

greek salad
(recipe on page 66)



spring clean

**detoxify your body with healthy
and delicious toxin-fighting foods**

by elaine gavalas • photos by paul godwin

Springtime is the time to celebrate the arrival of warm weather. And what better way to shake off the lethargy brought on by a cold, dark winter than to revitalize, rejuvenate and reenergize with fortification from the season's freshest fruits, veggies and organic foods? As a sports nutritionist, exercise physiologist and cookbook author, I find that incorporating natural foods into our diets is an ideal way to rev up our digestive system and boost wellness. Think of it as giving our bodies a long-overdue spring cleaning.

But what is it, exactly, that we're cleaning out? We're trying to rid our systems of environmental toxins that can build up in our bodies over time and have detrimental effects on cell function and structure. These toxins—herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, additives, preservatives and other contaminants—can infiltrate our bodies through conventionally grown produce, dairy, beef and poultry and fish as well as processed foods.

Toxic buildup can overwhelm the liver, the body's filter, causing a variety of ailments including headaches, allergies, chronic fatigue and psoriasis—and that's just for starters.

Fortunately, cleaning our insides is infinitely easier, and more enjoyable, than cleaning our homes. All we have to do is load our plates with toxin-fighting foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, whole unrefined grains, beans and lean protein (see "Toxin Fighters") and avoid fried and processed foods that contain preservatives, pesticides, processed sugar, white flour and hydrogenated fats. Add eight glasses of the purest water possible each day and we're on our way to an optimally functioning, toxin-free body.

We can also contribute to the environment by eating healthy whole foods. In the United States, the average supermarket food item travels approximately 1,500 miles by truck and/or plane from farm to plate. Purchasing locally grown, organic foods and pasture-raised



green gazpacho

- ¼ cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley (mint, cilantro or basil)
- 1-inch piece of ginger, peeled and minced
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Sea salt to taste

- 1.** Puree asparagus with ½ cup vegetable broth in a food processor.
- 2.** Add spinach, avocado, cucumber, ¼ cup onion, 2 tablespoons parsley, ginger and the remainder of the broth. Process until smooth. Add the water a little at a time until the soup is a desired consistency. Pulse in lemon juice and olive oil. Season with salt to taste.
- 3.** Serve immediately or chill. Garnish with remaining onions and parsley.

greek salad

These greens promote bile secretion and supply folic acid and soluble fiber. Red peppers and onions aid sulfation; asparagus provides glutathione; and tomatoes have alpha-lipoic acid anti-oxidants to combat harmful free radicals

meats, milk and eggs will reduce fuel consumption for transport and eliminate energy-depleting fertilizers and pesticides used for animal feed. On top of that, local organic produce is tastier and fresher and contains more nutrients than foods that have been picked before they're ripe and transported across the country. (To find local farmers' markets and grass-fed ranches and farms, visit localharvest.org and eatwild.com.)

The following energizing dishes highlight spring fruits, vegetables, herbs and foods that are rich in immune-boosting antioxidants, colon-cleansing fiber and liver-supporting nutrients. The point of the spring cleanse is to use ingredients that are fresh, organic, farm-raised, free-range

and locally purchased. Even if you can't obtain 100-percent-organic ingredients, these low-fat, healthy recipes will boost your energy and make you feel like spring has sprung.

green gazpacho

The glutathione in the asparagus, spinach and avocado helps remove fat-soluble toxins; onions enhance sulfation to make toxins easier to excrete; and fresh ginger promotes bile secretion to assist in toxin removal.

