

Licorice

ROOT

By Christian Dixchler



Licorice root's value goes beyond providing the polarizing flavor to the eponymous candy. For generations this versatile root has been used in recipes and medicine across the globe. Ranging from ancient Egyptian tea blends to something as simple as an all-natural multivitamin supplement, its importance cannot be understated. It's the anti-viral superfood spearheading our body's fight against infection, inflammation, heartburn and fatigue.

Originally utilized for its sugar-like properties, licorice now represents much more with its role in the super food world. It contains many phytonutrients, such as glycyrrhizin acid (GL), which gives it the sweetness and flagship flavor that's known worldwide. What's not as known is how beneficial GL is for the human body in balanced

doses. It provides an advantage against viruses and bacteria, helping create an unfavorable environment for infections to thrive, while simultaneously assisting to remove them. This includes infections like COVID-19, Hepatitis C and herpetic viruses like shingles. This is a crucial component to what makes licorice root valuable, and ongoing studies continue to support its effectiveness. However, knowing its benefits means also knowing its risks. Moderation is important with GL, as long-term abuse of it can result in issues such as edema. If you intend for long-term or heavy use, consider a deglycyrrhizinated (DGL) version, which has a substantial amount less.

The most accessible form of licorice root outside of a supplement is herbal tea. This ancient root has long been the centerpiece in a variety of cultures as they harness its medicinal powers in the form of tea. Next time you're in the grocery have a look at the multitude of licorice-infused teas that are available. You might be

surprised how many different ailments they treat. It's often recommended as a digestive aid in the wake of a large or questionable meal. If you suffer from chronic stomach pain, such as GERD, its soothing qualities will promote natural digestion and regularity. It also provides a substantial boost to the human adrenal glands, and outperforms other popular herbs like ginseng in recharging our batteries.



If treating the above symptoms isn't a priority, consider licorice root as a natural method to help you quit smoking, or as a substitute for the ever-popular caffeine addiction. It's truly a wonder the power contained within this mighty root and how many benefits it can bring to the human experience. Next time you ignore all the black jellybeans, remember that the flavor is only a fraction of this complex super food.



[WELLNESS]

Healthy Citrus with a Twist

By Christian Dischler

For a fruit known for its bitter taste, understanding the benefits of grapefruit is a much sweeter experience. While often touted as the original diet food, grapefruit possess multiple benefits aside from weight loss. You may know this powerful citrus to be packed with vitamins that help maintain a healthy heart, prevent strokes and balance gut bacteria. But it's also a useful source of cancer fighting nutrients, minerals that prevent diabetes and is robust with antioxidants that complete its total health profile.

Grapefruit are a rich source of vitamin C, among other nutrients, which contribute to a healthy immune system in our bodies. They also help to avoid developing insulin resistance in humans, according to a study published by the NIH. This is important because it plays a role

in preventing diabetes as we age, and helps regulate how our body responds to insulin.

These tangy fruits originally from Barbados are bursting with phytonutrients, like limonoids, which assist in preventing tumors and malignancies. They're also low in calories but dense with beta-carotene and lycopene, two carotenoids known for their antioxidant qualities. Grapefruit are even linked to the prevention of kidney stones, so drink a glass of their juice to help your body to stay productive.

Grapefruit are substantial sources of potassium and fiber—two nutrients linked to maintaining a healthy heart. These naturally occurring properties help lower blood pressure and promote the overall strength of our hearts. Studies have shown that frequent consumption of grapefruit leads to positive trends in total cholesterol levels, specifically

a decrease in LDL cholesterol. Try eating half a grapefruit before each meal, and peel it like an orange to maximize the fiber it provides. This will provide support for your cholesterol and help reduce blood pressure while helping you feel full. There's a lot to love about grapefruit, and even though they're a hydrating way to insert total body health benefits into each meal, make sure they don't conflict with your current regiment of medication. Ask your doctor if you should avoid grapefruit before you start including them in your everyday diet. Otherwise, stock up on this flavorful citrus and get creative with how to make it a part of your life to enjoy all of the advantages it offers. Try it in salsa, salads, cocktails and fresh with a little salt—to name a few ideas.





