

Compliments of Chris Holcomb

start HEALTHY

ISSUE 44

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decoding UV rays | 44



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Level Up Your Fitness *with a Sports Club*

How to build community
through sports | *PAGE 04*

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Dear Reader,

Bright sunshine and enveloping warmth are the norm this time of year, compelling us to get outdoors. This issue of Start Healthy offers tips for making the most of it, including considerations for starting a sports club, a trip to a charming northwestern travel destination, and a primer on the different types of UV rays.

Establishing a sports club is a great way to get healthier and connect with people who have common interests, such as pickleball, running, or soccer. The article inside provides simple steps that can help you kick off this amazing journey of better mental and physical well-being.

If you really want to enjoy nature, America offers plenty of options, one of the most magnificent being Missoula, Montana. Discover all there is to do in and around this idyllic city, from fishing or rafting its waterways to hiking its majestic mountains.

More time out in the sun also means there's the potential for absorbing more ultraviolet rays. The enclosed guide explains the differences between the three primary types, the potential hazards of each, and the benefits of getting sunshine in short spurts.

What will you do to relish the great outdoors?

Please join us for our upcoming estate planning webinar on July 15th from 6pm-7pm. Please see the back inside cover of this magazine for more information. We hope you can join us!

Chris Holcomb

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Choose Your Own Adventure in Missoula

Discover a spectacular town nestled in the picturesque Rocky Mountains.

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featured recipes



Sensational Sandwiches | 24

Recipes excerpted from **The Sandwich Shop: 50 Great Sandwich Recipes** by Lucy Heaver and Aisling Coughlan. Smith Street Gift, 2023. Photography © Chris Middleton



Bird-Watching *for* **BETTER HEALTH**

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HAVE YOU EVER BEEN

captivated by a songbird's enchanting melody or a cardinal's vibrant plumage? If so, you've already experienced how bird-watching can offer a serene respite from life's daily pressures. Here are just a few of the many health benefits you may reap from enjoying the activity.

BOOST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Researchers are still unraveling the exact mechanisms behind the stress-relieving effects of bird-watching. However, one study from *Scientific Reports* shows that people who engaged in this hobby experienced greater mental well-being for several hours after. The study even accounts for other variables like seeing trees and other greenery or hearing the



trickling of water, proving that bird-watching alone offers a pick-me-up separate from nature as a whole.

ENGAGE WITH NATURE

That said, one of the upsides of this activity is that it may draw you outside for a closer vantage point. In turn, you can enjoy some fresh air, get vitamin D for your bones and immune system, and experience nature's calming effects on your mind, heart, and blood pressure.

GET ACTIVE

Whether your favorite birding spot is at your local park or deep in the woods, venturing to it can help you fit more healthy steps into your day. Load up with optional but helpful birding gear like a camera,



binoculars, and a water bottle, and you can further build your muscles and burn additional calories.

LEARN AND GROW

As you devote yourself to this pastime, you may grow to recognize the diversity and interesting habits of the various bird species around you. And if you join a birding group, you may foster new friendships and enjoy novel experiences, which can, in turn, boost your happiness and feelings of self-worth.

Ready to dive in? Consider downloading the Merlin Bird ID app to help you begin your birding journey.

start HEALTHY



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Level Up Your Fitness with a Sports Club

written by:
ALLISON GOMES

STAYING ACTIVE AND CONNECTING WITH others can be tough as an adult, but it's essential for both your physical and mental well-being. And one solution that perfectly combines both is starting a sports club—it will not only keep you fit but also offer a fun way to meet new people and build a sense of community. Follow these core steps to help you get going.

Determine your vision and objectives

Before diving into the logistics, it's essential to have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish. For one, what sport are you interested in? There are a plethora of options to choose from, including soccer, running, bowling, kickball, and pickleball. Additionally, are you aiming for competitive play, recreational fun, or a good mix of both? Understanding your goals will guide you in every decision going forward, from the structure of your club to the type of members you recruit.





Research your area

Do a quick online search to determine what leagues already exist in your area; you can also reach out to your local recreation center for more insights into current offerings. (If the type of sport you're interested in starting has a well-established club in your city, you could consider joining it instead of forming your own.) This will help you assess if you'll have any competition for gaining members and who you could potentially play future matches against. Further, do some initial research into what you'll need to start your club, such as equipment and funds, and if there are feasible options for where to play.

Build interest

Starting with a core group of individuals onboard will make the process smoother, so reach out to friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who might be interested in becoming members. From there, host an informal meeting to help gauge their interest level and allow them to share their ideas and expectations for your club.

