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**Thank you,
Costco Connection team**

Lunar New Year ★ *The Golden Couple* ★ The perfect rec room

COSTCO Connection®

THE MAGAZINE FOR COSTCO MEMBERS

Healthy habits

Steps to take for
better health **34**



JANUARY 2023



FOR YOUR HEALTH

Vitamin D

Sleep and exercise

Supplier profile:
SmartyPants

And more ...

COSTCO **Connection** *January*

January 2023 | Volume 38 | Number 1

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by Sarah Madewell



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From what you
put in your body to
how you move it,
make 2023 a year
of positive changes.

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NWBA, LA SD

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A fresh start

Although it can seem like an arbitrary time to start—you could really pick any day of the year to do this—January 1 is historically the time of new resolutions, fresh starts, clean slates and newly discovered (or rediscovered) desires for bettering yourself.

As such, it's practically required that publications participate in this annual cycle of rebirth, with articles and tips for developing healthy habits. The *Connection* is no exception, with the added benefit that, in addition to offering advice from experts, we can point you to a variety of products and services at Costco that will help you achieve those goals. Whether you are seeking an improved diet, introducing or increasing exercise, looking for aid to recover from some of those exercises or hoping to achieve better sleep, you'll find information on that and more, from our cover story on balancing mind, body and spirit to the many stories featured in this month's For Your Health Special Section. The section also features a Buying Smart article that takes a closer look at the Costco Member Prescription Program, a way to help keep you healthy and your health costs down.

And, because recreation and relaxation mean different things to different people, our For Your Home articles complement each other by touching on ways to build the best recreation room to suit you and your family's needs, as well as how to select the best recliner for when it's time to sit back and relax and reflect on your day's successes.

Rounding this all out are some great recipe ideas, including ways to celebrate the culinary traditions of Lunar New Year, and some book recommendations from our book buyers.

However you choose to celebrate the dawn of a new year, we at Costco and at the *Connection* wish you success in your endeavors this month and in the months and years to come. ■



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Sandy Torrey is Senior Vice President, Corporate Membership, Marketing and Publisher, *Costco Connection*.

Coming next month Find out more about Costco Travel and the services and values it offers to our members.

Follow us on





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In praise of local flavors

I enjoyed your December cover story, "Regional appeal," about items sold regionally at Costco. I was reminded of my local Costco when I was stationed near Hiroshima, Japan. It had many familiar products that make Costco, Costco, but also some unique regional items like beautiful large trays of fresh sushi, pizza with seafood and corn toppings and the Korean Bulgogi Bake sold hot in the Food Court.

Bobbi Harris, Riverview, Florida

A satisfying sound

I read with interest your recent article "Hearing is believing," in the December issue. It describes Costco's partnership with [consumer audio company] Sonos. I have been a fan of Sonos' innovative and media-friendly products for many years.

Recently, I had a repair need with a Sonos product. Its customer support team responded promptly with a solution that far exceeded my expectations. Purchasing electronics can be a scary proposition. Knowing Costco and its suppliers share the same core values when it comes to customer satisfaction makes buying with confidence so much easier.

Julio Ayala, Novato, California

Recipes for everyone!

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the vegetarian and vegan recipes you ran in "Meatless memories," in the December issue. My husband and I have been vegetarians over 50 years and raised our children to eat the same way. Our youngest granddaughter is lactose intolerant, so we appreciate new recipes to add to our collection. I usually make a white gravy with raw cashews as the base. But the mushroom gravy in this story looks very tasty. Keep up the good work!

Colleen Shaver, Medford, Oregon

Making a difference

Thanks for the inspirational articles in the December issue ["World changers"] about people "being the change they wish to see in the world." We may not all have the time to do these things, but everyone can do something to address these problems: Ask our members of Congress to pass legislation to end hunger and make sure a quality education is available to all. In this way we can use our voices to make a difference.

*Willie Dickerson
Snohomish, Washington*

Quick & Easy
THE COSTCO WAY



Emergen-C Raspberry Drink Mix Smoothie

Get a boost of vitamin C with a creamy blend of yogurt, almond milk, banana and mixed berries. View this recipe and others at Costco.com. Search: *Quick & Easy* and click "Drinks."



Digital edition

Access the magazine online each month at Costco.com (search "Costco Connection").

Talk to us

Do you have a comment about something you read in the *Connection*? Please send a note, including your full name, phone number and address, to:

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ADVERTISING AND PRODUCTS

All products advertised are available in our warehouses unless otherwise noted. Ads will indicate whether a product is also available at Costco.com or only at Costco.com.

Products are scheduled to be available at the time of the *Connection*'s date of publication. If they are later than the publication month, they are noted as "early month" (1st to 10th), "mid-month" (11th to 21st) or "late month" (22nd to 31st). Costco.com carries many of the products available at the warehouses, and offers thousands of additional items. Prices are usually not listed in the magazine because they have not been finalized at the time of printing and may vary from one part of the country to another due to shipping costs. We hope members know to check Costco first when comparison shopping. To keep prices low, Costco does not offer a telephone service allowing members to call in for prices or product availability.



Great outdoors

January is National Family Fit Lifestyle Month, and what better way to celebrate than to get outside and enjoy all that winter has to offer? From snowshoes and sleds to workout gear to healthful foods and more, don't forget that Costco warehouses and Costco.com have everything to help you and your family get fit this season and beyond.

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Get out there

TRY INCORPORATING FAMILY activities into your winter routine to make this your healthiest month yet; here are a few suggestions:

Sledding. Get your blood moving while climbing hills. You'll have so much fun you won't even remember you're exercising!

Winter walks. Take in the beauty of nature at your local park or hiking trail.

Preparing healthful meals. Shop for seasonal fruits and vegetables as a family, and see what healthful meals you can whip up.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY



Civic-minded service

In 1994, the King Holiday and Service Act transformed Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Day into a national holiday, a day dedicated to volunteer service in honor of King's legacy. This year, MLK Day is on Monday, January 16. To find volunteer opportunities in your community, visit Mlkday.gov.

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GET FIT

Inspire Fitness FTX Functional Trainer

Functional trainers offer a range of resistance movements in a compact space. The Inspire Fitness FTX Functional Trainer features all this, and it comes with a one-year subscription to the Inspire Fitness app, which includes workouts from elite trainers. Item 1334042. Costco.com only.



WIN FOR YOUR SKIN

RoC Day and RoC Night Moisturizer packs

Fight wrinkles and add radiance to your skin day and night with RoC's moisturizer value packs, featuring two Costco-exclusive 1.3-fluid-ounce tubes. Each pack also includes a 0.3-fluid-ounce bonus bottle of RoC's clinically proven vitamin C serum, bringing luminosity to your skin. Item 1571203. Warehouses/Costco.com.



COURTESY OF JOAN AZARIAN

A FRENCH CONNECTION

Sweet vacation highlight

When Costco member Joan Azarian's three grandchildren (left to right: Stella Rose, Valentina and Romeo) visited her from Nice, France, their weekly Costco shopping excursions quickly became a highlight. In fact, all three kids agreed that the best part of their vacation was the strawberry and chocolate sundaes they enjoyed on the drive back to Grandma's home. How sweet!

★ NEW YEAR'S CHEERS!

According to WalletHub, more than 360 million glasses of sparkling wine are consumed every New Year's Eve.



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FITNESS TIPS

Training from home

New Year's resolutions routinely include working out more. Fitness instructor and Costco member Ali Aguirre, who is based in Vancouver, British Columbia, and teaches remotely on Fitnessali.com, offers the following tips for getting the most out of a session:

- Find a quiet space.
- Set devices on "Do not disturb" mode.
- Stay focused for the whole class.
- Keep your camera on for accountability.
- Use the camera as a mirror (this also allows the instructor to give feedback).
- Stream the class on your TV.



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FUN IN THE SUN

Driven to compete

In October 2022, Costco member Jill Ciminillo of Chicago and co-driver Kristin Shaw of Austin, Texas—both automotive journalists—completed the 2022 Rebelle Rally, an all-female off-road endurance driving competition sponsored by Pirelli North America.

At the Rebelle Rally, 54 teams covered more than 1,500 grueling miles through Nevada and California, covering a wide range of terrains, altitudes and temperatures while using only maps and a compass—no GPS. "[It was] eight nights of sleeping in tents and navigating our way across the desert for 10 or more hours a day," says Ciminillo. "We got lost, we had to dig out of sand, we got up at 5 ... every morning. I learned to do things most people never will, and I feel so much more independent and capable."

Costco member Jill Ciminillo (left) and Kristin Shaw at the 2022 Rebelle Rally.



FILE WITH EASE

Get your taxes done right

Tailored to your unique situation, TurboTax searches for hundreds of deductions and credits and handles even the toughest tax situations, so you can be confident you're getting every dollar you deserve. New this year, TurboTax includes one \$10 in-product credit toward in-product add-ons: state e-file fees, filing in an additional state or audit defense. Limit of one add-on per license code. Various item numbers. Warehouses/Costco.com.



TOP RIGHT: NICOLE DREON/REBELLE RALLY; BOTTOM RIGHT: REGINE TRIAS/REBELLE RALLY

by DIPESH JAIN

Reviews are the lifeline of the digital economy. When selecting a new product or service, prospective buyers rely heavily on what's written about those brands online. This is true for service businesses as well as products.

Whether you are buying a hair dryer, selecting a restaurant for a date night, choosing a pediatrician or even making a career choice with a company, ratings and reviews play a crucial role in deciding who makes the final cut.

The reason is rooted in human psychology and our aversion to losses. We view losses very differently from wins and do everything in our power to avoid buyer's remorse. Reviews help with that. They make us feel secure and in control of our purchases by providing social proof.

As a business owner, it is crucial to understand this consumer behavior and realize that reviews are here to stay. Embrace this reality instead of ignoring it, and build trust with prospective buyers by helping them feel comfortable selecting your service. To do that, you'll have to create and execute a proactive review and rating strategy. The following steps can be part of that strategy.

Ask for reviews. Make sure that you ask all of your customers to review your business and/or products on Google, Yelp or any other relevant platform, and make this task as easy as you can. Many businesses miss this simple step.

Be creative. Avoid cookie-cutter techniques for standing out. A seller once sent me a handwritten note two



months after my purchase. I left them a stellar review, something that I wouldn't have done otherwise.

Get your timing right. Don't ask for a review at the time of purchase, since the buyer has still not experienced your offering. Instead, look for the right opportunities to make the ask (see "The right timing").

