

Ithaca Health Alliance Newsletter

Eating is a Transformative Act

by Julia Lapp

In recent years, there has been a growing public consciousness about food that embraces the importance of healthy food for healthy bodies, and also emphasizes that the foods we eat have impacts and consequences well beyond the immediate nutritional effects. In the face of an ever increasing industrialized and technological world of food production, the contemporary movement toward awareness of the wider effects of food has largely centered on supporting local economies by supporting local farmers, at the same time recreating food production systems so as to allow health promoting foods to be available and accessible to all people on the planet, while also promoting ecological health. These wider effects are based not only on considerations of health and sustainability, but also stem from ethical and moral outlooks, illustrating how food nourishes the being in a myriad of ways, and is far from simple.

The way humans eat is one of the hallmarks of our species. Humans “dine,” while all other animals “feed,” and for the past century social scientists have studied the role of food and its use (known as “foodways,”) across the world’s human cultures to understand the significance of the many rituals, patterns, and rules governing human food use. In all social groups, food is a mechanism of communication, an expression of caring, affirmation of social ties or divisions, and a marker of status. Food is ritually tied to an array of human behaviors (both individual and social) as symbolic of important people or events, and can often communicate multiple messages. An example is the Passover consumption of unleavened matzo bread to mark the events of the Jewish exodus

from Egypt, which prevented the Israelites from waiting for their bread to rise in their haste to leave. The unleavened matzo has come to symbolize the salvation of the Jewish people, and at the same time is a reminder of humility. The occasion of eating matzo unites the Jewish community and affirms the Jewish beliefs and distinctiveness as an ethnic, cultural, and religious group.

On a more universal field, and apart from all other animals, humans uniquely live in two worlds: natural and cultural. Like all living things we are born from and are bound to the intractable laws of the natural, material world, yet we exist and function within the abstractions of culture. This is one of the essential paradoxes of human existence. Both nature and culture define us. Nature sets the boundaries, while culture tells us who we are, and how to behave and interact. Around the world, food, and the rules for its use, has served as a primary medium through which these two, sometimes seemingly divergent, worlds are united. Our animal instinct to consume

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ITHACA FREE CLINIC HOURS

Mondays: 2–6 p.m. (walk-ins to MDs, appointments for complementary providers)
 Tuesdays: 3–7 p.m. (by appointment only)
 Thursdays: 4–8 p.m. (walk-ins to MDs, appointments for complementary providers)
 Located at 521 West Seneca Street, Ithaca, NY. (607) 330-1254

The Ithaca Free Clinic is a project of the **Ithaca Health Alliance**. More than 80 percent of our work is done through volunteer efforts. Whether you're interested in working with the Clinic or the Health Alliance, if you're looking for a volunteer opportunity, call the Clinic Coordinator at 607-330-1254 or the Executive Director at 607-882-9060.

The Ithaca Health Alliance

The IHA was founded in 1997. Our mission is to facilitate access to health care for all, with a focus on the needs of the un- and under-insured of New York State.

Become a member of the IHA!

IHA members receive discounts from participating health providers and are eligible through the Ithaca Health Fund for grants and loans that pay for emergency and preventive care. To learn more about membership, call 607-330-1253 and ask to speak to the Office Manager.

Information about the IHA

is available through the Office Manager at office@ithacahealth.org, 607-330-1253; through the Executive Director at executivedirector@ithacahealth.org, 607-882-9060; or on our website at www.ithacahealth.org. Inquiries can also be made by mail: Ithaca Health Alliance, P.O. Box 362, Ithaca, NY 14851

This quarterly newsletter is a production of the Ithaca Health Alliance.



AFCU Holiday Debit Card Use Supports the Ithaca Health Alliance

In an effort to support the Ithaca Health Alliance, Alternatives Federal Credit Union will donate \$5 whenever an AFCU debit card user signs for 13 purchases on his or her card.* According to AFCU's announcement of this opportunity, "The Alternatives VISA Debit Card will get you out of checkout lines faster because you won't need to scramble for cash, write checks, or hassle with identification - just present your card, select 'credit,' and sign the receipt." What's more, carriers of the AFCU VISA Debit card pay no interest fees, so long as a line of credit is not used for purchases. In short, every one wins at AFCU this holiday season!

If you have an AFCU VISA Debit card, remember to use it during the holiday and become a contributor to this fund raising activity in behalf of the Ithaca Health Alliance. And if you don't have a card, consider getting one. It's easy to do, it helps the local economy by supporting the Alternatives Federal Credit Union, and just 13 gifts in this gift-giving season shows your support of the health and education services at the Ithaca Health Alliance.