Choose a structure

Once you have a few committed people, decide on the structure of your sports team. Will it be an informal group or a more organized entity with official membership and dues? Either way, you'll want to draft a set of bylaws that outlines the rules, responsibilities, and standards for each member. Depending on your location and the nature of your club, you might also need to register with local authorities or sports organizations.



There are a plethora of options to choose from, including soccer, running, bowling, kickball, and pickleball.



Build a budget

Launching a sports club will cost money, though the total amount will vary based on your goals and the size of it. To help prepare for these expenditures, create a budget that accounts for equipment, uniforms, facility rentals, registration fees, and other essential costs. You may have to start with estimates, but you will still be able to get a sense of your financial burdens, allowing you to determine where you may need to cut back or how much you should charge for membership dues. And the longer you operate the club, the better idea you'll have of the exact funds it will require.

Secure a facility and equipment

Finding a suitable location to practice and play is crucial to the success of your club. Contact local parks, sports centers, schools, and community centers about their availability and costs; some venues might require a booking fee, while others may be free to use. On top of that, you'll need to gather the necessary equipment and personnel. The former could range from basic objects like balls and nets to more specialized gear like helmets and face masks. As for the latter, you may need to seek people for umpire or referee positions should your chosen sport call for them.



Set a schedule

To keep members engaged and motivated, create a schedule of practices and competitions, such as internal matches or games with other local clubs. You can also organize social gatherings like team dinners and outings to help develop relationships off the field. These events can foster a sense of camaraderie and give members something to look forward to each week.

Starting a sports club is a great way to stay active, enjoy yourself, and connect with others. While it may take time to build a successful one, if you embrace the challenge, you'll soon have a vibrant community that brings more fun and fitness into your life.





money-saving
**TRAVEL
HACKS**

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY

SUMMERTIME IS PEAK VACATION SEASON—

and spending season. Between transportation, lodging, food, activities, and souvenirs, the price tag of your trip to paradise can skyrocket quickly. In fact, both GOGO Charters and Budget Your Trip reached the same conclusion when they crunched the numbers in 2024: a one-week vacation can cost around a whopping \$2,000 per person.

Given this reality, it's well worth your while to find ways to cut corners. By implementing these tactics, you can spend less and enjoy yourself even more.

plan STRATEGICALLY

Our spending and saving habits are often embedded in us at a young age, influenced largely by our families. Perhaps you grew up with a coupon-clipping mom or, in contrast, parents who splurged openly and freely. Those in the latter category, or even somewhere in between, may need to actively fight their brains to economize—and temptations to spend may weigh heavier on them while on vacation.

That's why strategizing is your best defense against getting caught up in the moment. First and foremost, much like you do with your home finances, set a vacation budget

that distinguishes between needs (such as lodging) and wants (such as souvenirs). Then consider tips and tricks like the following to help ensure that you stay within it.

- Download free apps designed to assist you in keeping costs low. For instance, Hopper will find and alert you to the best prices for airfare, stays, and more, while GasBuddy can lead you to the cheapest gas prices. An all-in-one app such as TravelSpend can also be a massive asset in both budgeting for and tracking your vacation spending.
- Book domestic flights one to three months in advance, if possible, since supply and demand will be better, resulting in lower prices. In addition, the day you buy can matter; FareCompare estimates that the best time to get a bargain on flights is at 3:00 p.m. Eastern time on Tuesdays.
- In contrast, you can get better prices for hotels the longer you wait—a NerdWallet survey found that around two weeks out is ideal. If you're daring or in a pinch, you can also find great last-second deals on an app like HotelTonight.
- Speaking of hotels, consider prioritizing ones that provide free breakfast or partner with local attractions to offer stay-and-play discounts, which can save you big.
- Vow to be judicial about souvenirs. If you find you *must* bring something back from your trip, set a strict souvenir-spending limit in your budget before you leave home, and consider keeping that amount in cash folded in your wallet as a reminder of it.
- Pack food and drinks in the car so everyone stays satiated during a road trip, possibly reducing the need to stop for meals. For planes and trains, conduct research ahead of time about carry-on snack policies.





do a deep dive **INTO DISCOUNTS**

The number of ways you can slash prices during your stay is vast, so take some time to do your homework. Of course, there are the classic strategies of enrolling in hotel and airline loyalty programs to earn and redeem points and searching websites like Groupon, AAA, and AARP for member discounts. But don't overlook your destination's visitor bureau website and other local travel sites; such places usually offer savings books with coupons and BOGOs that will help you keep spending low. And you can give yourself a discount by choosing to pay cash at stores and restaurants to avoid a relatively new phenomenon: credit card surcharges, which may add up to 4 percent to your bill.

be frugal **WITH FOOD**

Eating out is often the easiest way to blow your budget on a trip—you're there to have fun, after all, so buying extra drinks and tantalizing desserts just seems like part of the package. Smart decisions and self-awareness are key to preventing both excessive spending and overeating at restaurants.