Incentivize testimonials. Incentivize your team to collect client testimonials and make this an integral part of their onboarding and training processes.

Highlight reviews. Reward testimonials by highlighting them on your website. It makes your customer feel special and is one of the fastest ways to gain trust among prospective buyers. ■

Power of praise

Product and services reviews are the key to realizing online sales



Dipesh Jain
(@dipesh_jain17)
leads sales and marketing teams with Magic Ed Tech by day and moonlights as a focus consultant for high-performing teams.

COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco warehouses and Costco.com offer a variety of essentials for small businesses, from products to services, at great value.

The right timing

Be strategic about when you ask customers for reviews to increase your chances of success. Here are some triggers that

you can use to initiate the review request:

- When they've spent a certain threshold amount of time with your product
- When they've experienced a delightful moment

with your service or support

- At the time of project completion or handoff
- After they've used a certain number of features in your product—DJ

The 8.7% annual increase in Social Security cost-of-living benefits this year is the highest in four decades.—SO

FINANCIAL CONNECTION

by SUZE ORMAN

Delayed gratification is not something that comes easy to most of us. Yet one of the smartest retirement strategies you can make in your 60s is to delay when you start receiving your Social Security benefit. You can start collecting as early as age 62, but your benefit will be 25% to 30% less than if you wait until your full retirement age (between 66 and 67, depending on your birth year). If you delay the start all the way until you are 70, your benefit will be more than 75% higher than the benefit you could collect at age 62.

But I know many of you are not convinced the math makes sense. A *Connection* reader recently asked me two very smart questions: Why not claim early and invest the money? And isn't it sort of risky to wait until age 70, given that we don't know how long we will live?

Here's what I want him, and all of you, to know.

The higher benefit for waiting is guaranteed. The 6% to 8% annual benefit increase Social Security gives you for delaying your start between 62 and 70 is guaranteed. Could you earn as much investing on your own? Maybe. But it would involve taking a risk. No stock or bond investment guarantees a positive return that high. And as we all just experienced in 2022, when you invest you run the risk of your investment losing value. So I repeat: The annual increase when you delay collecting Social Security is 100% guaranteed.

There's a good chance you will be alive into your late 80s. If you are in poor health, delaying Social Security



ERIC HOOD / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

may not be the way to go. But the bigger risk is the strong possibility you will live a very long time. Even if you don't start to collect until age 70, you will come out ahead if you live into your 80s. More importantly, having a higher benefit—constantly adjusted for inflation—by delaying can be extra important if your investment balances are lower in your late 80s and 90s. (See “Count on surviving,” below.)

Delaying is extra smart for married couples. When one spouse dies, the survivor is entitled to collect one benefit: their own earned benefit or the benefit of their deceased spouse. If the higher-earning spouse delays until age 70, that guarantees the survivor the biggest possible benefit.

You won't lose out on inflation bumps. If you delay collecting between 62 and 70, your account will be credited for any inflation adjustments during those years. ■

Patience pays off

Delaying the start of your Social Security benefits guarantees an increased annual income

MARC ROYCE



Suze Orman

is an Emmy Award-winning TV host, *New York Times* bestselling author and host of the *Women & Money* podcast. Orman will answer selected questions in this column. She regrets that unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

Email

connection@costco.com
Please include “Financial Connection” in the subject line.

Count on surviving

Deciding when to start drawing Social Security requires making an assumption about how long you will live. My strong advice is that

if you make it into your 60s in average health, you should assume you could live until at least age 90.

That's not me being extra cautious—it's just the facts. According to the Society of

Actuaries, half of the 65-year-old women in average health today will still be alive at age 88. For men, there is a 50% probability of still being alive at 85.—SO

According to Reviews.org, smart speakers are the most popular smart-home device, with 35.6% of the U.S. population owning them.

TECH CONNECTION

Smart house

How to embrace the smart-home revolution throughout your house

by ANDY PENFOLD

The smart-home concept is increasingly popular, for good reasons. Smart devices give you enhanced functionality via a connection to the internet. This might mean you can stream content from the internet or control your device remotely via an app.

Here's a look at how you can add smart functionality to your house.

Living room. The most obvious addition here is a smart TV. Streaming Netflix and other popular services via your TV remote has become second nature in most households. If you're not doing this yet, now's the time to upgrade your television. The latest feature offered by some smart TVs is universal search. This lets you search your streaming apps via one search box. It is super convenient.

Kitchen. Smart appliances abound in the kitchen space, from smart fridges that let you see on your phone what's in the fridge to pressure cookers with companion apps for remote-controlling your dinner. You can even find air fryers that are compatible with virtual assistants, allowing you to control them with your voice.



Bedroom. Smart lighting is a great addition to your bedroom tech. Wi-Fi-linked lightbulbs connect to your home's internet service, allowing you to control them via your phone. You could create light that's comfortable for reading and then switch to cozy mood lighting without getting out of bed.

Everywhere. Smart speakers are a great idea for any room, including your bedroom. Set alarms with your voice, get news updates and have your speaker read out your day's agenda while you're getting dressed in the morning.

You can also add a touch of smartness to any gadget with a smart plug, an internet-connected plug socket that you plug into a regular wall plug. Then, when you plug an appliance such as a lamp into the smart plug, you can control it via your phone.

These are only a few of the ways you can add smart functionality to your home. If we had more space we could discuss smart doorbells and door locks, home alarms with webcams, bidets and toilets, toothbrushes, bathroom scales and much more. ■

HUGH BURDEN



Andy Penfold is a Bristol, England-based freelance technology writer whose work has appeared in *Macworld* and other publications.

COSTCO CONNECTION

You'll find a variety of items to make your home smart in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

Green is good

Using energy efficiently is (or should be) rightly front of mind for every U.S. household. Tech can help with this goal. A number of brands

offer kits to make household systems, such as heating, hot water and air conditioning, smarter. Smart thermostats allow you to control the temperature of your house via an app. In some cases

you can heat your home based on the rooms you're using. In addition, technology known as geofencing notices when you leave the house and reminds you to remotely switch off your heating.—AP

Bounty on the seas

Catch the latest
wave of cruise
ship dining

by LOIS ALTER MARK



MICHAEL MARK

Lois Alter Mark is an award-winning travel writer. She's sailed on oceans and rivers in Antarctica, Europe, North America, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. She hopes to check a world cruise off her bucket list soon.



Cruising can mean different things to different people: adventure, romance or exotic destinations, just to name a few. However, one aspect is consistent for everyone: food. And if you haven't been on a cruise in a while, you will be amazed—cruise lines have expanded offerings and elevated cuisine to provide true culinary experiences.

Notable chefs

From Guy Fieri's Guy's Burger Joint on Carnival to James Beard Award winner Michael Schwartz's 150 Central Park on Royal Caribbean, many cruise lines are now boasting big-name chefs and restaurants.

Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud recently introduced his first signature restaurant at sea, *Le Voyage*, on *Celebrity Beyond*. With dishes like Tamarind and Peanut-Crusted Prawns and Grilled Rubia Gallega Filet Mignon, cruisers can savor world-class dining at sea.

Exclusive restaurants

You may want to consider upgrading your stateroom so you can eat at

restaurants available to suite guests (there are options for non-suite guests; see "Specialty dining"). These restaurants are more intimate and feature exclusive dishes and impeccable service.

On Cunard, suite guests get complimentary access to the Queens Grill or Princess Grill, beautiful fine-dining venues serving dishes like beef Wellington and rack of lamb.

On Celebrity, guests have two options: If you stay in The Retreat, you can enjoy your meals in the comfort of Luminae, featuring signature dishes by chef Boulud. If you're in Aqua Class, your wellness journey includes dining in Blu, with its spa-inspired menu.

Princess Club Class offers guests their own separate area of the main dining room, with expedited seating, dedicated waitstaff and additional menu items.

And Holland America gives Club Orange guests their own private eatery on select ships.

Unique dining experiences

Going beyond the food itself, cruise ships are turning meals into memorable experiences, thanks to innovations like Disney Cruise Line's Animator's Palate



FAR LEFT: ©DISNEY © MATT STROSHANE

Clockwise from top left: Arendelle: A *Frozen* Dining Adventure, a theatrical dining experience on Disney Cruise Line; Carnival's Havana Bar & Pool; Carnival's Cucina Del Capitano restaurant.



LEFT AND ABOVE: © CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE

restaurant and the *Frozen* theatrical dinner, both of which offer top-notch entertainment while you eat, and Celebrity Cruises' Le Petit Chef, a delightful, animated experience that brings the tabletop and your plate to life.

Many cruise lines, including Princess, Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Azamara, offer chef's table experiences that treat a small group of passengers to a multicourse meal created and hosted by the chef, who describes each dish and the wine with which it's paired. It's a rare opportunity to feel like a VIP.

Coffee shops and afternoon tea

Cruise ship cafés are where you can pick up a specialty coffee (included in many beverage packages) along with a complimentary pastry or two. Café al Bacio is a popular gathering spot on

Celebrity ships; at Holland America's Grand Dutch Café, the Triple Berry Pannenkoek is an underrated treasure. The International Café on Princess is filled with goodies from doughnuts to quiches to sandwiches—and the food is free all day.

Don't skip afternoon tea, though—especially on Cunard's *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth* or *Queen Victoria*, whose three-course version of the British tradition is fit for royalty.

Buffets still rule

A cruise ship standard, buffets are bigger and better than ever, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, and everything from chicken and seafood to Indian dishes, pasta and sushi.

With offerings like these, you may need to add another cruise to your itinerary just to experience them all! ■

COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco Travel offers ocean and river cruises, as well as vacation packages, rental cars and hotel-only options for destinations in the United States and around the world. To learn more, visit CostcoTravel.com or call 1-877-849-2730.

Specialty dining

Although you can eat happily on any cruise ship without spending extra money, you may want to splurge on one of the

many specialty restaurants now available at sea. My favorites include Celebrity's Eden and Raw on 5, Cunard's Steakhouse at The Verandah, Princess' Sabatini's and Disney's

adults-only Remy.

Holland America offers a number of Culinary Cruises with top chefs. The ships also feature a variety of specialty dining options.

—LAM

What's your favorite form of self-care?

Costco members respond to our poll, posted to Costco's Facebook page

"Exercise! Being outside taking in all the beautiful sunrises/sunsets and animals is the best mental care for me and really helps me in the winter."

—Ashley Schuler

"Hot dog combo. I shouldn't have to explain why."

—Brody Mullins

"My skin care routine!"

—Robin Pressly

"I work out ... I get a massage ... I take time for me! That makes me a better husband, a better teacher, a better man!"