Call AFCU at 273-AFCU or visit the offices at 125 North Fulton Street for more information. ❁

*Eligible transactions include all purchases made within your debit card that do not require a personal identification number (PIN). The donation in your honor will be combined with those of other members to support the important work of The Ithaca Health Alliance, with donations going towards lab tests for people who can't afford them. See <http://www.ithacahealth.org> for more info.

Ithaca Health Alliance Discount Providers

By Rob Brown

The one hundred different healthcare professionals who participate as discount providers of the Health Alliance are an example of an inspiring community effort to fulfill the mission of facilitating access to health care for all. Recognizing that the cost of care (or fear of the cost) often prevents people from seeking treatment, these providers discount their fees by ten percent or more for Alliance members, making health services affordable. “In my practice I am committed to removing or at least reducing whatever barriers I can that would prevent a person from receiving the care they need,” says Ammitai Worob, DC, who’s proud to offer the discount and to be a member of the Alliance in general.

Participating providers represent the vibrant diversity of our health community, from the conventional to complementary disciplines. They include Cayuga Medical Center as the largest and one-person businesses as the smallest, each doing their part to help neighbors in need.

Ira Kamp, DDS, was one of the first provider members. He says “I chose to be a participant in the Health Alliance because I believe community is the most important element we have to work with. The Health Alliance specifically fills a need in our community, where healthcare insurance and healthcare costs are at times overwhelming.” Dental services, like eye care, mental health, and most of the alternative therapies offered by other provider members are often not covered, even when someone is lucky enough to have health insurance. While such services are an essential part of maintaining good health, many people try to save money by going without care until their health problems become severe. Discounts on emergency services like ambulance rides, hospital visits, and orthopedic care can make a big difference, too, especially when combined with the Ithaca Health Fund grants and interest-free loans program, to keep these unexpected costs from turning tight household budgets upside down.

Each provider member fulfills the Health Alliance’s principles of cooperation and service. They not only help other members, but also help to foster a healthier, more sustainable community for everyone.



Rob Brown is the Health Alliance Office Manager and has been an Alliance member since 1997.

Eating, *continued from page 1*

that which looks appetizing is tamed by social rules of etiquette stemming from the fact that, by and large, eating is a public activity. Anthropologists generally believe that the human inclination to share meals with others stems from the efficiencies of collective hunting, gathering, and preparation of food. At the same time, according to some, such as the psychologist Paul Rozin, the great paradox of food consumption lies in the reality that eating, as an act of life’s sustenance, requires that other lives and forms (of animals and plants) be destroyed. Hence consuming food is a daily reminder that we are all bound by the cycle of life and death. Rozin and others speculate that since eating is largely a social act, there are rules of “manners,” such as “chewing with your mouth closed,” to shroud and temper the profound reality of transforming someone’s mate into dinner. Similarly, early 20th century Sociologist Claude Levi-Strauss described human food use, and primarily the cooking of food, in almost poetic terms illustrating that raw foods represent the natural world, while cooked foods represent the domain of culture. Through the alchemy of cooking food, we transform nature into culture, reminding ourselves on a daily basis of our place in both worlds. Cooking takes on a whole new importance when considered in this light.

When one examines food from this wider vantage point, well beyond concerns of vitamins and minerals, a deeper significance of the place of food in human life emerges. This can be a transformational process for consumers to appreciate the truly nurturing aspects of nutrition, and bring new meaning to the notion that in so many ways, we really are what we eat. ❖

Julia Lapp is assistant professor of nutrition at Ithaca College and a member of the Ithaca Health Alliance Education Subcommittee.

Eating Healthy Without Breaking the Bank: GreenStar Introduces a New Discount Program

by Jessica Weston

Buying local and organic food just got easier! This past summer GreenStar Cooperative Market's Council approved of a new member-owner discount program called FLOWER (Fresh, Local & Organic Within Everyone's Reach), in hopes of reaching out to more people in our community who may not have found it affordable to shop there in the past. This discount is 13 percent, in addition to the 2 percent discount that all member-owners receive, amounting to a total amount 15 percent. The FLOWER discount is available if you qualify for one of several government assistance programs. If you have never been a GreenStar member and qualify for the discount, you will also qualify for a one-year free trial membership. To apply for this discount, simply fill out an application, which is available at both store locations, and turn it into the Customer Service Desk at the West End store. For further information stop by either GreenStar location or visit the website: www.GreenStar.coop.

GreenStar plays an essential role in our local community, as well as economy. Working at Greenstar has allowed me to become highly involved with Ithaca's local community. For many, it is a welcoming environment where shoppers feel at home and regularly see

friendly, familiar faces. However, I have also noticed that some people within our community feel that they are either out of place or cannot afford to shop there.