Serves 4

- 1 cup thin asparagus, ends trimmed, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- ½ cup baby spinach
- 1 ripe avocado, pitted, peeled and chopped

toxin fighters

Make these food choices even better by buying organic to reduce your exposure to antibiotics, hormones, pollutants, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and *E. coli* bacteria.

fruits: fiber-rich apples, berries, citrus (lemons, limes, oranges), grapes and pears are high in soluble fiber to cleanse the colon, rich in antioxidants that destroy harmful free radicals (byproducts of detoxification) and support the immune system.

grains: brown rice, brown basmati rice, oats, quinoa, whole-grain couscous, whole-grain pasta and whole-grain

Serves 4

8 asparagus tips
3 cups baby salad greens (spinach, radicchio, arugula, mesclun, romaine or a mix)
½ cup feta or goat cheese, crumbled
¼ cup scallions, chopped
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
½ cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
½ cup Kalamata olives
3 roasted red peppers, drained and sliced into strips
¼ cup mint leaves (flat-leaf parsley, basil or oregano), chopped
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
Sea salt and ground black pepper to taste

1. Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil. Boil asparagus tips for 2 minutes, drain and cool.
2. Arrange greens in a large round serving platter or bowl. Mound crumbled feta in the center of the greens and top with scallions. Arrange tomatoes, cucumber, olives, asparagus and red pepper in a circle on top of the greens. Sprinkle with mint leaves.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and vinegar; season with salt and pepper. Drizzle dressing over salad and serve immediately.

bread contains soluble fiber and nutrients that absorb toxins in the intestine and remove them from the body.

protein: pasture-raised lean meat and poultry (skinless chicken or turkey breast), nuts, legumes (beans, lentils, peas), GMO-free soy foods, and wild-caught, mercury-free fish contain healthy omega-3 fats and B vitamins.

vegetables: asparagus, artichokes, beets, cruciferous veggies (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower), cucumbers, dark leafy greens (arugula, dandelion, escarole, radicchio, romaine, spinach), garlic, herbs (basil, mint, parsley), shiitake mushrooms, onions, red peppers, and tomatoes purify the GI tract and support liver health.



chicken and pasta with spinach-basil pesto

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This is a complete meal, packed with lean protein and fiber-rich whole grains and greens. Adding spinach to basil cuts down the amount of olive oil typically needed without sacrificing taste. Whole-grain pasta provides soluble fiber to soak up toxins in the GI tract; walnuts, spinach and chicken are potent sources of glutathione; garlic enhances sulfation.

Serves 4

1 pound whole-wheat rigatoni (or your favorite pasta)
1 cup baby spinach leaves
1 cup basil leaves
2 tablespoons walnuts, almonds or pine nuts

2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Pecorino Romano cheese
1 clove garlic
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt and ground black pepper to taste
4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 3 ounces each)

1. Boil pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
2. Puree spinach, basil, nuts, cheese, garlic and olive oil in a food processor until it forms a rough paste (the pesto). Season with salt and pepper. Add pesto sauce to pasta and gently toss.
3. Preheat grill or broiler. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Grill or broil chicken about 7 to 8 minutes on each side or until cooked through and tender but not pink. Slice cooked chicken breasts into thin strips.



**fresh fruit
parfait**

4. Add chicken strips to pasta and pesto mixture, gently toss and serve immediately.

fresh fruit parfait

Fresh berries provide soluble fiber and antioxidants; cinnamon promotes liver health; walnuts contribute omega-3 fats; and yogurt's active cultures aid digestion.

Serves 4

1 quart nonfat, thick Greek-style (or plain) yogurt

¼ cup honey
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup strawberries, hulled and sliced
1 pint berries (blueberries, raspberries and/or blackberries)
1 cup walnuts (or almonds or pistachios), chopped
¼ cup mint leaves

1. If using Greek-style yogurt, you may begin with step 2. If using plain yogurt, line a strainer with a paper coffee filter or cheesecloth and place over a bowl. Spoon the yogurt into the lined strainer

and refrigerate for two hours or until most of the liquid has drained to create a thick, creamy base.

2. In a bowl, combine yogurt, 2 tablespoons honey, vanilla and cinnamon.

3. Spoon a layer of yogurt into 4 parfait glasses or glass bowls. Add a layer of berries and sprinkle with a layer of nuts. Repeat the layering once or twice more, depending on the container's height. Drizzle each with remaining honey and nuts. Garnish with mint.

