

◆ **Nourish to Flourish** ◆

Putting the Food is Medicine Approach into Everyday Practice

**UMACO'S QUARTERLY NUTRITION AND WELLNESS NEWSLETTER
SUMMER EDITION**



Welcome

to the summer edition of **Nourish to Flourish!** As routines shift and fresh foods come into season, this newsletter is here to help you turn nutrition knowledge into everyday habits. Each issue brings you quick, practical tips, easy recipes, and evidence-based insights designed to support your health—whether you're a patient working toward your goals or a staff member supporting others along the way.



Wellness Bites

Evidence-Based Tips for Everyday Health

Electrolyte drinks are everywhere right now—but the truth is, most people don't need them every day. For typical daily activity, your body does an excellent job maintaining fluid and electrolyte balance with water and regular meals. Foods naturally provide key electrolytes like sodium, potassium, and magnesium, which is usually enough to support hydration. So why all the hype? Electrolytes, especially sodium, play an important role in helping your body retain fluid, support muscle function, and maintain energy levels. But they become most important when your body is losing more fluid than usual.

When electrolytes matter most:

- Hot weather & heavy sweating: Sweat contains water and sodium. On very hot days or during prolonged time outdoors, replacing both helps prevent dehydration, fatigue, and dizziness
- Long or intense exercise (60-90+ minutes): Water alone may not fully replace what's lost, especially if sweating heavily
- Illness (vomiting, diarrhea, fever): Fluid and electrolyte losses increase quickly, making replacement more important
- Multiple workouts or long days outside: Electrolytes can help your body rehydrate more efficiently between efforts
- If taking medications that may affect electrolytes (e.g., diuretics or laxatives), consult your healthcare provider regarding individualized electrolyte needs.

Why you don't always need them:

- Your body tightly regulates electrolyte levels under normal conditions
- Most diets already provide adequate sodium and potassium
- Many electrolyte drinks contain added sugars or excess sodium that aren't necessary for everyday hydration

A simple way to think about it:

- Everyday life: Water + balanced meals
- Increased losses (heat, sweat, illness): Add electrolytes intentionally

Try this:

Start with water as your foundation. If you're sweating more than usual, include hydrating foods (like fruits and vegetables) and don't be afraid to add a little salt to meals. Save electrolyte drinks for times your body truly needs the extra support.

[SEE THE RESEARCH](#)





Myth or Morsel?

Separating facts from fiction in nutrition

MYTH

Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are “less nutritious” than fresh.

MORSEL

Frozen and canned produce can be just as nutritious as fresh—and sometimes even more so.

Frozen fruits and vegetables are typically harvested at peak ripeness and quickly flash-frozen, which helps lock in key nutrients. Canned options are also processed shortly after harvest and sealed to preserve their nutritional value.

While some heat-sensitive vitamins like vitamin C may decrease slightly during blanching or canning, most fiber, minerals, and many phytonutrients remain stable. In fact, research shows that nutrient levels in fresh produce can decline during storage and transport, meaning “fresh” is not always nutritionally superior by the time it reaches the plate.

Choosing frozen or canned (especially no-salt-added or no-sugar-added varieties) can be a practical, affordable way to consistently meet fruit and vegetable goals year-round.

[SEE THE RESEARCH #1](#)

[SEE THE RESEARCH #2](#)

Seasonal Spotlight

Using seasonal foods to support your health



◆ Zucchini ◆

Summer is the perfect time to “eat with the season!” When we talk about seasonal foods, we mean produce that’s at its peak—fresh, flavorful, and naturally packed with nutrients. Not only does seasonal eating support variety in your diet, it’s also budget-friendly and ensures you’re getting the most out of your fruits and vegetables when they’re harvested at their best.

So how do we turn these seasonal stars into a quick, balanced meal? The key is flexibility and color. A nourishing plate includes protein, high-fiber carbohydrates, healthy fats, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. One-pan and one-bowl meals make it easy to bring all of these components together without extra time or effort.

This month’s seasonal spotlight is zucchini. Mild in flavor and incredibly versatile, zucchini is a summer staple that works in just about anything—from grilling and sautéing to baking or spiralizing. It blends easily into meals without overpowering other flavors, making it a simple way to boost vegetable intake.

Try it in a quick summer stir-fry, grilled alongside lean protein, or shredded into a frittata-style dish for an easy, nutrient-packed meal. However you use it, zucchini helps keep summer eating light, colorful, and satisfying.

◆ Seasonal Bites ◆

Recipe pick of the month featuring the Seasonal spotlight food

Zucchini Lasagna

A lighter twist on a classic comfort food, packed with vegetables, lean protein, and fiber-rich lentils.

Prep Time: 45 min (includes salting zucchini) | **Cook Time:** 50 min | **Rest Time:** 20-30 min | **Total Time:** Approx 2 hr | **Yield:** 8-10 servings

INGREDIENTS

Zucchini "Noodles"

- 4 large zucchini, sliced lengthwise into ¼-inch thick strips
- Salt (for drawing out moisture)

Red Sauce

- 1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
- 1 (15 oz) can lentils, rinsed and drained
- ½ lb ground turkey or lean ground beef- omit meat for vegetarian version and add extra lentils or mushrooms
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp Calabrian chili paste (or a pinch of red pepper flakes, optional)
- Olive oil for sautéing
- Salt and pepper, to taste

White Cheese Mixture

- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup 2% cottage cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Topping

- ¾ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese



DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the Zucchini

- Slice zucchini lengthwise into ¼-inch strips using a mandolin or sharp knife.
- Arrange slices on a wire rack set over a baking sheet. Lightly salt both sides of each slice.
- Let sit for 30-60 minutes until moisture beads form on the surface. Pat dry thoroughly with paper towels before assembling the lasagna. Tip: This step helps prevent a watery lasagna.

2. Make the Red Sauce

- Heat a drizzle of olive oil in a large skillet or saucepan over medium heat.
- Add onion, carrots, celery, and garlic. Sauté for 3-5 minutes until softened and fragrant.
- Stir in Italian seasoning and Calabrian chili paste (or red pepper flakes) and cook for another minute.
- Add ground meat and cook until mostly browned (about 70% cooked).
- Stir in the lentils and marinara sauce. Simmer for 10 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld. Season with salt and pepper to taste

3. Make the White Cheese Mixture

In a medium bowl, combine Ricotta, Cottage cheese, Parmesan, Egg, Salt and pepper. Mix until smooth and well combined.

4. Assemble the Lasagna (9 x 13 Pan)

Lightly grease a 9 x 13-inch baking dish.

Layer in the following order:

- Thin layer of red sauce
- Layer of zucchini slices
- Red sauce

Dollops/spread of white cheese mixture, another layer of zucchini. Repeat the layers until ingredients are used, ending with a layer of red sauce.

Top evenly with ¾ cup mozzarella, ½ cup Parmesan. Cover tightly with foil. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes.. Remove foil and broil for 3-5 minutes, until the cheese is golden and bubbly.

Rest & Serve

Allow the lasagna to rest for 20-30 min before slicing. This helps the layers set and makes serving much easier. Leftovers store well in the fridge for up to 4 days and freeze beautifully for meal prep.



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