For example, one useful strategy is to ask yourself how hungry you are to gauge if your eyes are larger than your stomach, as is often the case while on vacation. If they are, go for an appetizer instead of a full meal. Or if you feel like this is your only chance to try the delicious dish you're craving, see if you could share it with someone in your party or get a doggie bag when you order so you can package half of it right away (making it a two-for-one meal).

Traveling is meant to be a time of relaxation, adventure, and fun, so don't let the stress of overspending take that away. By being discerning about your purchasing decisions and possibly even consulting a travel agent for money-saving advice, you can make the most of your time away while still protecting your budget.



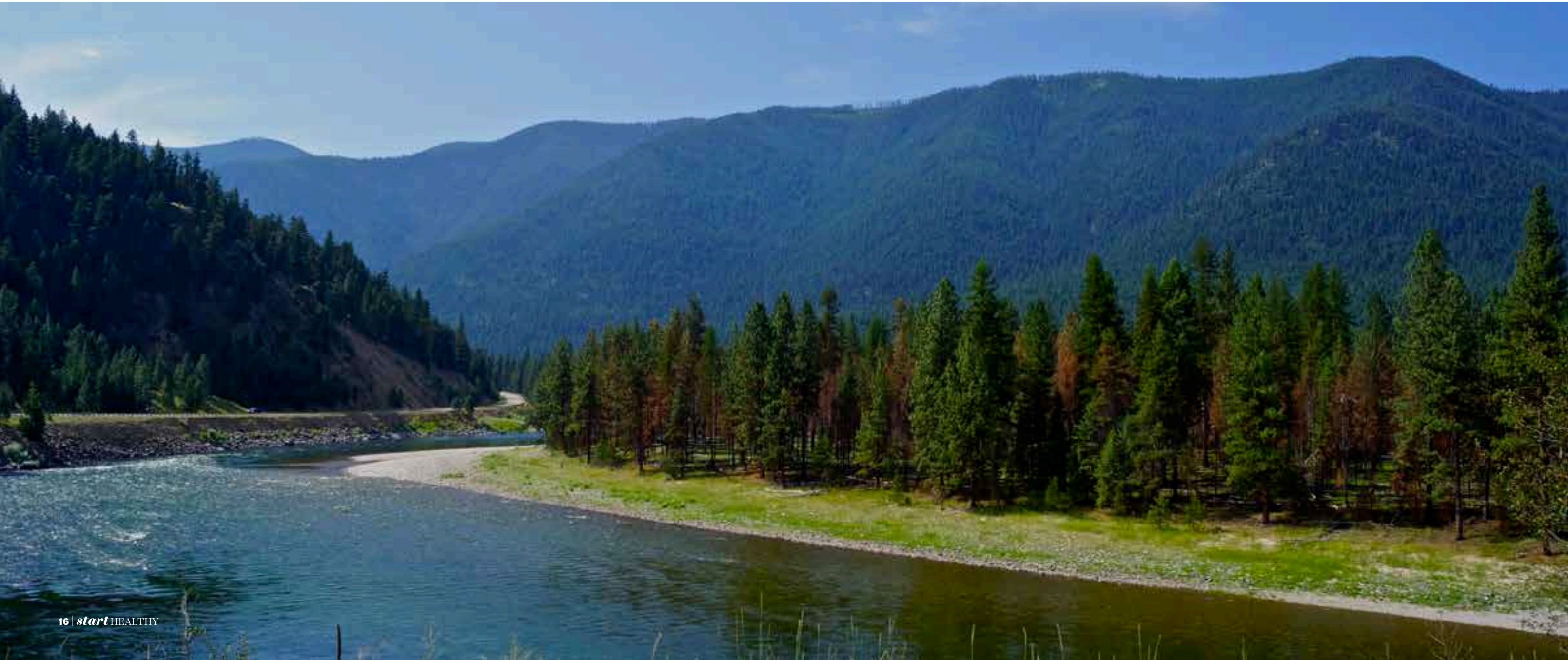
CHOOSE YOUR OWN

Adventure in Missoula

written by: ANDRE RIOS

If the crowded sidewalks of ultrapopular metropolitan cities feel too intense and the remoteness of national parks too isolating for your liking, consider a perfectly balanced destination that wraps the best of both into one neat package: Missoula, Montana. With its mélange of lush mountain vistas, burgeoning arts-and-culture scene, and outdoor sports

opportunities, this town offers something for everyone. And because of its underrated status, it may be one of the more affordable places to indulge your every whim. So make a jaunt to this pinnacle of adventure and relaxation, and get ready to take a breath of that clean mountain air.