—Dan Cole

"Swimming or just being in any water."

—Denise Gaviola

"Shopping at Costco for things I didn't realize I wanted or needed."

—Michele Harrington

"Going fishing."

—Chris Yelton

"When I need to decompress I knit. It helps me to center myself and calm my ... anxiety. I have learned it is not the finished project but the actual process that matters. True for life also."

—Laurie Winters

"Nurturing [the] soul with clean habits ... [like] eating the right food, going for a walk amidst nature, getting good sleep, meditating, helping others ... and, most important, trying not to hurt anybody or anything."

—Chandrasekhar Bharathi



Did you know?

From 2013 to 2017, the wellness economy grew by 5.8% annually, a growth rate nearly five times as fast as global economic growth.

Eight dimensions of wellness

How can you optimize your mental and physical health? First developed by Dr. Margaret "Peggy" Swarbrick, the eight dimensions of wellness (Northwestern.edu/wellness/8-dimensions) is an interconnected model used by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, among others, to show the framework for mind, body and self health:

- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Environmental
- Financial
- Occupational
- Social



Watch for the poll at Facebook.com/Costco. Or weigh in at connection@costco.com, with subject line "Poll."



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COVER
STORY

Path to wellness

Does a new year mean a new you? Every new year, people seek ways to enhance the quality of their lives. The path toward a healthier you involves your mind, body and soul for optimal success. The following tips can help you achieve a healthier lifestyle that you can use year after year.

by **Sarah Madewell**

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The decision to improve the quality of your life is probably the most important, yet difficult, choice you can make. When you focus on your mind, body and soul, you are taking steps toward a healthier you that can last a lifetime. Whether the goal is to eat healthier, lose weight, decrease stress, get better sleep, kick a bad habit like smoking or simply be happier, there is never a better time to start than now.



STEP ONE: MENTAL COMMITMENT

Choosing a goal might be easy. However, reaching that goal can be challenging. Make sure you are ready. Ask yourself: What is the goal? Are you in a healthy mental state to achieve that goal? A healthy mind is the solid foundation and the first step toward an optimal lifestyle. Mental well-being assists in developing realistic goals, setting a strong mindset and achieving success in healthier living.

Mental health

Mental health is one of the most reported-on health issues in recent years. Entities like the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledge the importance of quality mental health care to improve overall well-being and help prevent sicknesses, disabilities and early death.

Angie Delamore, a nurse and a certified nurse coach, provides health and wellness advice using nursing



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FROM TOP: © DIGITALSKILLETH; LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS; RIGHT: MARIA GALYBINA, L'YSENKO A. / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

fundamentals. She says poor mental health is exhausting and takes away the energy a person needs to better themselves, and asserts that “a positive attitude is a catalyst for better wellness” and “a positive influence of community, friends, counseling [and] coaching can be the glue that motivates you” to succeed.

Some ways to improve mental health might include:

Be active. Go on walks, tidy the house, dance, ride your bike, garden, etc.

Meditate. Ease your mind, decrease anxiety and promote cognitive function.

Turn electronics off. Electronics stimulate your brain, which can sometimes cause agitation, irritability and anger. Calm your brain by putting down the electronic devices.

Be social. Call, text or meet a friend. **Shut down.** Get seven to nine hours of sleep at night.

Get counseling. Talk therapy helps address problems, find solutions, build coping skills and change unhealthy thought processes.

Take a vacation or mental health day. Taking time off is recommended for mental well-being and can improve work performance upon return.

Mindset

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, mindset is a “mental attitude or inclination” that positions you for a specific purpose, such as setting goals for better health. It is a way of thinking that gives you the readiness to commit and enables you to do things you would not have done otherwise. A strong mindset drives you to follow through and become successful.

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A healthy mind is the solid foundation and the first step toward an optimal lifestyle.



FUEL FOR THE SOUL

For some people, spiritual health is vital for improving wellness and quality of life. Surround yourself with positive influences and replenish your soul with these suggestions:

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Massage
- Hobbies
- Connecting with a friend
- Reading a book
- Attending a place of worship
- Relaxing in a quiet place
- Listening to music
- Writing in a journal
- Spending time in nature—*SM*



Terry Reed, a certified fitness trainer, nutritionist coach and co-owner of Full Fledged Fitness in Wichita, Kansas, says, to develop a mindset, you must “find your why.” Why are you doing this? Write it down and hang it somewhere you can easily see it. Look at it every day and know you are doing it for that reason. That helps create a mindset.

If you feel you are losing momentum, look at your “whys.” Reed reminds you to think about where you were before, and where you want to be. Remember the reason you are doing this. “Priorities and goals are where it’s at,” he says. “If you know where you want to be, you have to at least put one foot in front of the other.”

STEP TWO: SPRING INTO ACTION

The next step is to take action. As a nurse coach, Delamore works with clients to identify their health needs, co-create an action plan and execute that plan. She teaches clients how to “trust themselves, have faith, explore and see what life is supposed to be.”

In addition to mental health care, optimizing nutrition and exercise are excellent ways to improve your overall health and quality of life. Understanding basic nutrition and identifying the common types of exercise can be all you need for deciding what foods and fitness regimens are best for you to create your personalized plan.

Working out

To begin exercising, start slow, follow safety measures and, if you need help, ask a professional such as a fitness trainer or physical therapist. Talk with your doctor if you have health concerns before beginning any exercise regimen. Decide how long each day and how many days a week



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EXERCISE SPOTS

Options abound indoors and outdoors, depending on your goals, most-enjoyed activities, scheduled tasks and, of course, the weather. Here’s a look.



CARDIO EQUIPMENT

A treadmill, rowing machine, stationary bike or elliptical machine



WEIGHTLIFTING

Free weights and muscle-building machines for exercises such as ab crunches and leg curls



FROM TOP: © FABIO KITRELL; RIGHT: MGRACHAL; RIGHT: MARIA GALYBINA; SPICYTRUFFEL / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

you want to devote to exercising. A great start could be 30 minutes per day, three days per week. Prepare by drinking plenty of water, and dress accordingly.

Types of exercise

Exercise can comprise many different types of physical activity. Even with physical restrictions, there is usually a way to exercise your body. The National Institute on Aging describes the four types of exercise:

Endurance. Exercise that gets the heart rate up, improving blood circulation and oxygenation.

Strength. Exercise that involves weightlifting, stretch bands, stress balls or daily activities such as carrying grocery bags. Muscle strengthening supports weight control, balance and decreased fall risk.

Balance. Exercise, such as tai chi and yoga, that encourages muscle control and strengthening, inner focus and meditation practices.

Flexibility. Exercise that involves stretching muscles of the shoulders, arms, back, chest, thighs, calves and ankles.

Regular physical activity can provide numerous health benefits, including weight loss, mental wellness and function, a stronger immune system and overall strength. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that regular exercise reduces risk of falls, illness, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers. Exercising prolongs life.

Balanced nutrition

According to the WHO, a healthy diet “balances calorie consumption with energy expenditure and should emphasize a balance of protein, fiber-rich carbohydrates and unsaturated fats, with no trans fats and limited intakes of [added] sugars, saturated fats and salt.”

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Optimizing nutrition and exercise are excellent ways to improve your overall health and quality of life.



GROUP CLASSES

Aerobics, dance, yoga, cycling, water aerobics



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Walking, jogging or bicycling the neighborhood, joining recreational sports teams



HOME WORKOUTS

With the proper equipment, many gym activities can be done at home.



HOUSEHOLD TASKS

Gardening, wiping windows, walking the dog or washing the car. Simply staying active is vital to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.—SM



This translates to vegetables, fruits and whole grains, along with protein, dairy and nondairy products, as well as “good” fats and vegetable oils.

Leafy dark greens and vegetables with dark reds and yellows, such as lettuce, spinach, cabbage, avocados, cucumbers, zucchini, celery, broccoli, green beans, tomatoes, carrots, bell peppers, cauliflower and squash, are highly nutritious.

Whole fruits that are fresh, canned, frozen or dried are the most nutrient-dense forms. Juice made from fruits such as apples, peaches, pears, pineapple, bananas, berries, melons and citrus contain plenty of nutrients but should be mixed with only fresh water, without added sugar.

Whole grains and cereals high in fiber include brown rice, oats, barley, wheat and rye.

Quality protein can be found in lean meats, poultry, eggs, legumes, nuts, seeds and soy. Limit your intake of processed and fatty meats like bologna, salami, bacon and red meat.

It is OK to use oils and unsaturated fats in your diet. These fats help maintain high-density lipoprotein (HDL, aka “good cholesterol”), which lowers the risk of heart disease and stroke. Vegetable oils, olive oil, avocados, walnuts, pecans and salmon provide energy, help absorb nutrients and support essential processes.

Saturated fat should not exceed 10% of daily calories, and trans fats—found in processed and deep-fried foods like french fries and doughnuts—should be avoided whenever possible.

If you have conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, consult with your doctor or a nutritionist to create a personalized food plan.



STEP THREE: SOULFUL SUCCESS

The last step for better health and quality of life is connecting your mindset and actions with your innermost self, or what many people describe as their soul.



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GROCERY TIPS

Things to consider when shopping for food:

- Check the Nutrition Facts label on food items—calories per serving (or per whole container), nutrient content and the percent



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Giving you a deeper understanding of why you want to achieve these goals, a healthy soul can promote dedication, devotion, determination and an appetite for success.

Spiritual health

Spiritual health is the way in which someone finds self-worth and soulful healing, and it can have a profound positive impact on mental and physical health. A healthy spirit can be derived from religion, nature, meditation, upbringing or spiritual coaching and can give you purpose and understanding of your life and the lives of others. Support your spirit by providing positive environments in your home life, work and relationships.

Spiritual health benefits include:

- Overall happiness and contentment
- Self-empowerment
- Self-awareness
- Self-actualization
- Sense of deep connection (to others, nature, a higher power)
- Relief from depression, anxiety and stress
- Lower health risks like heart disease and stroke
- Illness prevention

The transformation

These cohesive steps to better health and happiness provide strong roots for better habits, refined moral principles and a new outlook on life. Positive changes can give new meaning to living a healthy lifestyle. So, find your passion, find your why and step into the new you. ■

Sarah Madewell has been a nurse for 20 years, working in critical care and surgery recovery; she now specializes in health care writing.



Spiritual health is the way in which someone finds self-worth and soulful healing, and it can have a profound positive impact on mental and physical health.



daily value are excellent resources to help monitor what you eat. Vitamins, minerals and electrolytes are often listed as well.

