Welcome to Good Food News!

On face value happiness seems like a simple topic, but achieving true
happiness in a busy, complicated world can be anything but simple.

This issue we’re providing some food for thought around the topic of
happiness and the benefits that striving for happiness can have on our
physical and mental health.

Set your sights on happiness with our feature story, which examines
some of the key factors involved in achieving lasting happiness, before
finding out how diet and activity can play a key role in sustaining a
positive mood.

Our double page of fresh, tasty recipes will also be sure to put a smile
on your face, why not try them out at celebrations with family and
friends this summer as we move into 2012!

Happy Reading!
Set your Sights on Happiness
Population studies have shown our level of happiness is partially genetic – that is we are wired to be naturally happy or in fact, grouchy. But whether you see the glass half full, or half empty, the good news is you can positively influence your level of happiness.

Pig Out on Plant Foods
Enjoying a diet rich in whole plant-based foods is a simple way to improve your wellbeing, nourish your body and help you feel healthier – now that’s worth smiling about.

Good Mood Foods
What you eat can have a direct impact on how you feel. In fact, food is such a powerful mood-booster that emerging science has shown some nutrients may even protect against mild forms of depression.

Berry Tart
10 mins Preparation
12 mins Cooking
easy Difficulty
4 Serves
Green paw paw salad
Delicious salad with unusual flavours, great for dinner parties.

Exercise That's Worth Smiling About
Keeping active and physically fit is a great way to stay happy and it may even help prevent or manage depression. Research has shown if you take part in regular physical activity you may have a decreased risk of developing depression.

Summer Iced-Tea

Fresh Noodle and Vegetable Rolls
Laugh Away Your Troubles

Laughter truly is the best medicine. Scientific research shows it lifts your mood instantly and reduces stress. It can also boost your immune system, improve circulation and may even reduce aches and pains.

Read more...

Healthy Laugh Equals Healthy Heart

Filling your heart with joy may not only be good for your soul, but it could also be good for the health of your ticker.

Read more...
Set your Sights on Happiness

Population studies have shown our level of happiness is partially genetic – that is we are wired to be naturally happy or in fact, grouchy. But whether you see the glass half full, or half empty, the good news is you can positively influence your level of happiness.

The benefits of happiness – are so great that in the past 20 years there has been a boom in positive psychology “the science of optimal human functioning”. This has resulted in a vast amount of local and international research exploring what makes us happy. Distilling the research, and the mountain of best sellers on the pursuit of happiness, we’ve found seven common themes that are continually identified as areas we can work on to genuinely improve our happiness and wellbeing.

Social
Enjoying time with our friends and family has the greatest influence on our happiness. Our network of loved ones provides support when we need it and generally helps to make us happier, healthier and more productive.

The experts recommend that we should be spending between six to eight hours a day connecting with others – preferably face-to-face. Researcher and author of several New York Times best sellers on happiness, Dan Buettner says joining a club that meets just once a month can have a positive effect on your happiness that’s equivalent to doubling your salary.

Work
Most of us spend more than half our waking hours at work so it’s important we enjoy it! The key is to find a job that gives us the opportunity to use our talents and strengths, while providing a challenge. However, beware of lengthy commutes as they can have a negative impact on job satisfaction.

Also take short breaks regularly. While Australians may talk of having a “sickie”, the fact is we are actually a nation of hoarders when it comes to taking leave. Government statistics show we’ve accrued 118 million days and $33 billion in annual leave, with a quarter of Australian full-time workers owed more than 25 days leave.

Finance
According to Deakin University’s happiness expert Professor Robert Cummins, Australians with the highest level of happiness and wellbeing are not necessarily millionaires but instead those living with a partner and earning a combined income of around $100,000.

When it comes to finance, it seems it is security, rather than wealth, that makes us happy. So the common tips are to set up savings strategies, manage your money carefully and spend thoughtfully.

Physical
Health and happiness are intrinsically linked so make time in your day for your physical wellbeing. Nourish your body with whole plant foods and enjoy the natural high from the endorphins released by exercise.

There are several articles in this edition of Good Food News dedicated to feel good foods and moving to improve your mood…so keep reading!

Community
One of the key factors impacting your personal happiness is where you live. A great place to live generally ticks the boxes for safety, walkability (ease to access local services), peaceful surrounds, and has great community spaces such as parks and vibrant suburban hubs.