The basics

Given that the state's name derives from the Latin word for "mountain," it's no wonder that Montana is a haven of natural wonders, and Missoula sits perfectly located near many. Within its reach includes numerous famous mountain ranges, glittering waterfronts like at Flathead Lake, and several preserved parks, most notably Glacier National Park. If you plan on flying in for a sampling of this stunning scenery, opt for the nearby Missoula Montana Airport—although small, it is accessible from several hub cities, such as Dallas/Fort Worth and Denver.

Settling in

Once you arrive, Missoula invites you to rest your head in whichever ambience speaks to you most. Its various accommodations each capture a segment of the city's personality, one that embraces its natural roots while chasing a contemporary spirit. The Wren, for example, is a trendy, art-filled hotel that's pet friendly, loaded with comforting amenities, and situated in the heart of downtown just steps away from top-rated restaurants. Indulge in "the best pizza in Missoula" at the casual eatery Biga Pizza, or button up for a sophisticated meal at the Brasserie Porte Rouge, where you'll find a French-inspired menu and an extensive wine list.

Meanwhile, the old-fashioned C'mon Inn invites you to "escape the ordinary" with its laid-back vibe. Rustic cabin architecture wraps around an indoor courtyard that features a real rock waterfall and fishpond, while comforting suites equipped with fireplaces help you rest cozily. Or if you'd prefer to get up close with Missoula's must-see alpine scenery, you can skip the hotels and book a rental cabin or yurt instead. There, you can rest peacefully among natural soundscapes and swing your doors open to revel in a serene forest view.



Sampling the local culture

Whatever sort of accommodations you check into, don't idle for long—there's far too much to explore in this surprisingly vibrant city. Take a stroll through Missoula's historic downtown, where boutique shopping, popular restaurants, and a riverfront trail stretch below a stunning mountain backdrop. You'll also find the Montana Natural History Center here, which catalogs Missoula's past. Investigate fossils and other prehistoric wonders found nearby, and learn about the existing ecosystems and wildlife that make the surrounding region so extraordinary.





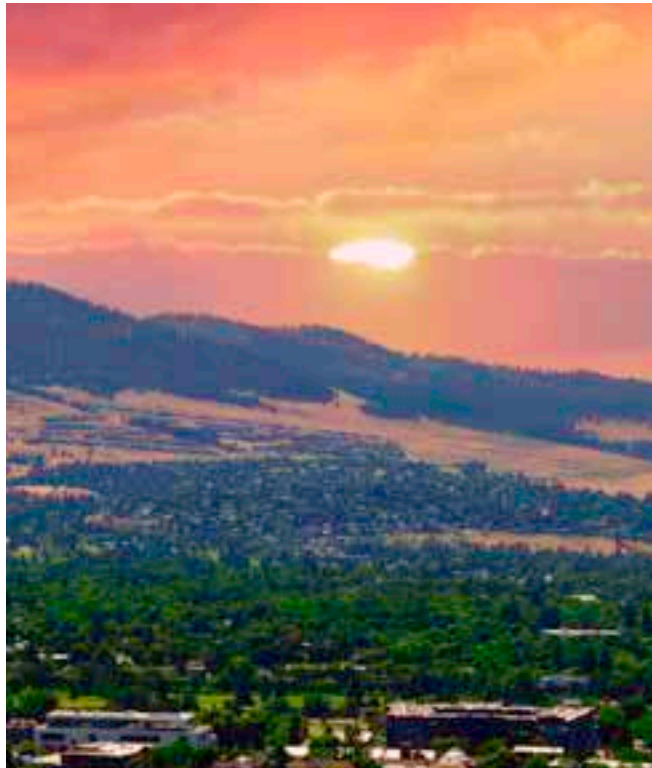
Perhaps even more thought-provoking is this town's art scene. The Missoula Art Museum, Montana Museum of Art and Culture, and several independent galleries all exhibit fine art by renowned and upcoming creatives alike, including work by indigenous people. If you happen to be in town at the beginning of the month, make sure to check out First Friday Gallery Night. As Missoula's tourism board describes, this is when "the downtown scene explodes with art on every block, along with samplings of freshly crafted poetry and culinary delights—food for the soul and the belly."

For a perfect balance of old West, outdoorsy amusement and highbrow culture, catch two of this city's biggest events: the Western Montana Fair and Rodeo and the Missoula Symphony in the Park, both of which occur annually each August. And if you make your visit in early September, you'll be right on time for the River City Roots Festival, a free event that attracts massive 15,000-member crowds to enjoy live music, work by local artisans, and more right downtown.

