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# THE DISH



The Community Meals Newsletter--  
connecting community to issues big & small

## THIS WEEK'S MEAL INSIGHT:

Sweet. Potatoes. So sweet. Why?

Sweet potatoes earned the name "superfood" because of the amount of nutrients they have.

Studies show they may help with:  
**Cancer.** Carotenoids in sweet potatoes might lower your risk for cancer. Purple sweet potatoes are high in another natural compound called anthocyanin that might lower your chances of getting colorectal cancer.

**Diabetes.** Compounds in sweet potatoes could help control blood sugar. When boiled, sweet potatoes are low on the glycemic index (GI), which means they won't raise your blood sugar as quickly as high-GI foods.

**Heart disease.** Research shows that sweet potatoes can lower your LDL "bad" cholesterol, which may lower your odds of heart problems.

**Macular degeneration.** Large amounts of beta-carotene and vitamin A, which are in sweet potatoes, can lower your chances of getting this eye disease, which is the most common cause of vision loss.

**Obesity.** Purple sweet potatoes may help lower inflammation in your body and keep fat cells from growing, which may help you lose weight.



## REMEMBER ME.

Recently I had the opportunity to volunteer at an event for refugees. Our community partner, Helpers-to-Good (Ansaar-ul-Birr) in North College Park had set up tables for families to come and look for clothing and household items.

It was a cold and windy afternoon, but the families seemed to enjoy finding things for their new life they were envisioning here in the United States. I spent my time searching through the piles of clothing, holding up what I thought might appeal to the women looking through piles of scarves, pants, and beautifully decorated dresses.

The clothing swap was finishing up, with nearly all the clothes having found new homes, and I spoke with some of the women. I know little Dari/Farsi but their English was strong enough that we could connect. "When are you coming back?" asked one woman who had worked with the U.S. Government there. "What will I do, how will I start my life here? If I had stayed back in Afghanistan the Taliban would have killed me. You know-- I am alone here. Sometimes I just cry." I said that I was sorry that life here could be difficult.

As I was leaving, she handed me a piece of paper. When I opened it in the car, it had her name, and the words, "Remember me."

In this world where war has torn lives a part, where the dignity of human life has been denied over and over, and in this season, when people around the world spend time reflecting during Lent, and eventually hear the words on the cross of the one hanging there next to Jesus, I can't help but think that these same words, "Remember Me" that this woman has shared with me are holy, too.

- AC

## A TIME FOR FASTING: FOR SPIRITUALITY, FOR JUSTICE & FOR HEALTH



At Community Meals, we are all about eating and celebrating all the delicious things that come from the earth. Yum! But people around the world in all different circumstances have appreciated the restorative effects of periods of not eating.

When we experience the lack of eating, we develop gratitude for the gift of taste, eating, enjoyment. We can also bring awareness to ourselves and others about injustices in the world.

As Christians around the world fast during Lent and Muslims begin their fast on April 1, we would be remiss to acknowledge that fasting has become a buzz word. People are using it to achieve not just spiritual awakening but for greater health in their lives.

In a New York Times article, "The Benefits of Intermittent Fasting," from February 17, 2020, we hear from personal health columnist Jane Brody:

"I was skeptical, but it turns out there is something to be said for practicing a rather prolonged diurnal (daily) fast, preferably one lasting at least 16 hours. Mark P. Mattson, neuroscientist at the National Institute on Aging and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, explained that the liver stores glucose, which the body uses preferentially for energy before it turns to burning body fat."

"It takes 10 to 12 hours to use up the calories in the liver before a metabolic shift occurs to using stored fat," Dr. Mattson told me. After meals, glucose is used for energy and fat is stored in fat tissue, but during fasts, once glucose is depleted, fat is broken down and used for energy."

Will you be fasting anytime soon? Why? We'd love to hear from you!

*The Dish is the weekly newsletter  
for Community Meals, food program located at College Park United Methodist Church serving the College Park,  
Beltsville, and Greenbelt areas. For more information or to donate, go to [umcollegepark.org](http://umcollegepark.org), click on "Donate" and  
select "Food Distribution."*