



**Cooking**  
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**Nutrition**  
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**Fitness**  
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Fitness editor



**Motivation**  
**Tracy Sulejmani**  
Weight Watchers Leader

**Q** I've seen sumac in recipes. Can you tell me what it is, what it tastes like and how you use it?

*Pauline Nesbitt, Sydney, NSW*

*Lucy Kelly replies*

**A** Sumac is a Mediterranean spice that is deep red in colour and has a slightly sour flavour. It's made by grinding sumac berries, which come from a shrub that grows wild in Mediterranean countries. With a quite tart lemony flavour, it's great added to dips, dressing, marinades or spice rubs for barbecued meat. Use about two teaspoons in a recipe to serve four. Sumac is available at most supermarkets and for a recipe using it, see lamb open sandwiches on page 62.



*lamb open sandwiches*

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Write to Lucy at *Ask the Panel*, PO Box 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059, Australia or email [editor@weightwatchers.com.au](mailto:editor@weightwatchers.com.au)

# ask the panel

Questions about fitness, nutrition, motivation and cooking? Send them to us and we'll answer!

**Q** How can I set appropriate goals for my weight-loss journey?

*Renee Falk, Yarra Valley, Vic*

*Tracy Sulejmani replies*

**A** Setting goals that are unrealistically hard or too simple can undermine our efforts. Identifying the power of setting appropriate goals is an achievement. It's important to set goals that are within our capabilities, taking into account limitations such as time and physical ability. Tailoring goals helps us set practical targets.

Focus on the process rather than the outcome. For example, saying 'I'll exercise 30 minutes a day, five days per week' rather than 'I'll be fitter and stronger' provides decisive challenges that are achievable but still require effort and healthy habit changes.

Effective goals are specific, realistic and measurable. 'Review my online tracker once a week, starting today' works better than 'Look at my food choices'. Additionally, by choosing a specific time or date you have already decided what you are going to do rather than what you will do 'sometime'.

Think in terms of short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals engage us on a daily basis and as we build on them they become the stepping stones to achieving the long-term goals that motivate us for our entire weight-loss journey.

Setbacks happen and considering possibilities in advance makes a difference. Identifying potential roadblocks and coming up with specific strategies to overcome them contributes to success.

Finally, remember to review your goals every so often. Reviewing helps you to identify what works well, what doesn't and what you can do next.



**Q** What's healthier when it comes to food: fresh, frozen or canned?

*Natasha Thomas, Adelaide, SA*

*Emma Stirling replies*

**A** 'Fresh is best' is a good nutrition mantra to live by, but there's always more to the story and exceptions to the rule. Frozen and canned foods can be great standby staples. They can also save you money and boost food variety by providing unseasonal produce, for example, frozen blueberries or cherries in the middle of winter. The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating supports the inclusion of canned and frozen foods, as well as fresh foods, for a healthy balanced diet. But, even fresh produce can lose nutrients between being picked and eaten. Tinned or frozen fruit and vegies are usually picked at their prime and very quickly snap frozen or canned, which helps maximise nutrient content. In fact, some studies have shown higher levels of select nutrients, such as vitamin C, in frozen peas than in fresh ones. While the initial heat treatment of canned products can result in loss of some heat-sensitive nutrients like vitamins B and C, the levels of these nutrients are relatively stable during subsequent storage due to a lack of harmful light and oxygen.

There's still not a huge amount of data available on antioxidant activity in canned and frozen produce, however some surprises are emerging. The class of antioxidants called flavonoids may be affected by canning, but the absorption of the potent antioxidant lycopene is, in fact, enhanced. (Lycopene is the red pigment in foods like tomatoes.)

As there are pros and cons to fresh, frozen and canned foods, the best approach is buying fresh when you can, focussing on seasonal foods, and eating a mixture of canned and frozen when you cannot.

**Q** I suffer from arthritis so can't jog and have to be careful with any physical activity I choose to do. Is exercise beneficial to my condition and how do you suggest I stay active?

*Angela Morrissey, Eagle Hawk, ACT*

**Martha Lourey-Bird replies**

**A** Arthritis is common and does not just affect the elderly. Many people mistakenly believe exercise will worsen their condition. However, safe and effective regular exercise can, in fact, reduce the pain and inconvenience of arthritis.

Firstly, get specific arthritic advice from your doctor as there are many different types of arthritis. If you receive medical clearance, start out slowly and gradually increase the frequency and intensity of your exercise – but never to the point of pain.

Remember that when it comes to mobility, you have to move it or lose it and, without regular activity, your mobility will continue to decrease and your weight will increase. This in turn worsens your arthritis, so it's a downward cycle to get into. Exercise ideas to get you started include:

- Gentle stretching to improve range of motion and reduce stiffness in afflicted joints.
- Cardio exercise, particularly low-impact activities such as walking, cycling and tai chi.
- Weight-bearing exercise, such as walking rather than swimming, helps to reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis.
- Try rhythmic, soothing, positive and enjoyable exercise options, like gentle yoga, as people with arthritis are susceptible to depression due to the degenerative nature of the condition.

Staying active and exercising regularly is an effective way to avoid the associated health risks of arthritis. Regular physical activity builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints, as well as helping to control joint swelling and pain.



If your letter to Martha is published, you'll win a pair of women's sports shoes from Rykä. Don't forget to tell us your shoe size when you write in to *Ask the Panel*, PO BOX 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059, Australia or email [editor@weightwatchers.com.au](mailto:editor@weightwatchers.com.au)