• “Low-fat” or “no sodium” may mean an unwanted alternate

ingredient, such as sugar, starch or artificial sweeteners, was added. Refer to the Nutrition Facts label instead.

• With canned fruits and veggies, be sure the fruit is stored in juice, not syrup.

Also, rinsing the veggies will dramatically decrease salt content.

• Frozen fruits and vegetables can be good alternatives for busy families who need food to last longer.—SM



Costco
Member
Prescription
Program



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Value of your health

The quest for better health is an ongoing and ever-evolving process. It can be by turns rewarding or frustrating, depending on how much progress it feels like you are, or are not, making. It often seems like the rules keep shifting as well, as new information—often in the form of fad diets and exercises—promises to hold the latest answers.

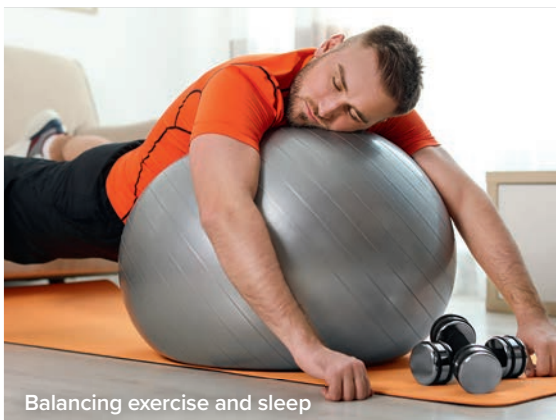
The good news is that while fads come and go, there is quite a bit of established knowledge—tried-and-true basics—when it comes to achieving and maintaining good health. Diet, exercise and sleep are the foundations of any health quest. You can read about those fundamental components here, and more, as you continue on your path to healthful living.

Appetite-
boosting tips



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Balancing exercise and sleep



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Katie Coleman fills this month's consumer reporter slot with this behind-the-scenes look at a Costco program. Email questions about this article to connection@costco.com.



Script savings

The Costco Member Prescription Program offers direct discounts

by KATIE COLEMAN

Since the first Costco Pharmacy opened in 1986, this warehouse staple has continued to evolve to fit members' needs and lifestyles. Now, the newly enhanced Costco Member Prescription Program (CMPP), Costco's direct member medication discount plan, offers even more discounts and value to help you make the most of your membership.

What is the Costco Membership Prescription Program?

Prescription discounts through the CMPP are an added benefit of a Costco membership—at no extra charge. Through the program, Costco members and their dependents receive lower prices on medications—including ones for pets (talk about a pharmacy

for your whole family). While it's not health insurance, this program aims to help members pay less for their medications and other health-related services and supplies.

Better buying

One way Costco is able to drive this kind of value is by negotiating with various manufacturers in order to get price reductions on medications. "Once we get those discounts, we pass 100% of the savings on to our members," explains Vivien Chan, Costco Health Solutions director.

Chan says another benefit that members can expect from CMPP is that it allows Costco to pass savings on to patients without insurance or a copay.

The Costco Member Prescription Program brings value and savings for you and your family—including your pets.

Oftentimes, these savings can be significant. “It’s not unheard of for our members to be able to get a prescription drug for up to 20%, 30% or even 80% off what they normally pay,” notes Chris Pierce, assistant vice president of Costco Health Solutions.

Network of pharmacies

CMPP has a network of 19,000 participating pharmacies across the country outside of Costco. “This is meant for people who have memberships and don’t necessarily live close to a Costco Pharmacy,” says Pierce. While it doesn’t offer the same discounts you would get at Costco, Pierce adds, “it is still lower than other pharmacies’ normal cash price.”

It’s easy to get your member discount at participating pharmacies. All you need to do is present your Costco member card, and you will be given the CMPP pricing. “The number that the participating pharmacy puts in your prescription is your Costco member number,” explains Pierce. “And, there are no coupons, no applications and no additional paperwork.”

Curious to see if pharmacies around you are in network? Go to [Costco.com/cmpp](https://www.costco.com/cmpp) and type your prescription name in the search bar. “It will show you a list of pharmacies by your ZIP code,” Chan

says. “You can also compare prices on various quantities.”

Another option on the CMPP site for members who don’t have a scheduled trip to the warehouse is to get prescriptions via Costco Prescription Home Delivery, which is fast, safe, private and oftentimes less expensive than the closest participating pharmacy.

Pharmacy for Fido

Along with prescriptions for people, Costco has expanded its CMPP coverage to include pets. “During the pandemic, many people became new pet owners, and we want to let members know we offer great pricing for pet medicine too,” Chan says.

The savings can be substantial. For example, Costco offers a six-month supply of Simparica Trio, a once-a-month chewable tablet that prevents heartworm and other parasitic diseases in dogs, for savings up to 28%.

“It’s pretty amazing to see the positive feedback from our members,” Pierce says. “Some of them are actually thanking us for bringing lower costs through this program. We’re just excited to share the savings potential with members and bring more awareness about CMPP’s benefits and value.”

It’s just another reason why you can rest assured that, no matter what, Costco—and Costco Pharmacy—has you covered. ■



New OTC reimbursements

More over-the-counter (OTC) medications are now eligible for reimbursement through participating health savings and flexible spending accounts. They include the following:

Pain relief medication

Acetaminophen and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen

Cold and flu products

Medications for severe cough or congestion

Allergy products

Antihistamines and decongestants

Heartburn medicine Acid reducers such as antacids and histamine-2 blockers

Menstrual products

Tampons, pads, liners and menstrual sponges—KC

LEFT: © KADMY; NIKOLAI SOROKIN / STOCK.ADOBE.COM; RIGHT: COSTCO PHOTO STUDIO

More than meds

Along with filling your prescriptions, Costco Pharmacies offer several services in the warehouse, including a full range of

immunization services, pet medications, over-the-counter medications under the Kirkland Signature™ label, expanded screenings, contraceptives and international travel medicine

consultations. Availability of and age restrictions for these services vary by state, so be sure to check with your local Costco Pharmacy for more information.—KC



Moving, sleeping

Balance sleep and physical activity to optimize your health

by DR. MICHAEL HUNTER



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EVERGREENHEALTH

Dr. Michael Hunter is an oncologist and health writer based in Seattle.



COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco members will find items for exercising and to help with sleep in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

To optimize health, say the experts, you need to choose a healthy diet, maintain the proper weight, be part of a community and not drink to excess or smoke.

But let's not forget two other essential components of health: sleep and physical activity/exercise.

Observed risks

Researchers from The University of Sydney in Australia analyzed data from more than 380,000 middle-aged men and women over an 11-year-period and discovered that poor sleep was associated with a higher risk of early mortality. The risk increased when combined with low physical activity.

The researchers also observed that getting no physical activity led to worse health outcomes regardless of sleep amount. In addition, those with lower sleep scores had a higher chance of dying from cardiovascular disease or a stroke.

The scientists concluded that any level of physical activity at or above the lower threshold recommended by the World

Health Organization (WHO) seemed to eliminate most of the negative impacts of poor sleep on mortality.

Takeaway messages

Compared with those with high physical activity and healthy sleep scores, those at the other end of the scale (no moderate to vigorous physical activity, plus poor sleep) had the highest risk of premature mortality.

On occasion, it's probably not unreasonable to sacrifice sleep to exercise if you are not too tired. However, if you chronically get insufficient sleep, you will be more fatigued and set yourself up for more severe health problems down the road, including cardiovascular disease and cancer. In addition, you need adequate sleep to recover from exercise.

The goal is to find the right balance. For age-specific recommendations on activity, go to the WHO website at who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity. For sleep advice, see "Getting your Zzz's," below.

The message is clear: To have the best health outcomes, sleep well and move. ■

Getting your Zzz's

How much sleep is adequate? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that school-age

children (6 to 12 years old) should get at least nine and up to 12 hours per 24 hours (naps count!), teens ages 13 to 18 should get eight to 10 hours, those ages 19 to

64 should aim for seven to nine hours and individuals 65 or older should get seven to eight hours.—MH



More than a multivitamin

SmartyPants is on a mission to improve the health of customers around the world

by ERIN SILVER



Brenda Demers

COURTESY OF SMARTYPANTS VITAMINS



Brenda Demers and her family have a morning routine: After breakfast, they take their SmartyPants vitamins. As CEO of the company, which makes multivitamin gummies for adults, toddlers and everyone in between, she says it's a healthy regimen they look forward to every day.

"Taking your vitamins should fit into your daily life," says Demers, who has spent more than 23 years leading businesses in the vitamins, minerals and supplements industry. "If your vitamins don't taste good you won't take them, no matter how healthy they are for you."

For example, says Demers, recognizing that many people don't like the taste of fish oil, SmartyPants created a gummy with fish oil or flaxseed oil "which includes a variety of other essential nutrients, from vitamins A and D to zinc, without tons of sugar, that our customers love. We use natural flavors like strawberry, banana, orange and lemon," she says, adding "each serving of our kids', women's and prenatal vitamins has approximately the same amount of sugar as a third of a banana."

Recognizing that it's not all about flavor, she explains, "All our products are based on the latest scientific evidence with input from our scientific advisory board, so

we can [continue to] create innovative and effective formulas."

SmartyPants was originally founded in 2011 by Courtney Nichols Gould and Gordon Gould, two parents who saw a market for multivitamins that families would actually want to take.

Though the Goulds have since sold SmartyPants and moved on to pursue ventures tackling climate change, the goal at the company remains the same: to create vitamins that can be part of everyone's daily routine.

At the same time, the company is also aiming higher—to help 100 million lives through Vitamin Angels, a charity that provides nutrients to women, children and expectant mothers around the world.

"We give 1% of our sales to Vitamin Angels," says Demers, who became CEO of SmartyPants in 2021. "They work with local organizations, including governments, to improve maternal and child nutrition worldwide. So far, more than 27 million lives in 65 countries around the world, and all 50 U.S. states, have been positively impacted through our partnership." ■

Erin Silver is a freelance writer in Toronto.

COMPANY INFO

Name

SmartyPants Vitamins

CEO

Brenda Demers

Employees 90

Headquarters

Marina del Rey, California

Items carried at Costco

Kids Formula Multivitamin Gummies, Women's Formula Multivitamin Gummies (Warehouses/Costco.com); Organic Prenatal Formula Gummies, Organic Kids & Toddler Multivitamin Vegetarian Gummies (Costco.com only). Various item numbers.