It’s also important to get involved in your local community. Connecting with our surrounds enhances our feeling of belonging, while giving back to the local community through volunteering can provide a rewarding sense of personal satisfaction.

Home
The great Australian dream of home ownership is alive and well, and that could be because it simply makes us happier. Australians who own a home – even those with a mortgage - are happier than renters.

But whether you rent or own, you can take steps to ensure your home is indeed your happy place:

• Grow a garden – studies have shown time spent gardening helps lower stress hormones.
• Pets are also great for reducing stress.
• Turn your bedroom into a sanctuary for sleep free from TVs and computers. A good sleep is vital for your wellbeing.

Self
Dan Buettner has studied the longest living cultures on the planet and discovered that certain things help them not only live longer, but also healthier and happier. He says that people who can articulate their life purpose in one sentence are 20 per cent happier than those who can’t.

What's your purpose? It's a big question, but why not start by taking time to recognise and put to good use your strengths, talents and passions.
Pig Out on Plant Foods

Enjoying a diet rich in whole plant-based foods is a simple way to improve your wellbeing, nourish your body and help you feel healthier – now that's worth smiling about.

So what are whole plant-based foods? Basically fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes that look as they did when they were harvested from the field or orchard - straight from nature.

In some instances, there may be a small amount of processing needed to package these foods, but they haven’t been altered significantly. Therefore, they generally contain minimal or no added ingredients such as salt, fat, sugar, additives or preservatives.

So why are whole plant foods so good for you?

• Excellent source of fibre – Fibre is important to keep digestive systems healthy and can help to lower blood cholesterol. People following a whole, plant-based diet consume between 50 per cent and 100 per cent more fibre than non-vegetarians.

• Cholesterol free – Plant foods are completely cholesterol free, which can help to keep blood cholesterol levels within a healthy range. Research has shown that following a plant-based diet contributes to lower blood cholesterol levels.

• Plant foods are packed with antioxidants and phytochemicals – Antioxidants and phytochemicals help to neutralise substances called free radicals, which left unchecked cause damage to cells in our bodies. This damage that has been linked to aging and diseases such as cancer.

• Plant foods are nutrient dense – This means that you can get all the nutrients you need, while consuming fewer calories.

• Variety – Whole plant-based foods come in many shapes, sizes, colours, textures and tastes. Including a variety of whole plant-based foods not only provides different nutrients, but adds interest and appeal to meal times.

What about avocados, olives, nuts and seeds, are these high in fat?

Food like avocados, olives, nuts and seeds are an important source of good fats and are a great addition to your diet. They contain healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, and a low proportion of "bad" or saturated fat.

Flaxseed, chia seeds and walnuts also contain plant omega-3 fats in the form of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which is important for good health and can help to reduce inflammation. Research also shows eating a handful or two of whole nuts (unsalted) each day, may reduce your risk of heart disease and can actually help you maintain a healthy weight.

Examples of whole foods include:

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<th>Any fresh fruit</th>
<th>Any fresh Vegetable</th>
<th>Legumes</th>
<th>Wholegrains</th>
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<td>Apples</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
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<td>Cauliflower</td>
<td>Peas - fresh or frozen</td>
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<td>Plums</td>
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Good Mood Food

We all know there are many things that can affect our mood, from stress at work, the weather, or even what's for lunch. But more and more research suggests that the effect food has on our mood is more complicated than simply feeling uninspired by lunch time left-overs.

According to one UK study – The Food and Mood Project – eighty percent of people reported a significant improvement in mood swings, depression and anxiety when their eating style was based on ‘supporter foods’ like vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, wholegrain foods, oily fish and water. The researchers also found that ‘stressors’ on mood were foods containing excess refined sugar, caffeine and alcohol. The foods identified as ‘stressors’ initially stimulated the body but eventually left people feeling depleted and more stressed because they provided little nutrition.

So what does this mean in day-to-day terms?

Eating a balance of ‘supporter foods’ may be helpful in managing anxiety and changes in mood. Choosing meals based on whole plant foods, eating a good breakfast including wholegrain breads or cereals and making water your main drink can be a great start.

Try to avoid ‘stressor’ foods such as caffeine, alcohol and refined sugary foods like lollies and soft drinks. Often we find ourselves reaching for sugary foods at snack time. Why not keep a mix of nuts, seeds and dried fruit handy as an easy snack of ‘supporter foods’?