Romps and recreation

Besides its cultural opportunities, Missoula is also a flat-out fun place to spend a weekend. Looking for some low-stakes thrills? Venture ten minutes outside town to Gray Wolf Peak Casino to try your hand at a multitude of games; its indoor golf simulator in particular is a must-try. Or if you prefer outdoorsy escapades, don't miss 10,000 Waves Raft & Kayak Adventures. Through this company, you can book a calm, scenic floating tour, thrilling white-water rafting outing, or other water-sports excursion on the Clark Fork or Blackfoot River.

Of course, you can't miss out on the chance to grab a rod and reel: Missoula is practically the capital of freshwater fishing. In fact, Robert Redford's 1992 film *A River Runs Through It* may be this city's ultimate claim to fame. Its tale featuring a family's fly-fishing adventures nods to the popular local sport, though the title may be a tad inaccurate—not just one but many rivers and creeks flow through Missoula, providing ample fresh water for catching fish like trout and bass. And its lush forest scenery makes this locale one of the most serene spots to cast your line.



A gateway to national wonders

In addition to the offerings within the city, Missoula serves as the perfect launch point if you're looking to trek in wide-open nature. Some options you'll find right nearby, including Mount Sentinel with its stunning mix of city and mountain views. But many other options that represent nature at its finest are an easy day trip away.

◀ Lolo National Forest

Take in the elevation at this can't-miss escape that features towering trees, sapphire lakes, jagged canyons, and winding rivers. You can enjoy these sights (and maybe spot some wildlife) from a hike or bike ride on one of the park's many trails. If you're tempted to stay longer, Lolo National Forest also offers rentable cabins in canyons and lookouts upon mountaintops that provide a convenient place to rest your head.



Glacier National Park ▶

This is surely one of the most ethereal landscapes on earth, and it lies only two and a half hours north of Missoula. In Glacier National Park, tremendous peaks rise out from jewel-toned lakes and lush forest trails—seven hundred miles of hiking trails, to be exact—and its namesake glaciers glitter in the sun.

A fascinating city brimming with verdant scenery, quaint city streets, and a wealth of culture and history, Missoula, Montana, unquestionably belongs on any traveler's bucket list. In fact, all you will find yourself lacking during your visit is time—but, thankfully, this uniquely American destination will always welcome you back.

For more info, visit destinationmissoula.org



sensational sandwiches

recipes by: LUCY HEAVER AND AISLING COUGHLAN

photography by: CHRIS MIDDLETON

caprese with balsamic glaze

SERVES 2

measure

- 2 ciabatta rolls, sliced in half
- Olive oil, for brushing
- 1 garlic clove, cut in half
- 3–4 tomatoes, thickly sliced
- 2 balls fresh buffalo mozzarella, sliced
- A few basil leaves

Balsamic Glaze

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar

make

1. To make the balsamic glaze, place the vinegar in a small saucepan over high heat and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the vinegar has reduced by half and coats the back of a spoon.
2. Preheat a griddle pan to high.
3. Brush the cut sides of the ciabatta with olive oil then rub with the garlic. Place the ciabatta halves cut side down in the griddle pan and toast until char marks appear. This can take anywhere up to 10 minutes. Placing a plate on top of the ciabatta will help speed up this process and prevent your kitchen from filling up with smoke.
4. Layer slices of tomato and mozzarella on the bottom half of each ciabatta. Tear over a few basil leaves, then season with salt and plenty of cracked black pepper, and a drizzle of the balsamic glaze.

scan here



to get the full box,
The Sandwich Shop:
50 Great Sandwich Recipes



chicken *gyro*

SERVES 2

measure

- 14 oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- ½ tablespoon olive oil
- 2 Greek pita breads
- 1 tomato, diced
- 2–3 thin slices red onion
- 2 handfuls shredded lettuce
- ½ cup tzatziki

Marinade

- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoons Greek-style yoghurt
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

make

1. To make the marinade, combine the ingredients in a bowl, along with a pinch of salt and pepper. If using chicken breast, slice it in half horizontally, so that each breast becomes two thinner pieces. Add to the marinade, mix well to coat then chill in the fridge for 1–2 hours.
2. Preheat the oven to 340°F.
3. Preheat a barbecue or griddle pan to high and brush with the oil. Drain any excess marinade from the chicken and transfer the chicken to the barbecue. Cook the chicken for 5–8 minutes, turning once, until cooked through. Shred the meat using two forks.
4. Warm the pita in the oven for 2–3 minutes. Tear two large squares of baking paper, slightly larger than the pita bread.
5. To assemble, place the pita on the baking paper. Add the tomato, red onion, chicken and lettuce and spoon over several dollops of tzatziki. Tightly roll each gyro in the baking paper and serve.



egyptian *falafel*

SERVES 2

measure

- 6–8 falafel (chilled, store bought)
- 2 large Lebanese flatbreads
- 2 handfuls shredded iceberg lettuce
- 1 tablespoon Turkish pickled chilies
- 8–10 pickled turnips
- 2 dill pickles (gherkins), quartered lengthways
- 2 tomatoes, thickly sliced