Quote about Costco

"We love working with ... Costco because of our like-minded values in providing members with high-quality products at the best possible value."

—Brenda Demers



Taking control

Being your own health advocate puts you in charge of planning and decision making

by MALI ANDERSON



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COSTCO CONNECTION

Costco pharmacists are available to answer questions in Costco warehouses. Prescriptions and other medications are available in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

While the guidance of your health care provider is important, it is also essential to be your own health advocate. After all, you know your body best. Having your concerns, questions and preferences addressed is a vital step in making informed health care decisions—you will feel more confident as you move through treatment plans with improved medical literacy.

Bring questions to your appointments

Gone are the days when talking with a doctor was a one-way discussion. “Take time to write down questions so you and your health provider can prioritize your health concerns,” says Dr. Melinda Ring, director of the Osher Center for Integrative Health at Northwestern University. “Ask if there are any evaluations that should be done to explore your health needs, given your personal health risks and goals.”

Understand your insurance coverage

Taking time to understand your individual insurance can help you receive the care you need while sidestepping expensive bills.

For instance, the Affordable Care Act mandates that private insurance companies cover colonoscopy screenings, without copays, from age 45 to 75. But if you have the procedure more than once within 10 years or use an out-of-network provider when an in-network provider was available, you could receive a bill.

Stay on top of preventive care

Be sure to schedule regular appointments and routine screenings. “It’s important to realize that chronic diseases occur on a continuum,” says Ring. “Often, by the time they are diagnosed, problems have been brewing for years. For example, a person doesn’t become diabetic overnight; insulin resistance may start a decade or more before. Catching things early means you can take action to reverse them before developing permanent damage.” Quick diagnoses and fast treatments lead to better health outcomes. ■

Mali Anderson is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

Your pharmacist

Your pharmacist can be a valuable health partner. They can:

- Answer your questions

about over-the-counter remedies

- Supply immunizations, such as flu shots
- Introduce you to alternatives to high-

priced prescriptions

- Help you manage your medications
- Connect with your doctor about prescription adjustments—MA



Buyers' picks

Product selections from Costco's Health and Beauty buying team



Jessica Rodgers

Lindsay Bubitz

Anna Forbush

Dove Advanced Care Invisible+ Antiperspirant Deodorant 4-Pack

With Dove Advanced Care Invisible+, you can say so long to deodorant marks on your clothing. This newly formulated antiperspirant deodorant stick features all the same great benefits as before, but it now offers no white marks on 100 colors, twice the nourishing oil for soft skin and a premium cucumber and cactus water fragrance. Item 1663915. Warehouses/Costco.com.

—Jessica Rodgers



Neutrogena Body Oil, 32 Ounces

Moisturize your body with this delicately scented oil from Neutrogena. Add some to a bath, or use it right out of the shower. The iconic formula goes on without leaving a greasy residue, while providing essential hydration and a light sesame scent. Suitable for all skin types. Item 1675334. Warehouses/Costco.com.

—Lindsay Bubitz



Orgain Plant-Based Protein + 50 Superfoods Ready-to-Drink Shake, 18-Pack

Fuel your body with the power of plant-based protein in a ready-to-drink shake. With just 140 calories and zero grams of sugar, the shake provides 20 grams of protein, plus 50 organic superfood fruits and vegetables, all in a deliciously smooth and creamy chocolate flavor. No artificial colors, flavors or sweeteners; non-GMO; and gluten-, soy- and dairy-free. Item 427209. Warehouses/Costco.com.

—Anna Forbush



Buyers' picks

Product selections from
Costco's Pharmacy buying team



Kelly Hansen

Barb Bradford

April Werner

Nature Made Wellblends Immune & Respiratory

Nature Made Wellblends Immune & Respiratory is a 3-in-1 blend scientifically formulated to provide advanced immune support. Each serving provides 100% of the daily value requirements of vitamins C and D₃, plus EpiCor, a clinically proven postbiotic ingredient that supports nasal health, respiratory wellness and a healthy immune response. Each bottle contains 90 vegetarian capsules. Item 1658277. Warehouses/Costco.com.—*Kelly Hansen*



Zarbee's Children's Cough Syrup

Zarbee's Children's Cough Syrup Daytime and Nighttime was specially developed for kids ages 2 to 12 and formulated with zinc, elderberry and ivy leaf, with dark honey to soothe coughs associated with hoarseness, dry throat and irritants. The nighttime cough syrup also has calming chamomile. The cough syrup contains no drugs, alcohol, artificial sweeteners, artificial flavors, dyes or gluten. Each Costco pack includes 8 ounces of Daytime and 4 ounces of Nighttime syrup. Item 1700279. Warehouses only.—*April Werner*



Afrin No Drip Nasal Spray

Afrin No Drip Severe Congestion provides fast, powerful nasal congestion relief due to colds or allergies. This medicated spray with cooling menthol starts acting in seconds and provides lasting relief for up to 12 hours. Item 1648450. Warehouses/Costco.com.—*Barb Bradford*



Massage for the masses

Therabody continues to create new tools for physical therapy

by ROSIE WOLF WILLIAMS



Chiropractor Jason Wersland suffered a motorcycle accident in 2007 that left him with debilitating chronic muscle and nerve pain. Treatment from a fellow chiropractor provided some relief, “but the pain would return shortly after,” he says. “The doctors I saw recommended prescription medicine or major surgery to ease my pain, but I wanted to exhaust all other options before going those routes.”

Improvising on the use of vibration therapy, which uses percussion on the human body as a therapeutic treatment, Wersland designed a makeshift device from what he could find in the garage. “I took a power saw and padded it with a cat toy taped around the bent blade,” he says.

The relief he felt was immediate and long-lasting. He realized that there were likely many more people like him suffering from chronic and acute pain, who also wanted to find solutions other than prescription drugs or invasive surgery.

It became Wersland’s mission to bring his idea and its therapeutic benefits to as many people as possible. Over the next seven years, Wersland made prototypes and tested them on his patients while working to create a user-friendly product. “At one point I made 250 prototypes and sold them to fellow chiropractors,” says Wersland. “During that time, I was also working to find the right partner to bring the product to market. Then, in 2015, I met [fellow entrepreneur] Ben Nazarian.”

The two combined forces, co-founding Theragun in March 2016, and launching the business with the Theragun Gen 1, patented as the first-ever percussive therapy device.

The company quickly broadened its market with additional Theraguns such as the G2Pro in 2017, and, after continued research and development, the G3Pro, with a quieter design and improved ergonomics, in 2019. The same year, the company introduced in-store relaxation experiences in Los Angeles.



PHOTOS: © THERABODY, INC.

Left: Using RecoveryAir JetBoots after a workout.

Above: Theragun Elite percussion massager with adjustable positions.

Nazarian. “The JetBoots are wireless ... so your recovery and pain relief can go where you do.”

The health and wellness company states that its core principle is that the more our bodies can move, the richer and more fulfilling our lives can be.

Available in more than 40 countries, helping athletes, medical personnel, trainers and more, Therabody products can work together with professional support, says Wersland.

“Ultimately, we aim to help our customers feel better. We have based our company around the idea of a complete ecosystem of whole-body wellness products. Now we’re creating TheraMind content and using biometric data to help tap into your own body’s ability to heal itself,” says Wersland.

“Everything we make is rooted in science, and we continue to listen to our customers to uncover their needs,” he continues. “We truly believe that the future of wellness is connected, and we are excited to continue innovating solutions that help every mind and body keep moving.” ■

Rosie Wolf Williams (alwaysrosie.com) is a freelance writer in Vermont.

COMPANY INFO

Name

Therabody

Founder

Jason Wersland

CEO

Ben Nazarian

Employees

460

Headquarters

Los Angeles

Items carried at Costco

Pro, Elite and Mini Percussion Massagers, RecoveryAir JetBoots, Powerdot Bundle. Various item numbers. Warehouses/Costco.com.

Quote about Costco

“Costco is an important [retail] partner for Therabody, as we share a common ethos: We both work within our categories to increase accessibility to products that can improve lives. We look forward to being able to help more people by making our products available through ... Costco.”

—Ben Nazarian

How it works

Theragun massages deep into muscle tissue, increasing circulation and reducing tension. It also stimulates the nervous system to provide

pain relief. The National Institutes of Health has advised that massage therapy can reduce fatigue and improve sleep, and massage has been shown to improve sleep in adults.

The Therabody app uses real-time behaviors and activities to recommend wellness routines that work with Bluetooth-enabled devices.—RWW



Get an A in vitamin D

Consuming the right amount of vitamin D is important for maintaining good health

by LISA A. BEACH

Vitamin D plays a vital role in your health. It aids in calcium absorption (which helps build strong bones) and assists with proper muscle and nerve function. But did you know it also helps the immune system fight off bacteria and viruses? Whether it's during flu season or a pandemic, it's more important than ever to ensure you're getting enough vitamin D.

As both a nutrient and a hormone, vitamin D helps to reduce inflammation as well as control processes such as immune function and cell growth, including antigen-presenting cells and regulatory T cells. Research shows that vitamin D plays a variety of roles in immune system functioning, which may improve the body's first line of defense against foreign invaders and

COSTCO CONNECTION

Vitamin D-rich foods and vitamin D supplements are available in Costco warehouses. Supplements and grocery delivery are available at [Costco.com](https://www.costco.com).

deter the development of autoimmunity (when the body's immune system attacks its own healthy cells and tissues).

In fact, researchers have been studying the immunity-building benefits of vitamin D as they relate to respiratory infections. Recent studies (see "COVID-19 and D") found that using vitamin D supplements showed promise in both preventing and treating respiratory infections.

While the amount of vitamin D needed daily varies by age, most adults need 15 to 20 micrograms (mcg), about 600 to 800 IUs. However, research shows that many people aren't getting enough. The National Institutes of Health found that about one in four people have inadequate vitamin D blood levels, and a June 2020 article in *Nutrients*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal, says 95% of Americans don't get enough vitamin D in their diet.

"Some people don't consume fish, eggs, milk or milk alternatives, or other vitamin D-fortified foods," says Mira Ilic, a registered dietitian with Cleveland Clinic.

Increasing your vitamin D intake

You can get your daily vitamin D requirement from three sources: food, the sun and dietary supplements. To get more vitamin D, combine these dietary and exercise approaches:

Eat more vitamin D-rich foods. "The best natural source is fatty fish, which is why many health experts recommend two to three servings of fatty fish per week," says Julie Stefanski, a registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Not a seafood lover? It's also in egg yolks

and some fortified foods. "Milk is fortified with 3 micrograms [or 120 IUs] per cup," Stefanski says, noting that other dairy products made from milk (like ice cream and cream cheese) are usually not fortified.