While food can play a role in our moods, as mentioned earlier, it is not the only factor, so it is important to seek advice and talk to a professional if you have been feeling down or depressed for more than two weeks.

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Berry Tart

Ingredients
1 sheet reduced-fat canola puff pastry
¼ cup almond meal
1 punnet strawberries, halved (or 200g blueberries)
1 tablespoon raw sugar

Method
1. Cut pastry in half. Score a 1cm border around the edge of each piece of pastry.
2. Sprinkle almond meal in the centre of each piece of pastry. Top with strawberries and sprinkle with sugar.
3. Bake in a moderate oven, 180°C, for 10-12 minutes or until edges are puffed and golden. Serve with yoghurt or crème fraiche with lemon rind.

Tips
Raspberries, blackberries or a mixture of berries could be used for making these delicious tarts. You can also use frozen berries.

Nutritional Information
Per Serve
Kilojoules 950 kJ
Calories 230 cal
Protein 5 g
Total fat 13 g
Carbohydrate 21 g
Sodium 5 mg
Potassium 150 mg
Calcium 30 mg
Iron 0.7 mg
Fibre 3 g
Green paw paw salad

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small red onion, finely diced
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 limes, juice only
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon soy sauce (salt reduced)
½ cup unsalted peanuts, roughly chopped
200g green paw paw, peeled and grated
1 carrot, peeled and grated
½ cup mint leaves, torn
½ cup basil leaves, torn

Method
1 Heat oil in frypan, sauté onion and garlic until golden brown. Set aside to cool.
2 In a bowl combine lime juice, salt, brown sugar, soy sauce and half the peanuts. Mix dressing with paw paw and carrot allowing the paw paw to soften.
3 Mix half mint and basil into the onion mixture.
4 To serve, place paw paw mix on a plate, top with the onion and herb mix, then remaining mint, basil and nuts.

Tips
Paw paw are sometimes called papaya or vice versa but they are the same fruit.

Nutritional Information

Per Serve
Kilojoules 500 kJ
Calories 125 cal
Protein 4 g
Total fat 9 g
Carbohydrate 5 g
Sodium 520 mg
Potassium 200 mg
Calcium 40 mg
Iron 0.8 mg
Fibre 3 g
Keeping active and physically fit is a great way to stay happy and it may even help prevent or manage depression. Research has shown if you take part in regular physical activity you may have a decreased risk of developing depression.

But how does exercise help to improve your mood and lift your optimism? Regular exercise has been shown to increase levels of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is a chemical in the brain involved in mood, sleep, libido, appetite and other functions. Exercise may also increase endorphins, which are ‘feel good’ chemicals.

Exercise does not need to be extremely vigorous to be helpful for your mood – simply briskly walking each day can be beneficial.

In fact, a recent scientific study concluded that 16 weeks of regular exercise was as effective as certain antidepressant medications for treatment of mild to moderate depression.

If you are being treated for depression, it’s important to not make any changes to your management plan without speaking to a health professional. Depression can affect anyone at anytime, if you need assistance call: Beyondblue info line 1300 22 4636
Summer Iced-Tea

5 minutes preparation
0 minutes cooking
easy difficulty
4 serves

Ingredients
1 cup lemon soother herbal tea, chilled
1 lime, juice only
1/2 cup cranberry and raspberry juice
1 cup orange juice
Ice cubes
1 punnet strawberries, sliced

Method
1 Combine tea, lime juice, cranberry and orange juice together and mix well.
2 Pour over ice cubes and strawberries. Garnish with mint if desired.
3 Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Tips
Herbal teas are a good alternative for people who want to avoid the caffeine of regular teas. Herbal teas are not only based on the leaves, but sometimes the flowers, roots, bark and seeds of various plants. You can find a wide variety of interesting herbal tea blends in your local supermarket. If you wish to avoid caffeine, be sure to check the label, as some may contain caffeine. This tea will keep refrigerated for two days.
For ice cubes with a twist, try freezing passionfruit pulp instead of water or place a frozen raspberry or blueberry in each individual ice cube mould, cover with water and allow to freeze.