Eating healthy food is often portrayed as too expensive for the average consumer, yet more sides to this story exist than meet the eye. There are many benefits to both the individual and the environment from eating an organic and locally based diet; for instance, eating healthier food leads to better physical well-being, which in turn often leads to lower medical bills. Certain health food does cost more money, specifically specialty products (certified vegan, gluten-free, raw, etc.). Nonetheless, other ways to approach healthy shopping can reduce your costs, including emphasizing bulk foods and produce. Buying healthy pre-made or packaged food is almost always more expensive than cooking for yourself, which doesn't have to

be as daunting a task as it may initially seem.



GreenStar Natural Foods Market

It may take a while to adjust your lifestyle to include home-cooked meals, but it is definitely fun and rewarding. I find that

cooking for myself (and especially for friends and loved ones) is extremely gratifying; by recognizing my own ability to create a satisfying meal, by promoting emotional well-being through more engaged social interactions, and by giving myself the time to slow down in my otherwise hectic schedule.

Included on the next page is a recipe for a meal that will serve a family of four, along with the cost and preparation time involved. All of the ingredients can be found in either bulk or produce sections of GreenStar. ❖

Jessica Weston is a student at Ithaca College and an employee at GreenStar Cooperative Market.

Quinoa with Pumpkin Seeds & Apple, Sautéed Broccoli, and Curried Frittata

Ingredients

For the quinoa:

1 cup white quinoa
2 cups water
Pumpkin seeds
½ large local apple, diced
Cinnamon, nutmeg

For the broccoli:

1–2 heads of broccoli
Olive oil
2–4 cloves of garlic (depending on personal taste), finely chopped
½ medium onion, finely chopped
¼ cup wheat-free tamari.

For the frittata:

8 local eggs
Olive oil
½ medium onion, finely chopped
½ red pepper, chopped
⅓ bunch spinach, chopped
¼ cup feta cheese
Curry powder, kosher salt.

Directions

For the quinoa: Heat a saucepan filled with water over high heat. Once boiling, add quinoa to water, add apple and spices. Turn heat down to simmer and cover with lid. Turn off heat after 12–15 minutes, or until quinoa is fluffy, but has no water left. Stir in pumpkin seeds.

For the broccoli: Heat olive oil in frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; stir until golden brown. Turn heat down to simmer. Stir and sauté broccoli with tamari.

For the frittata: Heat oven to 400°. Coat a cast iron pan or oven safe dish with olive oil. Mix eggs with onion, red pepper, spinach, feta, and salt. Pour mixture into oven-safe dish. Cook for approximately 30 minutes or until egg is cooked all the way through.

Total Time: 45 minutes (prep & cook)

Cost: approximately \$16. Serves 4. ♣



IHA Officers

At its October meeting, the Board elected new officers, as follows:

Deirdre Silverman, President
Govind Acharya, Vice-president
Barbara Alden, Treasurer
Scott McCasland, Secretary

Other directors include **Alexandra Clinton**, **Fran Spadafora Manzella**, and **Ammitai**

Worob. A minimum of two and a maximum of five seats on the Board remain vacant. Inquiries about volunteering for the Board can be made to Bethany Schroeder at executivedirector@ithacahealth.org. Appointed positions between election cycles are made at the discretion of the Board. ♣

Broccoli heads © 2005 David Monniaux; GNU Free Documentation License. Apple © 2010 Jim Houghton

Compiled by Brooke Hansen and Bethany Schroeder

Praise for the Beet: Improve Your Health, Save Money, and Support Local Farmers!

The beet has been much maligned in modern America, quite unfairly many would agree. It's time to resurrect this lovely vegetable, which can enhance health, help save money, and support local farmers (almost all of whom grow and sell beets at area farmers' markets). To cite a few beet accolades: beets have been a central part of many cultural and culinary traditions (e.g., borscht soup in Eastern Europe) and they are a much valued ingredient in high-end restaurants, where the unique sweet and earthy taste of the beet becomes an amazing companion to nuts, goat cheese, and caramelized onions.

The health benefits of beets are numerous and include cleansing the colon and supporting the liver and gall bladder. Beets are high in carbohydrates, low in fat, and they contain phosphorus, sodium, magnesium, calcium, iron, and potassium, as well as fiber, vitamins A and C, niacin, and biotin. Beets are commonly known for building the blood and detoxifying the body, attributed in part to phytonutrients called betalains, which provide antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and detoxification support. These phytonutrients do break down with prolonged heat, so the maximum health benefits can be enhanced by steaming for less than 15 min or roasting for less than an hour. Beets also contain nitrites, as do cabbage, celery, and other green leafy vegetables, which have been shown to lower blood pressure and increase blood flow to the brain—especially important in older populations. Several studies have also shown promising results in the inhibition of

tumor growth in the colon, stomach, lung, breast, and prostate among people who eat beets. This encouraging news has led researchers to further examine the cancer fighting properties of betalains in beets.

