davis Medical Group Davis Clinic
“Excellent service, quality of caregivers, patient management and communication system, and the respectful treatment of patients meet all of my needs and expectations. Great job!”

Dermatology Cannery
“It may seem like I just randomly filled in all the Very Goods but, like all of my visits to any UCD facility, I have nothing but praise every time. I honestly don't understand why anyone would go anywhere else and I tell that to everybody.”

E6 Cardiothoracic
“Received what I ordered; dinner was excellent (turkey). Quality!”

UC Davis Medical Group Elk Grove Clinic
“Loved the telemedicine video visit. Super easy with the UC Davis Health app.”

Emergency Pavilion
“We travel 45 to 50 miles from our home for our child to be seen here. Because they are AMAZING! Thank you for all you do!”