Nutritional Information

Per Serve
Kilojoules 180 kJ
Calories 45 cal
Protein 0.5 g
Total fat 0.2 g
Carbohydrate 10 g
Sodium 10 mg
Potassium 145 mg
Calcium 15 mg
Iron 0.3 mg
Fibre 0.2 g

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Fresh Noodle and Vegetable Rolls

Ingredients
80g rice vermicelli noodles
1 medium carrot, grated coarsely
1 medium cucumber, deseeded and finely sliced
1 medium red capsicum, finely sliced
1/4 small Chinese cabbage, finely shredded
1/2 cup coriander leaves
1/2 cup mint leaves, whole
12 x 22cm rice paper wrappers

OPTIONAL - Dipping Sauce
1/4 cup caster sugar
2/3 cup water
1 birds eye chili, halved and sliced (optional)
1/4 cup lime juice
2 tsp rice wine vinegar
2 tsp reduced salt soy sauce

Method
1. Soak noodles in boiling water in a large heatproof bowl for 5 minutes; stir to separate strands, then drain. Using scissors, cut noodles into shorter lengths.

2. Place noodles in a large bowl; drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the dipping sauce. Add vegetables and herbs; toss to combine.

3. To assemble rolls, place 1 sheet of rice paper in a medium bowl of warm water until just softened. Lift sheet from water carefully; place on a board covered with a clean tea towel. Place 1/3 cup of mixture across lower part of the wrapper, in a neat horizontal pile. Fold bottom end over, then sides and roll up tightly. Place on a platter. Repeat with remaining rice paper sheets and vegetable filling.

4. To make dipping sauce, combine sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir until sugar dissolves. Add chili; bring to the boil. Reduce heat slightly and simmer for 5 minutes. Pour sauce into a heatproof bowl; cool. Stir in remaining ingredients.

Tips
Each teaspoon of dipping sauce contains approximately 15kJ, 1g of carbohydrate and 5mg of sodium not included in the nutritional information above.

Nutritional Information

Per Serve
Kilojoules 140 kJ
Calories 35 cal
Protein 1 g
Total fat 0.5 g
Saturated fat 0 g
Carbohydrate 7 g
Sodium 10 mg
Potassium 105 mg
Calcium 20 mg
Iron 0.5 mg
Fibre 1 g

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Laugh Away Your Troubles

Laughter truly is the best medicine. Scientific research shows it lifts your mood instantly and reduces stress. It can also boost your immune system, improve circulation and may even reduce aches and pains.

Enter Laughter Yoga, the happiest way to chuckle your way to better health and wellbeing.

Laughter Yoga is based on the scientific fact that the body cannot differentiate between fake and real laughter - you get the same physiological and psychological benefits from both.

Along with breathing exercises, Laughter Yoga participants practice laughing for no reason, without relying on jokes. Sounds kooky, but participants all say the same thing: the simulated laughter soon turns into real, contagious laughter.

Laughter Yoga was founded in 1995 by the now world famous Dr Madan Kataria and offers free classes for all. From his first session in Mumbai with just a few laughers, the concept has become as infectious as laughter itself, with more than 6000 social laughter clubs now established worldwide.

Australia is no exception with 60 laughter clubs throughout the country. In addition to the multiple benefits of a hearty laugh, participants equate the cardio work out of 10 minutes of laughing to 30 minutes on a rowing machine.

If you are ready to giggle, you can find your local laughter club or learn more about Laughter Yoga.

www.laugheryoga-australia.org

Why not give it a go, as classes are free.

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Healthy Laugh Equals Healthy Heart
Filling your heart with joy may not only be good for your soul, but it could also be good for the health of your ticker.

Researchers at Columbia University, New York, have shown people who are happy are less likely to develop heart disease than people who are not as happy.

In this study, trained observers determined levels of positive emotions such as joy, happiness, excitement, enthusiasm and contentment amongst 1739 participants. They found those who expressed positive emotions were likely to have a lower risk of heart disease.

The reasons why happiness is good for the heart are not clear, but it's an area attracting scientific interest.

Research presented at this year’s European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Congress included the role of laughter and its effect on heart health. Researchers showed participants a number of movie clips with either humorous or stressful scenes. After each movie the effect on blood vessels was measured. They found after movies that made study participants laugh, that their blood vessels were markedly more relaxed. These benefits lasted for about an hour.

So next time you enjoy a good belly laugh, you may be keeping your heart happy too.