Beets are also easy to prepare and can be eaten raw, boiled, pickled, roasted, steamed, and sautéed. They can be part of a salad, main dish, side dish, or dessert. The interior spiral patterns of many beet varieties, which come in colors of red, gold, pink, and yellow, make for a beautiful and dramatic addition to any meal. You can make a moist and delicious chocolate cake with beets (see recipe link below) and a variety of drinks (Felicia's Atomic Lounge has been known to feature beet cocktails). To top it all off, beets are easy to grow, you can use all parts of the plant (root and leaves), they are inexpensive to buy, and easy to find.

What are we waiting for, let's go get some beets! ♣

<http://www.webmd.com/brain/news/20101103/beet-juice-good-for-brain>
<http://www.whfoods.com/>

Chocolate cake recipe:
<http://straightfromthefarm.net/2007/06/23/try-to-beet-this-chocolate-cake/>



What's So Good About Potatoes?

According to the Potato Board, the potato is the leading vegetable crop in the United States. It is estimated that total per capita consumption of potatoes is 126 pounds, with 52 pounds being frozen and 46 being fresh. At 11.5 billion pounds, Idaho leads in potato production, with the state of Washington in second place at 9.3 billion pounds and Wisconsin in a distant third at 2.9 billion pounds. Yet potatoes can be grown successfully in most of the U.S. Whether used as a food crop or an ornamental in the kitchen window, potatoes are lovely to look at and easy to grow. ▶

UPDATES & EVENTS

FUND UPDATE

By Rob Brown, Office Manager

The Ithaca Health Fund made forty-one grants in the third quarter of 2010, totaling \$5,378. As always, preventive exams were the most-requested grants, but broken bones and emergency room visits are tied for second place. An area of concern to staff and board member has been falling membership this year: we've lost about 200 members. We know this is partially due to the economy but we earnestly ask for feedback on our programs and how we can reverse the trend. ❖

OUTREACH UPDATE

By Betsy Caughey, Outreach Coordinator

Fall has been a busy time for us! After holding our Open House to commemorate our new offices, we began a season of educational workshops including sessions at the Cancer Resource Center, Tompkins Workforce New York, and the Brooktondale Food Pantry. In addition, this November we are launching a series of educational workshops at our new address; the first lecture focuses on lung health and features Bob Riter from

the Cancer Resource Center and Erin James from the TC Health Department. Exciting projects in the future include working with the Cornell Free Clinic Initiative on a grant that students obtained to offer educational healthcare workshops at local food pantries. If you have ideas or suggestions for a workshop that you'd like to participate in, please contact the outreach coordinator at: outreach@ithacahealth.org. ❖

FREE CLINIC UPDATE

By Sadie Hays, outgoing Clinic Coordinator

Now in our new offices at 521 West Seneca Street, the Ithaca Free Clinic is well-prepared to meet the steady increase in demand for services for the uninsured. During the third quarter of 2010, the Ithaca Free Clinic received 15 percent more new patients than in the same quarter of 2009. Volunteer physicians donated over 110 hours and provided 405 visits at no charge to our patients. A new facility, sustained growth and success, and a team of dedicated volunteers — during the upcoming holiday season, the Ithaca Health Alliance recognizes and commends with gratitude all who make our work possible. ❖

Potatoes

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It is thought that the Incas of Peru were the first to cultivate potatoes, evidence for which dates back to 200 B.C. The Spanish Conquistadors were responsible for introducing the vegetable on their return to Europe. Within 40 years, the useful, hearty potato had been successfully introduced all across the continent. People appreciated that the potato was a more efficient crop plant than any of the other staples, such as rice and wheat, and that most of the required vitamins could be had in the potato. By 1621, the potato had been introduced to the English colonies and it had a permanent place in the garden by 1721.

As a result of the potato famine in Ireland during the 1800s, many people considered the potato to be animal feed rather than food fit for humans. Not until a fungicide was developed to prevent the blight that caused the great famine did the potato recover its

good reputation as a healthy part of the human diet.

As any potato aficionado will tell you, storing the vegetable appropriately is key to enjoying it throughout the winter months. Potatoes should be stored in a well-ventilated place, with a temperature between 45 and 55 degrees. Keeping potatoes in the refrigerator for any length of time causes the vegetable's starch to be converted to sugar, causing a sweet taste and discoloration of the potato. In making potato purchases, try to choose clean, unmarred, and firm potatoes, and store them in a cool, dry place, out of the sun in order to extend shelf life. And avoid washing potatoes until you're ready to use them so that you don't promote molds.

For more information, visit <http://www.healthypotato.com/>. ❖

Brooke Hansen is a professor of anthropology at Ithaca College. She and Bethany Schroeder have worked together on this column for the past five years.



Ithaca Health Alliance
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Find us online at
www.ithacahealth.org



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