Tahini Sauce

- 2 tablespoons tahini
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 1 small garlic clove, crushed

make

1. To make the tahini sauce, place the ingredients and 3 tablespoons water in a small screw-top jar, close the lid and shake well until combined.
2. Cook the falafel according to the packet instructions.
3. Dry-fry the flatbreads in a large frying pan over high heat for about 30 seconds on each side, until soft and warmed through. Set aside and keep warm.
4. Place the shredded lettuce in a line on one side of each wrap. Sit the falafel on top and drizzle over lots of tahini sauce. Test-run a pickled chili. Most Turkish pickled chilies are relatively mild, but some can be very spicy, so deseed them if necessary before adding to your wraps. Top with a few pickled turnips, the dill pickles and tomato. Add another drizzle of tahini sauce, then fold up the bottom of the wrap and roll over the shorter side, trying to catch all of the ingredients as you roll. Roll up completely and serve while still warm.



ultimate *salad wrap*

SERVES 2

measure

- 4 squares mountain bread or similar
- 2¾ oz. cashew cheese
- 4 lettuce leaves, shredded
- 4 slices pickled beetroot
- ½ carrot, finely grated
- ½ avocado mashed with 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ½ small cucumber, sliced
- ¼ red capsicum (bell pepper), thinly sliced
- ¼ red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 small handfuls alfalfa sprouts
- Small handful sunflower kernels (optional)

Tahini Sauce

- 2 tablespoons tahini
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 1 small garlic clove, crushed

make

1. Make the tahini sauce by combining the ingredients and 3 tablespoons water in a small screw-top jar, close the lid and shake well until combined.
2. For each wrap, lay two squares of mountain bread on top of each other. Roughly spread the cashew cheese onto the bread and arrange the lettuce in a line on one side of each wrap.
3. Layer on the remaining ingredients, finishing with a large drizzle of tahini sauce and a sprinkling of sunflower kernels, if using. Season with black pepper.
4. Fold over the bottom of each wrap and roll over the shorter side, trying to catch all of the ingredients as you roll. Roll up completely and serve.

a guide to healthy **COOKING OILS**

written by:
LAUREN KIM

LOOKING TO GIVE YOUR RECIPES A HEALTHY upgrade? Swap butter for a plant-based oil when preparing your meals, and you may boost their nutritional value while also reducing your intake of harmful fats. In this guide, discover how to best use such oils in the kitchen and get a closer look at four flavorful options.

THE UPSIDES

Cooking with oil can provide a delicious boost to your well-being in a number of ways. For starters, many types contain antioxidants that can help improve mental health and limit the risk of cancer and heart disease by neutralizing free radicals, chemicals that can cause dangerous cellular damage. These oils also tend to be high in polysaturated and monounsaturated fats that may lower LDL (bad) and raise HDL (good) cholesterol. However, note that some oils, like coconut and palm, can contain saturated fats,

while others, like canola and vegetable, can be highly processed, potentially leading to inflammation. This makes it essential to be careful in your selection to maximize the benefits.

BEST USES

Plant-based oils are ideal for everything from creating flavor-packed salad dressings and marinades to keeping your food from sticking to surfaces to cooking on the stove or in the oven. Just make sure to use them in moderation—aim for about one tablespoon at most per meal to avoid excess calories. And be mindful of the smoke (or burning) point. Smoking oil can ruin foods, pose a fire hazard, and add cancer-causing agents to your meals. When you're done cooking, store most oils in a closed container away from light, such as on a pantry shelf, to help them last longer and stay fresher.

TASTY AND NUTRITIOUS OILS

Head to the grocery store, and you'll find an ever-increasing variety of plant-based oils on the shelves. Here are four top ones to consider reaching for.

Olive

There are several grades of this oil, which is made by crushing and pressing olives. Extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO) is the least processed and considered to be the healthiest because of its heart-healthy fatty acids. EVOO is generally used in salad dressings and for drizzling, but it can also be good for sautéing and searing; despite its relatively low smoke point, experts say it is stable and safe to cook with. Refrain from purchasing EVOO in bulk, though, unless you can finish it within six months since it can lose its freshness quickly.

Sesame

A little of this unrefined, toasted oil goes a long way—it's perfect for Asian-style sauces and meals, such as by mixing it with soy sauce and rice vinegar for dipping dumplings. According to research, it can also help improve your metabolism and blood circulation. This oil has a lower smoke point, so add it as a final step in your cooking to avoid burning it. And after it's opened, put it in the refrigerator to help it last longer.