Get outside. Spending time in the sun can pose challenges, since dermatologists recommend using sunscreen to protect against skin cancer. "Sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher blocks the UVB rays that are responsible for making vitamin D in the skin," explains Ilic. The time of day, geographical latitude, seasons and amount of exposed skin all affect how much vitamin D the body can make from the sun.

Stefanski advises going outdoors without sunscreen for just 20 minutes, three to four times a week. Besides boosting your vitamin D, being outside in the fresh air and sunshine elevates your mood and provides opportunities for physical activity. "Sun makes us *feel* good—an important part of human health," says Stefanski.

Take a supplement. "Your doctor can order a blood test and, based on the results, let you know if you need to supplement and in what amount," says Ilic. "Too much vitamin D can cause the body to absorb too much calcium, which can lead to kidney stones or damage."

And Stefanski points out that, when taking a supplement, you should choose vitamin D₃: "Sometimes food can be fortified with vitamin D₂, but it's not as well absorbed by the body." ■

Lisa A. Beach (LisaBeachWrites.com) is a freelance writer in Orlando, Florida.



Are you D-ficient?

Vitamin D deficiency stems from a variety of causes: a diet low in vitamin D-rich foods, limited exposure to sunlight and certain health conditions. Deficiency symptoms can range from mild to severe and include:

- Fatigue
- Bone or joint pain
- Mood changes
- Muscle cramps, weakness and pain

In infants and children, vitamin D deficiency causes rickets, which can show up as skeletal deformities, delayed growth, incorrect growth patterns, delayed motor skills, muscle weakness and bone pain.

In adults, vitamin D deficiency causes progressive loss of bone mineral, which leads to osteomalacia (softening of bones), bone pain and increased risk of osteoporosis.—LAB

LEFT: © BIT24; ОЛЫГА ХОЛІВІНА; ABOVE: SOMPONG_TOM / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

COVID-19 and D

According to a 2021 study in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 82% of COVID patients in one hospital

were vitamin D deficient. And a 2021 study in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* found higher serum nutrient levels—especially of vitamin D and zinc—were

associated with decreased risk of contracting respiratory infections, less severe respiratory infection symptoms and faster recovery times.—LAB



Upping your intake

Tips to boost your appetite and support a healthy weight

by ROSANNA LEE



FROM LEFT: © AAMULYA; NIZWA DESIGN / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



RICHARD AU

Rosanna Lee is a registered dietitian nutritionist who specializes in weight management and chronic disease prevention.



While the health impacts of being overweight or obese are well known, many people don't realize that there are also risks to being underweight. Having a low weight increases the risk for malnutrition or vitamin deficiencies, impairs bone health, weakens immune function, prolongs hospital stays and exacerbates surgical complications. It may also cause fertility issues and affect growth and development. Those who are underweight may experience frequent fatigue, become sick or ill very often, have irregular or skipped periods, experience dry skin or even have hair thinning or loss.

There are many reasons for being underweight. It could stem from a naturally faster metabolism, or a medical condition like hyperthyroidism, which

can speed up the body's metabolism. Uncontrolled diabetes, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease (e.g., Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis), eating disorders, and depression or anxiety are other common causes. With these conditions, it is best to see a doctor for individualized medical management.

Medications may be reviewed as well. Some antibiotics, chemotherapy drugs and antidepressants are known to make it more difficult to gain and maintain weight.

A lack of appetite can also cause you to be underweight, which is a common concern among the elderly. Seniors are at an increased risk for malnutrition and involuntary weight loss. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, almost 50% of older Americans are malnourished.

While the health impacts of being overweight or obese are well known, many people don't realize that there are also risks to being underweight.

Boosting your appetite

Finding ways to improve appetite and developing some of the following strategies to tackle these challenges can help you keep the weight on.

For example, in addition to taste, the visual appeal of food can also affect your decision to eat and how much. Think about presentation: Consider plating and colors (i.e., how foods contrast with each other and the plate).

Think about the aroma and flavor. Try new herbs, spices or sauces to create more aromatic dishes, while giving them some pizzazz.

A comfortable atmosphere can help, so include music, conversation and welcome company at mealtime. Eating together reduces feelings of isolation and promotes food consumption and better nutritional intake, particularly among seniors.

Good planning is key to eating well. Keep pre-portioned entrées in the freezer (use batch cooking or ready-made meals from the freezer aisle) so you can still get your nutrition. Smaller high-calorie and protein-dense snacks (e.g., Greek yogurt with fruit and granola, cheese with crackers, eggs or nut butter with toast, hummus and vegetables) may also be a good idea if you are a small eater.

Expending energy via exercise may also help stimulate appetite, particularly exercises that support muscle mass. Include weight training in your routine to increase muscle stimulation and retention to support weight gain and maintenance.

If you are underweight due to a medical condition, it is best to speak to your doctor before starting a physical activity routine. Too much aerobic exercise may work against your weight gain goal.

Eat the right foods

Focus on protein and calories with each bite. Good protein foods include meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, eggs, legumes, nut products, seeds and tofu; whey- or soy-based protein powders and shakes can be consumed alone or added to meals and beverages.

Healthy fats from foods like avocados, fish (salmon, mackerel, herring, trout, sardines), seeds (flax, pumpkin, sunflower, sesame), nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts), beans (kidney, navy, soybeans) and olive oil are excellent for added caloric intake. ■



Be SMART

Set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) goals. For example, if you cannot eat a full meal, a SMART goal may be to consume half portions and include two or three snacks between meals every day spaced at least two to three hours apart. Use a smart device, health app or journal for continuous monitoring and self-accountability.—RL

COSTCO CONNECTION

Fresh, frozen and prepared healthful foods are available in Costco warehouses. Same-day and two-day delivery is available through Costco Grocery at Costco.com.

Controllables

Genetics is one uncontrollable factor in regard to weight, but there are lifestyle choices you can

make to increase your weight. Consider quitting smoking, try to reduce the frequency of alcoholic beverage consumption and avoid illicit drug use.

Also, consider enlisting the help of medical therapists and counselors, community rehabilitation programs and medical treatment centers.—RL

Room for recreation

Building your perfect rec space starts with a good plan

by DAN JONES



COSTCO CONNECTION

You'll find a selection of products to create your perfect recreation room—including furniture, chairs, games, televisions, lighting and much more—in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

When you envision a space in your home that you and your loved ones will enjoy, what does it look like?

It's a question that Bryan Sebring, president and founder of Sebring Design Build, asks potential clients. His Chicago-based company offers a range of home remodeling and design services, including recreation rooms.

A rec room is a space used for games and other forms of entertainment. The quintessential rec room should be a blend of fun and functional, Sebring says. But it goes deeper than that, he adds.

"The No. 1 thing I am looking for in a rec room is that it solves a problem, usually by age," says Sebring, who is a Costco member. "From children, to middle school, to high school, to adult spaces—how can this room help?"

Plan it out

When it comes to setting up a rec room, use the space you have. That could be a basement, garage, attic, spare bedroom or loft.

Patricia Gray, an interior designer in Vancouver, British Columbia, says gathering feedback is key when it comes to execution. "Take a poll of your family's interests before you start your planning," the Costco member says. "Consider all members of the family. Make lists and have everyone contribute."

Finding the right theme

Your rec room may have one specific theme or purpose, or it could serve multiple roles for different family members.

A space with a flat-screen television and a round table for card games or trivia creates possibilities for either a theater or a gaming night. The room might include a surround sound system, a snacking area with a microwave oven, board games and puzzles. Blackout coverings for windows will ensure an ideal movie setting, Gray says.



FROM LEFT: © VECTORPOUCH; JULIABELKINA / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Set the mood with good lighting.

Furnishing a space with a built-in bar with stools and a dartboard might make for the ultimate adult hangout. Additions like a golf putting mat or foosball or billiard table could take it to another level.

A room for children or teenagers might feature beanbag chairs, a video gaming station and a mini fridge for goodies. For families with younger kids, a contained play spot for toys means parents and siblings won't have to dodge potential tripping hazards around the house. Dual television screens could help create an option for tech-minded teenagers who want to game on their own while other family members watch a movie.

Other factors

Furniture, carpeting, lighting and art can go a long way to establish the motif of your rec room, Sebring says. Sectionals and sofas, pillows, chairs and tables will set the tone, and new carpeting or a large rug will offer a comforting feel to the area.

"If you like to have parties where people dance, arrange your furniture so that there is floor space available," Gray adds.

For light, would you benefit from a manufactured or a natural source? Styling content creator Amy Stansfield says bright lights are a no-go because they aren't relaxing. Instead, she suggests using ceiling spotlights or wall sconces that have a dimming function.

"Also, make sure to place lighting strategically," says Stansfield. "If you have a table where you play games, make sure the lighting is above this so that you can see clearly and not strain your eyes. If you have a cozy reading corner, have a lamp next to your chair."

Art can include more than just paintings. A sports room could showcase autographed memorabilia, a neon sign might present well in a tavern-like setting, while vintage movie posters will resonate with a cinema or speak-easy theme. Family photographs, plants and retro items such as arcade games will set your space apart too. ■



Tips from a pro

Toronto-based interior designer Laura Stein, a Costco member, offers additional tips for building a recreation room:

- Treat your basement as if it's on the main floor of your house. If you consider lighting, furniture and decor the same way you would for your family room upstairs, you'll end up with a comfortable space you want to hang out in.
- Make sure you have enough easy-access storage for all the books, board games, toys and video games you'll want to use in the rec room. Kids will be more likely to put things away if there is a clear space for each thing.
- Don't overfurnish. Too much furniture or furniture that is too big makes for cramped quarters.—DJ

A world of options

A lot of thought should go into the style, design and layout of a rec room. There are many possible themes for such a dynamic space,

including the following suggestions from Sebring Design Build president and founder Bryan Sebring:

- Golfer's dream
- Board game hangout
- Art studio
- Family lounge
- Family game room
- Home bar
- Memorabilia showcase
- Video game central
- Meditation room
- Media room—DJ

Right: Arnie Leather Power Glider Recliner, gray. Item 1570124. Warehouses/Costco.com.

Below: True Innovations Paxley Fabric Swivel Glider Recliner, light gray. Item 1049323. Warehouses/Costco.com.



LEFT TO RIGHT: © LIVING STYLE (SINGAPORE) PTE. LIMITED; © SYNERGY HOME FURNISHINGS



COSTCO CONNECTION

A variety of reclining chairs can be found in the warehouses and at Costco.com.