All We Want FOR CHRISTMAS IS #NEAUXCANCER RICH MAUTI CANCER FUND

By Christian Dischler

*“The impediment to action
advances action. What stands
in the way becomes the way.”
—Marcus Aurelius.*

Rich Mauti, a former National Football League standout with the New Orleans Saints and founder of The Rich Mauti Cancer fund, understands success arises in the aftermath of failure. His story embodies the writings of philosophers long ago, and illustrates the strength and potential of humans throughout history.

In 1978, Mauti entered his second year in the NFL. His job was dangerous as a contact sport. It meant risking his health on every play, but getting tackled wasn't what knocked him off balance. It was his father's cancer diagnosis.

“When you find out someone in your family has cancer, you know nothing about it and you feel lost. I didn't know where to go, I didn't know what to do,” Mauti said. A year later his father passed away.

“To this day that's stuck in my head as to why we're where we are, and what we're getting ready to do.”

Mauti converted this adversity to enact change and created the Rich Mauti Scramble Against Cancer Golf Tournament.

“I wanted the money we raised to go directly to the patients in need, so we decided to do our own 501(c)(3) in 1981, the Rich Mauti Cancer Fund, and keep all the funds in the state of Louisiana. We're a 100 percent volunteer run non-profit, and I was conscious of the foundation being as pure as it could be,” the Mandeville resident said.

The tournament continued to serve the Louisiana cancer community until Hurricane Katrina. But again, Mauti identified the obstacle in his path and created an opportunity. The Rich Mauti Tennis Classic, an annual fundraising event held in Covington, LA, was born.

Now heading into their 40th year, new energy surrounds the organization. Mauti and his wife Nancy, with their kids, Patrick, Rachel and Michael, join forces to each contrib-

ute a unique skill set. The result is a re-branding of the organization as the Mauti Cancer Fund, and their first priority is a new initiative called #NeauxCancer.

“I know what I felt like when I was told that my dad had cancer. I didn't know who to call. I want a comprehensive phone call where you can find out anything. Find every hospital and doctor that's in town; get feedback and say, 'Okay, this is what I have. What did you do, how did it



work? Who are the best people to see?" Mauti explained. "That's the objective of #NeauxCancer. To be a comprehensive, community-based fundraising organization available to everyone that's in need."

It's an ambitious project, and enlisting the help of the family provides a unique quality to the new look cancer fund. Rachel Mauti and Richard Taubin of MPRESSED Media have spearheaded the re-brand and overhaul. Michael and Patrick Mauti have brought their expertise in the CBD field, adding a layer for alternative health solutions. #NeauxCancer gives the fund a platform to branch out while tying everything back to its core principle.

"That will be at the top of the mountain and we'll be able to put other organizations and categories under that," said Mauti, discussing intentions to incorporate several divisions under the #NeauxCancer tagline.

Those efforts will include changing legislation for alternative cancer treatments, creating a database of healthcare information and local specialists, providing a support system for affected families and creating a CBD product line for alternative solutions.

"It's a one-stop-shop that will be comprehensive and include all cancer related services, doctors, clinics and interactive elements like blogs and social media. We want to give hope. When you hear the word cancer, a switch flips that it's terminal. We want to change that. We want to say, yes it's a challenge, but here are the tools to help you and your family get through this. And it starts with the right resources and attitude," said Mauti, detailing his vision for #NeauxCancer.

"I'm open to new ideas. I don't want to get locked in. So it's exciting to have four or five heads working on this. I know it's going to be impactful for our community," said Mauti. "We're also excited about our partnership with Ochsner and St. Tammany Health System. That's



going to be a great collaboration moving forward."

The upcoming year brings excitement for the Mauti Cancer Fund, which to date has generated over \$3.5 million. Mauti, a pioneer in cancer funding, appreciates the path and people which led him to this moment.

