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NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE MOST DEPRESSING DAY OF THE YEAR *Happiness Expert Provides Insight To Stay Happy and Healthy This Winter*

SAN JOSE, Calif. (January 26, 2009)—According to experts, the key to avoiding the “winter blues” is to set small goals, including engaging with happy friends and family, eating healthy and exercising, for a well-rounded approach to life. This advice comes just in time for America’s “Most Depressing Day of the Year,” January 26, 2009, designated by U.K. psychologist, Dr. Cliff Arnall.

Health expert and author, Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD, has a few simple tips for staying happy and healthy during this depressing time, no matter where you live. “With the sunless winter weather, fading New Year’s resolutions and holiday bills arriving, late January is a critical time to focus on ways to increase happiness. Surround yourself with positive people. Choose foods with natural vitamin D, like mushrooms, and keep your body moving.”

Make the Winter D-light-ful by Increasing Vitamin D

In addition to helping support a healthy immune system, and possibly lowering risks for cancers, including prostate, breast, colorectal and lung, vitamin D has also been shown to enhance moods. This is especially useful during winter months, when a lack of sunlight may lead to or worsen mood disorders, such as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which affects some 11 million Americans.¹

To include more vitamin D in your diet, simply toss foods with natural vitamin D, like mushrooms, in your everyday meals. A recent review of mushroom varieties showed that all mushrooms have vitamin D ranging from 4 to 400 percent of the Daily Value. Similar to the way that humans absorb sunlight and convert it to vitamin D, mushrooms contain a plant sterol—ergosterol—that converts to vitamin D when exposed to sunlight.

- Try healthy and inexpensive mushroom dishes, such as the “[Mushroom and Smoked Salmon Frittata](#)” recipe that provides natural vitamin D for an average cost per serving of \$2.52
- The “[Baked Mushroom Parmesan](#)” recipe adds a healthy twist to the classic Chicken Parmesan dish for an average cost per serving of \$2.78
- For more exciting mushroom news and recipes, visit the MushroomChannel.com

Make Connections with Happy Friends and Family

A recent 20-year study found that happiness is contagious. People with the most social connections were the happiest.² In addition, happiness has been shown to have an important effect on reduced mortality, pain reduction and improved cardiac function.³ With that in mind, Sass recommends:

- Make time for family and friends: Schedule a standing dinner date with your family at least once a week; join a new club with a friend
- Log on and link in: Connect with long-lost friends online through one of the increasing number of online social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn

Exercise, Even if Just a Little

A little exercise can go a long way in beating the winter blues. Research shows that as little as 10 to 15 minutes at a time can improve mood in the short term.⁴ Another study found that one hour of aerobic exercise outside (even with cloudy skies overhead) had the same benefits as 2.5 hours of light treatment indoors.

- At lunch, take an extra lap around the office
- Instead of taking a cab, walk 10 to 15 minutes to save money and improve your mood
- Bundle up and take your pet for a walk outside or set up daily 30-minute walks around the neighborhood with a friend for an instant mood lift

“Mushrooms Every Day, Every Way” Recipe Contest

Cooking delicious meals is another way to boost your mood. More and more research indicates that dietary changes may influence mood by initiating changes in brain structure.⁵

To uncover America’s favorite recipes, the Mushroom Council and *Taste of Home* are co-hosting the “Mushrooms Every Day, Every Way Recipe Contest” from January 26 through May 18, 2009. Four lucky winners will receive \$1,000 and one grand prize winner will receive an additional \$1,000. To enter the contest and view contest rules, visit mushroominfo.com or tasteofhome.com.

Home cooks are encouraged to submit recipes including at least 8 ounces of fresh commercially cultivated mushrooms in one of four categories. The *Taste of Home* Tasting Panel, consisting of food and online editors, will select one finalist from each category. TasteofHome.com visitors will then be asked to vote online for their favorite recipe. The recipe receiving the greatest number of votes will be named the grand prize winner.

- Happily Veggie After: Recipe using mushrooms as a substitute for meat (e.g., Portabella Mushroom Burgers)
- Mushroom Main Event: Mealtime idea starring mushrooms as a main dish or dinner recipe (e.g., Cranberry Mushroom Beef Brisket)
- Inspiring Appetizers: Appetizer recipe using different types of mushroom varieties (e.g., Bacon and Shiitake Stuffed Mushrooms)
- Fun Fungi: Favorite recipe with an unusual use of mushrooms (e.g., Mushroom Ice Cream)

Vitamin D Deficiency

Vitamin D deficiency has become an increasingly urgent health topic across America. In 2008, the American Medical Association, the nation’s largest physician organization, called on the Food and Drug Administration to re-examine the current Daily Reference Intake Value for vitamin D. The American Academy of Pediatrics doubled the amount of vitamin D it recommends for children and infants. Recently, a scientific panel of vitamin D experts held a meeting at the University of California and recommended increasing vitamin D intake to 2,000 IU from all sources for healthy adults⁶. It’s important to know your numbers. The blood level for vitamin D should be 40-60 ng/mL. If you don’t know what your levels are, contact your doctor. For more research and information on the importance of vitamin D, visit <http://www.vitaminhealth.org/> or <http://www.grassrootshealth.org>.

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The Mushroom Council is composed of fresh market producers or importers who average more than 500,000 pounds of mushrooms produced or imported annually. The mushroom program is authorized by the Mushroom Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act of 1990 and is administered by the Mushroom Council under the supervision of the Agricultural Marketing Service. Research and promotion programs help to expand, maintain and develop markets for individual agricultural commodities in the United States and abroad. These industry self-help programs are requested and funded by the industry groups that they serve. For more information on the Mushroom Council, visit mushroomcouncil.org.

¹ <http://www.webmd.com/depression/news/20040803/vitamin-d-ease-depression> (Referenced January 14, 2009)

² <http://christakis.med.harvard.edu/pdfs/095.pdf> (Referenced January 14, 2009)

³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSTRE4B400H20081205> (Referenced January 14, 2009)

⁴ <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression-and-exercise/MH00043> (Referenced January 14, 2009)

⁵ <http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/how-food-affects-your-moods> (Referenced January 14, 2009)

⁶ <http://www.grassrootshealth.org/daction/epidemic.php> (Referenced January 16, 2009)