Sit back and relax

How to pick the perfect reclining chair for your needs

by MALI ANDERSON

They call it kicking back for a reason. Stretching out and putting your feet up in a recliner is ideal for unwinding after work, cuddling with little kids or sitting while you stream your favorite shows. If you want a piece of furniture that can make your home even cozier, there is a recliner out there that can match the type of comfort and functionality you crave.

“There are so many styles now,” says Costco member Sarah Boardman-Miller, principal interior designer and owner of SB Design and Showroom LLC. Whether you live in an urban condo, where space is at a premium, or in a sprawling home, there are recliners to fit your needs. Here are tips to find the right one.

Measure your space

While it is fun to begin searching for recliners in stores or online, be sure to get out the measuring tape before making a

purchase. After all, recliners recline, meaning you will need enough space for the chair to be an asset to your living room whether it is upright or not.

“Depending on the angle and size, you will need more space behind and in front of the closed chair. Most recliners that really recline need anywhere from 12 to 24 inches [of space] in front and back,” Boardman-Miller explains. But because recliners cancel the need for an ottoman, they can actually take up less space than a traditional chair with a footrest, depending on the rest of the furniture in the room.

Explore features

Because there is such a wide range of recliners, focus on what features are important to you. For instance, parents of young children often gravitate toward gliders to lull their children to sleep, while



Barcalounger
Ridgefield Leather
Pushback Recliner,
brown (above, Item
1518047) and gray
(left, Item 1518046).
Costco.com only.

individuals with physical jobs may opt for heat capabilities and massage features to ease muscle aches and reduce stress.

According to Costco member Hope Nichols, owner and principal designer of Hope Nichols Interiors, because there are “a ton of options for recliners on the market today, I really like to narrow down what the purpose of the piece will be. For example, will it go in the home theater, become a cozy alternative to the desktop for someone working from home, is it meant for a reading nook or does the client need it as a health support? In any of these cases, I like to look for options that meet my client’s needs, like a built-in USB port or cup holder.”

If you are interested in a pair of recliners for an entertainment area, you may want to look into swivel recliners that will allow you to engage in a conversation happening on the couch and then swivel back to watch TV.

Consider materials

Once you have an idea of how much space you will allot for your recliner and which features you are prioritizing, think about colors and fabrics. The materials you prefer will depend on the style of the rest of your home. Leather looks luxurious, while fabric recliners provide a soft look. And don’t forget stain-resistant choices (see “Do you have pets?”), which, paired with proper care, can help a chair look like new for a long period of time.

“Whether in a neutral tone or a coordinating color ... the right fabric will always make a space feel pulled together,” says Nichols. “To me, a recliner is like a favorite pair of jeans, and I want my clients to love what they choose.” ■

Costco member Mali Anderson is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

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Try it on for size

Just like standard sofas and armchairs, recliners are available in different sizes. Here are a few sizing tips to keep in mind when you try different models:

- Before reclining, your knees should be at a 90-degree angle, with your feet touching the floor.
- While you are seated, your arms should rest comfortably, from elbow to hand, on the armrest.
- When you lean back, the middle area of the chair should support your lower back and your heels should be supported by the footrest.
- Your head should rest comfortably as well. If you feel any strain in your neck, try another model.—MA

Do you have pets?

Many animal lovers share furniture with their furry companions. If this is true for you, remember the possibility of pet wear and

tear when choosing a recliner.

For some, patterned fabrics make shedding and small marks less noticeable. Tightly woven fabrics can be a good choice, as they may withstand some pet damage.

And while “leather is always a great choice for harder wearing, know that if you have pets, leather will show the wear from claws,” notes designer Sarah Boardman-Miller.—MA

Tea time

Ways to incorporate tea into your food

by LAURA BODE



© ELENA SCHWEITZER / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

January is Hot Tea Month, which, for many, will be enjoyed with a mug of their favorite brew.

However, in addition to being a simple, comforting beverage, tea—hot or cold, already brewed or still in loose-leaf form—can be an amazing ingredient in a variety of recipes. There are hundreds of ways to enjoy various teas—green, matcha, black and herbals. Here's a look.

Green tea can be used in smoothies and sangrias: For smoothies, simply add ½ tea-spoon matcha powder per 3 cups of liquid ingredients; for sangria, steep six or so tea bags in cold water (8 ounces per tea bag) before adding the tea to the wine and fruit.

Green tea can also act as a base for marinade, sauce or soup; poultry recipes are especially complementary, as the mild flavor of the chicken balances the natural grassy flavor of the tea. In some recipes, such as chicken noodle soup, you can replace broth with equal parts tea.

Poaching fresh fish (cod or sea bass are good examples) in brewed green tea gives it a delicate and delicious aroma and taste, says Rona Tison, a Costco member and executive vice president of corporate relations and public relations for ITO EN, North America, a Costco tea supplier.

Matcha, a powdered green tea, has become more and more popular—both as a beverage and in foods, like chocolates.

“Matcha was traditionally used in Japanese tea ceremonies, but today you'll find it used in breakfast foods like oatmeal, pancakes and even matcha guacamole,” says Tison, a tea master and a prominent figure in the tea world, with more than 35 years in the industry. She suggests using homemade matcha vinaigrette for grilled vegetables, salads and even slathered on grilled shrimp.

Robust black tea, such as Earl Grey, English breakfast and Irish breakfast tea, is excellent for smoking meats or as a marinade for duck or grass-fed beef. In Bhutan, people mix black tea with cream and butter to make butter tea, a popular drink.

Infusing fresh seasonal fruit—think peaches, blueberries and/or mango—with herbal (or green) teas can bring a delicious flavor dimension to the fruit and fruit smoothies. Suggested herbal teas include chamomile, mint, rooibos and chai blends. Using tea in cocktails like hot toddies and gin spritzes brings a new twist to the drink, and tea simple syrups can be added to your favorite spirits.

The next time you invite a friend over for a cup of tea, you might want to surprise them with a new twist on the classic, as tea is more than just a comforting cuppa. ■

Laura Bode is a freelance writer based in Camas, Washington.

COSTCO CONNECTION

You'll find various teas in Costco warehouses and at Costco.com.

It's the real deal

A father and his sons created Unreal to reinvent their favorite snacks

by ERIN SILVER



© COSTCO PHOTO STUDIO

Unreal's story begins in the late 2000s, when brothers Kristopher and Nicky Bronner went out trick-or-treating on Halloween and came back with their haul of candy.

"The next day, their dad, Michael Bronner, confiscated all their candy," explains Unreal CEO Kevin McCarthy, who came on board in 2014 and assumed the role of CEO in 2016. "Michael didn't want them eating treats made with artificial colors, lots of sugar and preservatives."

The boys wanted to know why foods that taste so good had to be bad for you. Inspired by that, the three Bronners decided to challenge that notion. Though he had no experience in the food business, Michael was an entrepreneur who had previously founded Digitas (a digital advertising agency) and Upromise (a college savings program), and he sensed an opportunity. He and his sons worked with a chef and began testing recipes for chocolates that could be enjoyed without guilt. "They used real ingredients and less sugar to develop chocolates that tasted just as good as the products already on store shelves," says McCarthy.

In 2011, the Boston-based Bronners officially launched their company. Thanks to lots of startup funding and buy-in from major celebrities like John Legend and Gisele Bündchen, who, McCarthy says, "are just really big fans of what we are doing here," the trio began manufacturing

Unreal chocolate snacks. Since then, they've created an entire line of treats, including chocolate coconut bars that are lower in sugar and made with no artificial ingredients, compared to other conventional treats.

Today, Michael serves as chairman of the company, while Kristopher works on product development. (Nicky has moved on to other endeavors.) And Unreal has remained true to its original mission: All of its chocolates are made with simple, clean ingredients, like organic peanut butter and coconut. Instead of artificial dyes, their colored candies are coated with colors derived from natural ingredients such as beets and spirulina. The company also keeps sugar to a minimum, with no fillers or artificial sweeteners. In fact, Unreal's Dark Chocolate Coconut Minis, sold in Costco warehouses, have only 3 grams of sugar per bar. Unreal also uses fair-trade ingredients, which means farmers are guaranteed safe working conditions and sustainable wages.

Of course, taste has always been a top priority. "No matter how clean, organic or simple any indulgent item is, it has to taste amazing, especially when it comes to chocolate," says McCarthy. "We're trying to create love at first bite. It's cheesy, but it has a nice ring." ■

Erin Silver is a freelance writer in Toronto.

COMPANY INFO

Name Unreal

CEO Kevin McCarthy

Employees 30

Items carried at Costco

Dark Chocolate Coconut Minis. Item 1268728. Warehouses/ Costco.com

Quote about Costco

"Costco is transparent, super reliable and they never drop the ball. We've been working with Costco for years and [the company is] amazing to work with."

—Kevin McCarthy



Foods of fortune

The culinary traditions of Lunar New Year celebrate good fortune and a fresh start

by GEOFF NUDELMAN



COSTCO CONNECTION

A variety of foods to help you celebrate Lunar New Year are available in most Costco warehouses. Groceries are available for delivery at Costco.com.

The Western idea of Lunar New Year often includes colorful dragon dancing, loud firecrackers and gifted red and gold envelopes filled with money to promote good luck and prosperity. However, that's a small snapshot of the traditions and celebrations of the holiday.

"We were always taught it was the most auspicious of holidays, as it dictates how your whole year will unfold," says Costco member and cookbook author Katie Chin, whose family is Cantonese.

Of course, where there's family, there's food. That combination creates the foundation of Lunar New Year celebrations (beginning January 22, 2023) throughout the Asian diaspora, with certain foods and dishes in particular symbolizing luck, health and prosperity in the new year.

Countries across eastern and Southeast Asia have subtle differences in the ways they celebrate Lunar New Year (in China, particularly, there are variations among provinces), but the preparation, presen-

tation and eating of certain foods is one central tradition they all share.

Eating for health

One of the most important foods eaten during Lunar New Year is the venerable noodle. Noodles are often boiled and served in broth, with symbolism in the length of the noodles. The belief is that a longer strand will lead to a longer life, so noodles are often served uncut at the table and guests are encouraged to eat the entire noodle in one slurp so as to not break the potential for good health.

Eating for wealth and prosperity

Many foods served throughout Lunar New Year are in the shape of coins or money in an effort to bring good financial fortune. Various versions of small glutinous rice cakes resemble coins. Egg rolls and spring rolls are also staples, as their rectangular shape resembles gold bars.