"I wouldn't be here without the people that helped along the way, for nothing, on a volunteer basis because they believe in our cause, because they want to help. But along the way maybe half have passed away. That drives our determination further. – 'How are we going to help the next person so they don't have to go through this? How do we reach more people?' That's where a lot of our drive comes from. Seeing, feeling and getting to know the people going through this," he said, his voice emotional.

"It's all about attitude. It's not what happens to you, it's how you react to what happens to you. You build a mountain one pebble at a time."

Over his career, Mauti has been transforming adversity into opportunity, collecting pebbles for the foundation of his mountain and creating connections with his community. Now he and his family are ready to reach heights unheard of and create far-reaching, comprehensive support for a community in need. ■

Visit MautiCancerFund.org to volunteer, donate or find out more.



• woman who inspires



Victoria Edwards and Margaret Joly, with dogs Happy Boy and Gracie.

GENEROSITY OUTSHINES *Pain*

By Christian Dischler

Less than a month after Margaret Joly was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer, her husband passed away. In a fog of disbelief, she arrived for the first visit with her oncologist. The doctor's words came in a blur.

"Will I lose my hair?" she asked. He nodded and her heart sank. "I had a complete meltdown. It was everything at once, it threw me."

She looked at her doctor and began to cry, "I don't think I can go through with this. I think this is too much for me." He placed his arm around her and reassured her they would get through it together. Suddenly, Joly felt the fog begin to dissipate. "I was at my absolute lowest point, but when he hugged me it became a high point. That shows how powerful compassion is."

Tragedy had swept through Joly's life like a hurricane from the Gulf, but she was determined to weather the storm. She boarded up from negative thoughts and stocked up on optimism.

"From the beginning, positive thinking worked for me. I would tell everyone how good everything in my life is because I knew my attitude would be important," she said, "and my faith helped me keep my head clear and looking forward."

Facing these decisions, Joly found herself leaning on the guidance of her doctors, and drawing confidence from their advice, she underwent a double mastectomy with reconstructive surgery.

"It ended up being the best decision for me." Two months after her surgery she underwent 16 treatments of chemotherapy and lost her hair.

Margaret embodies the strength of positivity and spreads joy wherever

she goes. Her exuberance is prolific and intrinsic to her personality, but it wasn't until she faced breast cancer that she discovered her true strength.

"I thought I was more dependant and less of a leader, but I found out I was stronger than I ever thought, and I realized I was capable of anything. My perspective about life changed. Every morning I would wake up and feel fortunate, I didn't take anything for granted."

Joly began to explore a deeper purpose buried within her experience.

"What plans do I have?" Her internal thoughts provoked an outward vision. "As I looked over and saw a volunteer working with patients, it dawned on me, this is what I will do. I can give people hope if they can see that I've been through this, and they'll see they can do the same thing."

Now, five years since her diagnosis, Joly continues to volunteer by sharing her story with cancer patients and providing hope.

"My cancer is a chapter in my life but now I'm starting a new one. I'm moving on but I don't want to forget about it because it made me a better person in every way," she said. "It strengthened everything."

She wants women to know how necessary it is to follow-up with yearly appointments and create a routine for themselves. But she also wants to create an open dialogue about breast cancer and normalize those discussions.

"Talk about it. It's not the end of the world and it's healthy to discuss. I'm walking proof that you can get through it, and that generosity will always outshine pain." ■

Interested in how to support local business and give back to cancer survivors at the same time? 10 percent of all services provided by Rosé Beautique & Wellness Spa are donated to Pink Heart Funds, a charity helping cancer patients acquire wigs, free breast prosthesis and post-mastectomy bras. Rosé owner Christina Viers wants her clients to pamper themselves in her cozy salon while supporting an incredible cause at the same time.

Feed your soul

• feature



STAY AHEAD OF Breast Cancer

By Christian Dischler

We sat down for a conversation with Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center to discuss the importance of staying proactive in the fight against breast cancer, especially during a pandemic. Johnnay Benjamin, the director of early detection and education, and Brittny Costella, an early detection specialist, provided methods to stay ahead and aware of breast cancer:

Women need to begin their preparedness by knowing themselves, according to Benjamin and Costella.