Avocado

A versatile cooking oil with a high smoke point, this product from the berries of the avocado tree is good for your heart, eyes, and skin. Opt for cold-pressed, its least refined form, for extra benefits like more vitamin E and a delicious buttery flavor.

Pumpkin seed

Offering a nutty taste, pumpkin seed (or pepita) oil may help boost your mood and ward off depression; some studies claim it can even reverse hair loss and reduce menopausal symptoms. It's often used to accent foods like soups, cabbage slaw, and pesto.

Try cooking with a wholesome oil or two, and you may elevate your meals while also supporting a healthier lifestyle.



WHAT YOU CAN
DO FOR YOUR
digestive
HEALTH

written by: ANDRE RIOS





ON ANY GIVEN DAY, YOUR DIGESTIVE SYSTEM CAN

feel like your best friend or your worst enemy. This tract takes the foods and drinks you consume, then breaks them down into chemical components that sustain your body and mind. And whether this process occurs smoothly or leaves your belly in knots largely depends on a surprisingly complex arrangement of organs, glands, enzymes, and microorganisms like bacteria—all of which team up to help keep you healthy. Even still, making the following simple changes to your lifestyle may have a dramatic positive impact on your daily digestive experience.

AVOID ALCOHOL

You may be familiar with the terms “after-dinner drink” or “digestif,” both of which refer to the ritual consumption of a strong beverage like brandy or a cocktail at the end of a meal. This is supposedly intended to aid in digestion by cleansing the stomach of any potential contaminants in the prior feast (e.g., if your steak came out a touch too rare for your constitution).

But the science behind this practice is shaky, and, in reality, alcohol consumption could actually negatively impact your digestive health. Adult beverages have been shown to increase acid production, cause heartburn, harm helpful gut bacteria, and heighten the risk of conditions like inflammatory bowel disease. And according to the World Health Organization, there’s no such thing as a safe level of alcoholic consumption, meaning that even one such beverage can lead to these results. So pass on that digestif, and opt for water instead to gain the opposite effect; good hydration has been linked to an overall healthier, more comfortable, and more efficient digestive tract.

GET ACTIVE

While alcohol might not be a reliable digestion aid following a meal, taking a walk could be an ideal healthy choice. Doing so will assist peristalsis, or the gentle flow of your intestinal muscles as they guide food through your body. Even more, engaging in regular exercise can offer ongoing gut-health benefits, including increased blood flow to enhance digestive-organ function and a more diverse gut microbiome to reduce the risk of disorders like IBS and colon cancer. It's recommended that all adults get at least thirty minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, such as walking, swimming, or cycling, five days a week and conduct a strength-training routine like weight lifting at least two times weekly.

LISTEN TO YOUR GUT

Naturally, what you eat affects your short- and long-term digestive health, but crafting a diet that supports it is a bit more nuanced than the generic advice to "eat healthy." Chalk this up to food intolerance, a phenomenon that makes some substances incompatible with an individual's body. This may occur if you don't produce enough of a specific enzyme needed to break down the chemicals in certain foods—common examples include dairy, gluten, and high-fat products. After eating something you don't tolerate well, you may struggle to digest it, resulting in symptoms like bloating and abdominal pain.

There are various other reasons why a food may not sit well with someone. Those who live with chronic issues such as celiac or Crohn's disease may be more likely to experience negative digestive reactions, while people who suffer from ulcers or acid reflux may struggle with highly acidic foods like spicy dishes or citrus fruits. Take note of anything that just doesn't make you feel good, and try to avoid it, possibly seeking an alternative such as dairy-free milk instead.





REFRAME YOUR DIET

Beyond any unique digestive afflictions, you can also heed some general advice to eat your way to better wellness. A primary approach to consider is switching to a diet filled with whole foods: natural ingredients like raw produce. While processed meals may be high in artificial sweeteners, saturated fats, and other substances that can worsen your gut health, whole foods offer optimal quantities of essential nutrients like fiber, which can speed up the digestive process. This can, in turn, help you pass food more easily and reduce your risk of diseases such as colorectal cancer.

That said, some processed foods may actually improve your lifestyle, namely those that contain probiotics. These are live microorganisms that can aid in nutrient absorption and naturally produce certain chemicals that may boost your digestion, among other benefits. Look for probiotics in yogurt, certain bottled beverages like kombucha, and fermented foods

like pickles and sauerkraut. Consuming these foods regularly can support a healthy gut microbiome and improve your ongoing digestive well-being.

SEEK TREATMENT

Finally, don't hesitate to speak to your doctor about any digestive concerns you may have, especially if you notice any symptoms affecting your daily life. For instance, if you suffer from certain food sensitivities, you may feel nervous about trying new dishes or dining out at restaurants for fear of triggering a reaction. Your doctor can talk you through a game plan of how to approach the experience and what to look out for when selecting foods. Remember that they are there to make you feel comfortable, even when discussing uncomfortable topics. By addressing your concerns with them, you can take steps toward achieving greater digestive wellness—and take a bite out of life with fewer worries.