"If something is unusual or out of the ordinary, we recommend to get it checked out. Also knowing your family history is very important." When asked about patient apprehension surrounding the pandemic, both specialists stressed the importance of maintaining medical screenings, "Our patients feel comfortable when they come in, we're doing temperature checks, masks are worn, surfaces are

disinfected and safe distances are maintained."

Staying mindful means staying ahead and the value of early detection cannot be overstated.

"The five year survival rate is the percentage of women who are still alive five years after their diagnosis. For early stage detection, that number is 99 percent, but drops to 27 percent if the cancer isn't detected and spreads," Benjamin said. "Identifying cancer in its earliest stages gives us the opportunity to use all the tools we have to help that individual."

These tools are abundant at Mary Bird Perkins, ranging from free breast screenings to multidisciplinary teams of doctors and post-diagnosis nurse navigators to help you and your family through the process. It's important to remain informed of the options available.

"Everyone is welcomed to be screened. It's about providing access that goes beyond financial status," Benjamin said.

Prevention is paramount to surviving and the center spearheads a Prevention on the Go program, which allows free access to a mobile breast screening unit that accommodates

schedules and follows CDC guidelines for cleanliness and social distancing. The outreach of the program is substantial and is making strides in providing women breast screenings.

"More than ever before, we're relying on people in the community to spread the word on awareness. Please encourage women in your life to schedule their appointment now, and don't wait until next year," Costella said.

One of the best ways to inform others is to promote routine screenings.

"We say make it a birthday present to yourself. Life can be chaotic and that's a great way to remember to get screened annually," Benjamin said. "Breast cancer doesn't only happen in October. A lot of women feel like they need to take care of everyone else, so this is an opportunity to take care of themselves and make sure they're around to support their families."

"Even if you share this information with one other person that could be the life we save," Costella said. ■

For more information on how to schedule a screening, donate to their cause or volunteer to help in the fight against cancer, visit www.marybird.org or call (985)276-6810.



A Breath of Fresh Air

By Christian Dischler

HOW TO BEAT LUNG CANCER

This holiday season we're all thankful to be approaching the end of 2020. But for cancer, there is no downtime, and it's important to stay ahead by keeping ourselves informed. November is Lung Cancer Awareness month, and knowing your risk factors is paramount to beating cancer. Dr. Scott Bermudez, an oncologist at Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, discussed identifying cancer risk and how a recent medical advancement provides the best chance for survival: a low-dose CT scan (LDCT).

"With lung cancer, it's rarely ever discovered at an early stage," said Bermudez. "If it's picked up early stage, survival is well over 90 percent, but by the time you start showing symptoms it's not early stage by definition, and that's part of the reason that LDCT scans play such a role in detection."

"Chest X-rays have never been shown to be useful for screenings," Bermudez said, which only allow for detection of larger tumors. The LDCT scan detects abnormalities much smaller. This provides a huge advantage in surviving cancer because it opens up treatment options before the cancer has a chance to spread. However, LDCT scans aren't for everyone.

"LDCT scans use low-dose radiation, meaning less than a diagnostic CT scan. But not everyone qualifies for that screening. It's only high risk patients, and there are strict definitions of who is considered high risk," Bermudez explained. "If you're over 55 and a smoker of at least 30 pack years—defined as smoking one pack a day multiplied by how many years you've smoked—then you should consult your primary care physician to see if you qualify for a LDCT scan."

Recognizing your own risk can sometimes be a confusing task.

"It can be difficult for patients to figure out exactly what risk category they're in. The key thing I would encourage people to do is discuss it with their primary care physician. If they have that smoking history, and even if you aren't 55-77, there's wiggle room. The key is to talk to your doctor," Bermudez said.

Clear communication with your medical provider, smoking cessation and knowing the risks associated with lung cancer are integral assets to keeping you ahead of the cancer curve. Combining this information with the early detection benefits of a LDCT scan will help you remain in the 95 percent of lung cancer survival. For more information on lung cancer, risk categories and LDCT scans, visit MaryBird.org or NCCN.org. ■