Decoding UV Rays

written by: ALLISON GOMES

WARM WEATHER OFTEN MAKES US EAGER

to get outside and soak up the sun, whether by lying back on the beach, hiking in the mountains, or simply enjoying a leisurely walk in the park. But while our star provides us with warmth, light, and vitamin D, it also emits ultraviolet radiation, which can have a potentially detrimental impact on our health. That's why understanding these rays and their effects is crucial to enjoying the outdoors safely this season and beyond.

The different categories of UV rays

UV radiation is a type of energy that falls into three categories: UVA, UVB, and UVC. Each one has varying wavelengths and ability to penetrate the atmosphere, meaning they can affect you in different ways.

UVA

These rays possess the least amount of energy but have the longest wavelengths. As a result, they make up the majority of the UV radiation that reaches the earth's surface. Despite their lower energy, UVA rays penetrate deep into the skin, degrading collagen and elastin fibers over time. Both of these are essential for maintaining the skin's structural integrity and elasticity, and damage to them leads to the development of wrinkles and fine lines as well as a general loss of skin firmness, making UVA rays a major contributor to premature aging.

UVB

In contrast, UVB rays have more energy yet shorter wavelengths. This means that although fewer of them reach the earth, they are more intense and have a greater potential for harm. UVB rays are the primary cause of sunburn because they impact the epidermis, the skin's outermost layer, and can cause DNA mutations within skin cells. This is a key factor in the development of skin cancers, including various carcinomas and melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer. Tanning beds are another source of UVB rays, exposing users to higher concentrations of them and increasing their risk for such health issues.

UVC

While these rays are the most energetic of the UV spectrum, they fortunately do not reach the earth's surface since they are completely absorbed by the atmosphere. However, UVC rays can still pose a danger through artificial sources. Devices such as welding torches, mercury lamps, and UV sanitizing bulbs all emit UVC radiation, which can cause severe burns and other injuries if proper precautions are not taken.

The good

Despite the potential dangers of UV exposure, there are beneficial aspects. UVB rays, for instance, play a particularly important role in vitamin D production, which is essential for maintaining healthy bones and a robust immune system. The World Health Organization recommends brief, unprotected sun exposure two to three times a week for about twelve minutes, or roughly half the time it would take for your skin to begin burning. (This may vary depending on your skin's sensitivity and the UV index on a given day.) This allows your body to synthesize adequate levels of vitamin D without significantly increasing your risk of skin damage.

Moreover, sunlight is a known mood booster due to its ability to increase serotonin levels. That's why spending time outdoors is a common suggestion for people who suffer from seasonal affective disorder. So if you're looking for a quick pick-me-up during the week, get outside for a brief moment—you may be surprised at the difference it can make.

Though sunlight is essential for life and provides important health benefits, it also presents risks that shouldn't be ignored. By taking the appropriate precautions, such as wearing sunscreen, staying in the shade, and avoiding exposure during peak hours, you can enjoy the sun safely, reaping its benefits while minimizing its harmful effects.





PAW-FECT DOG GROOMING TIPS

written by: LAUREN KIM

Routine care for your dog's coat, teeth, and nails isn't just about keeping them looking and smelling their best. It can also prevent serious health problems and provide some essential bonding time for you and your furry companion.

BRUSH THEM

To start, brush their coat a few times a week to help it stay shiny, reduce matting, and limit shedding. As for haircuts, some breeds (like beagles and boxers) only rarely require a trim, whereas others (like poodles and Shih Tzus) may need one monthly to avoid painful skin conditions and keep their vision unobstructed. Such regular maintenance may also allow you to promptly spot and treat issues like ticks, fleas, or minor injuries.

MAINTAIN TEETH AND NAILS

Getting your dog to sit still while brushing their teeth can be a challenge, but it's worth the effort. Consistent

dental care can freshen their breath and reduce the risk of painful dental disease; using a toothpaste formulated for dogs in a flavor like peanut butter may make the chore less difficult. And don't forget a pedicure—trim their nails every two to four weeks to prevent painful clacking on the floor. You can use either a clipper or a grinder, taking care not to go below the quick.

BATHE AS NEEDED

Bathtime is also critical to keeping your canine well-groomed. While the frequency will depend on their breed and the length and thickness of their coat, you should wash them at least once every three months to keep them free of dirt, pests, and allergens. Add a splash of excitement by giving them a toy to play with, and your four-legged friend may not mind being washed, rinsed, and dried, making the task more joyful for the both of you.

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