Year of the Rabbit

The lunar calendar cycles among 12 annual characters, with this year being that of the Rabbit. The last five Years of the Rabbit occurred in

1963, 1975, 1987, 1999 and 2011, so those born in any of those years will take special note of the next 12 months.

According to the Chinese zodiac, those born in Rabbit

years are calm, peaceful and artistic, among other traits. Also, the rabbit is considered the luckiest of all animals in Chinese culture.—GN

© SUSHKONASTYA / STOCK.ADOBE.COM



© FANVELDMAN / STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Dinner tables throughout China often feature a whole fish or chicken served at the table with head and tail intact in an effort to bring wealth and abundance to the entire family. (Also, the Chinese word for abundance sounds similar to the word for fish.)

Costco member Holly Ong, founder of Sibeihø, a Singaporean condiment company, notes that food is such an integral part of the holiday in Singapore that there's barely any room on the table for anything else. "[In Singapore], this is often the only time of year workers have off, so it makes it even more special," she says.

Cookbook author Hetty McKinnon, who is Cantonese, says that the foods of the holiday can vary between areas. For instance, in Zhongshan prefecture, where her family is from, *gok jai* dumplings are stuffed with a savory filling, then steamed, while in neighboring Taishan, they are sweet and deep-fried.

No matter which traditions you practice or foods you choose to serve for Lunar New Year, much of it revolves around getting together with loved ones and creating a good foundation for the next 12 months.

"It's a time for reflection and being with your family," says Filipino American chef Dale Talde, who spent several years working in Cantonese kitchens. ■

Geoff Nudelman (geoffnudelman.com) is a freelance lifestyle journalist and copywriter based in Oregon.

Chinese Shrimp Cakes

1 lb shrimp, thawed, peeled and deveined	1 tsp cornstarch
1 small (1.8 oz) carrot	1 tsp sesame oil
5 water chestnuts (freshly peeled or from a can), minced	2 tsp oyster sauce
¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped	2 tsp Shaoxing wine or dry sherry
1 tsp ginger, grated	½ tsp salt
1 egg white	¼ tsp sugar
	⅛ tsp pepper
	3 Tbsp vegetable oil, divided

Pat the shrimp dry with a paper towel. Lightly smash them with the side of a knife, and coarsely chop them. Be careful not to mince the shrimp into pieces that are too small.

Split the carrot in half crosswise, then lengthwise, and blanch the pieces in boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and finely dice the carrot.

In a mixing bowl, combine the shrimp, carrot, water chestnuts, cilantro, ginger, egg white, cornstarch, sesame oil, oyster sauce, Shaoxing wine, salt, sugar and pepper. Whip everything together with a rubber spatula for 5 to 10 minutes, until the mixture is sticky and all ingredients are well combined. You should be able to gather it into one big smooth ball with a rubber spatula.

Heat a nonstick or cast-iron frying pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add 2 Tbsp oil; reduce heat to medium. With oiled hands, take a portion of the shrimp mixture and roll it into a ball (about the size of a golf ball). Drop the ball into the oiled pan and use an oiled spatula to quickly press it into a flat disc. Repeat until all the shrimp cakes are in the pan.

Pan-fry each side of the shrimp cakes for about 3 minutes, until golden brown. Add the remaining oil if needed during pan-frying. Makes 5 servings (10 shrimp cakes).

Recipe and photo courtesy of Thewoksoflife.com





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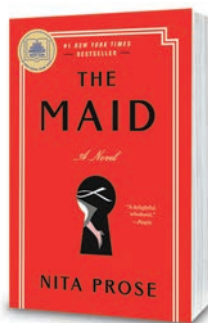
Alex Kanenwisher
Buyer, Books



The Maid is Nita Prose's debut novel. It tells the story of Molly, an eccentric maid who sets out to uncover who killed one of the guests at the hotel where she works. Molly, who has been alone since her gran died and who struggles with social skills, is used to being overlooked. It's that quality that gives her an advantage in solving the mystery.

Molly is a delightful character, and this novel is full of heart while also serving as a reminder that we're never as alone as we think we are.

The Maid (Item 1708086; 1/3) is available in most Costco warehouses.



Nita Prose

© DHALIA KATZ

Prose only

Longtime editor talks about her debut novel, *The Maid*

by HOWARD CALVERT

Scribbling an idea for a bestselling book on a napkin is a cliché you see in movies and works of fiction, but occasionally it happens in real life and leads to an unpublished author landing a headline-making book deal.

For Nita Prose, whose debut novel, *The Maid*, is this issue's book buyer's pick, that is exactly what happened.

"I was staying at a hotel in London in 2019 and came back to my room and startled the maid," says Prose. "The truly embarrassing part was that she was untangling my tracksuit bottoms. I remember thinking it's such an invisible and intimate job. By cleaning my room she knew so much about me, yet I knew nothing about her."

This sparked an idea that revealed itself on the plane back to Canada, where Prose lives. "Molly's voice—my protagonist—came to me, and it was clear, succinct and precise. I wasn't planning on writing a novel and didn't have any paper, so I grabbed a napkin and wrote the prologue in a single burst. I didn't know it at the time, but that was when my debut novel began."

She completed the first draft in four months while working around her day job as vice president of Simon & Schuster Canada. "When you're an editor, you have this picture [of the novel] from above, but when you're an author, there's a blindness," she says. "You're going through a labyrinth and you don't know what's ahead. And I experienced the other side of that when writing this."

The Maid is a tightly plotted whodunit, yet it reads like few other novels in the murder-mystery category due to the offbeat narrator, Molly the



Natalia Hendricks
Assistant Buyer, Books

“This power of memories to both hurt and heal is a major theme of the novel.”

—ANA REYES



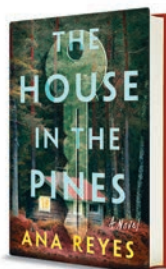
maid. “I knew there was going to be a murder early on and that it was going to feature a maid who’s invisible but exists in plain sight,” Prose tells the *Connection*. “It was important for me to situate the reader with very little information—to just open the book and encounter Molly. My hope was that by discovering her unique perspective, to live as her, would be to love her.”

Prose says that she worked on *The Maid* in complete secrecy. “Not a soul on the planet knew what I was doing, not even my partner. As I work in the publishing industry, I’d replay this nightmare scenario in my head where I’d present my work to agents and they’d say, ‘Oh yeah, we read your work and it’s lovely,’ which is a very slicing rejection.” In reality, the feedback was beyond anything she could have imagined: “I got a wonderful response, which made me realize I’d achieved what I’d hoped to achieve.”

Prose also hopes that readers come away from her book with a better understanding of people who do jobs that are cloaked in invisibility, yet they make the world run. “We’re discovering that we need to think more about those workers and how undervalued they are,” she concludes. “But also, I hope people enjoy the mystery aspect and the fact it can only be solved through connection to the human heart.” ■

Howard Calvert is a freelance journalist and author based in Hampshire, England.

The mystery of memories



The House in the Pines (Item 1708087; 1/3) will be available in most Costco warehouses.

In *The House in the Pines* by Ana Reyes, Maya is in high school when her best friend drops dead in front of her and Frank, a man the two had been spending time with. Seven years later, Maya sees a YouTube video in which another young woman dies in front of Frank. It launches her into a search for answers.

Costco Connection What would you most like readers to know about *The House in the Pines*?

Ana Reyes This is a story where things aren’t what they appear, and danger lurks where you might not expect. It’s about buried secrets, lost memories and a house with a mystery at its heart.

CC What is it about how memory works (or doesn’t) that intrigues you?

AR I’m interested in the way memory shapes us. ... But I’m also intrigued by what we can’t remember ... and the way these blank spots make us who we are too. Maya is haunted by something that happened the night she visited a man named Frank at the house he’d built in the forest. She can’t quite remember what happened—the memory lurks just out of reach. Yet the trauma of it remains. Maya’s self-destructive behavior at the beginning of the book is an attempt to cope, but the real story starts when she realizes that uncovering the truth of what happened is the only way for her to heal. This power of memories to both hurt and heal is a major theme of the novel.

Also at Costco.com

The *Treasure Chest* series is educational fun at its best. Intended for ages 8 and up, each title includes a 48-page book, a buildable model,

engaging illustrations and a variety of projects.

Titles include *Middle Ages*, *Rome* and *Egypt*. Children can learn about medieval life from the queen in her castle and the plowman in the field, everyday

life in ancient Rome and aspects of life in ancient Egypt.

The *Treasure Chest* series is available at Costco.com (various item numbers) and in most Costco warehouses (Item 1444844; 1/9).—AK



Beneath the surface

New suspense novel explores the veneer of perfection

by JUDY GELMAN

Costco's suggested Book Club read provides insight into a selected novel, as well as an appropriate recipe to accompany your own book club's discussion.

Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen's latest domestic suspense thriller, *The Golden Couple*, is about a therapist with unconventional methods who attempts to unlock the mystery of a "perfect" marriage.

When their editor suggested *The Golden Couple* as the title for their next book, the authors were taken. "With those three words as our inspiration, we began to explore the heart of our story," Hendricks tells the *Connection*.

"The couple had to be seemingly flawless: Marissa and Matthew Bishop get the best tables at restaurants and never seem to argue or have mud on their designer boots," says Pekkanen.

But the thriller writers knew their characters needed to have deep, troubling secrets. "We created a central character who could uncover the truth about our perfect couple: therapist Avery Chambers, who won't tolerate being lied to," says Hendricks. "Avery is most successful when she helps a client understand that the most important person they've been lying to is themselves."



The Golden Couple (Item 1708089; 1/3) will be available in most Costco warehouses.



BILL MILES

Food plays an important role in the characters' lives—and highlights their differences. Avery lives alone and relishes eating what—and when—she chooses, "whether it's a veggie burger at a bar after work or carry-out food," Hendricks says.

But Marissa longs for intimate family dinners—often impossible because of her husband's late nights at work. When Avery recommends the couple reconnect on a date night, Marissa and Matthew plan to meet at their favorite restaurant. Matthew doesn't arrive, leaving Marissa to begin dinner by herself. "She feels self-conscious and sad, her appetite gone—in sharp contrast to how Avery feels dining alone," says Pekkanen.

Later, Marissa surprises Matthew at his office with a sweet treat to remind him of a romantic moment. "He offers her the first bite and tells her eclairs always remind him of their trip to Paris. That eclair, and the memories it sparks, helps our 'golden couple' reconnect," adds Hendricks.

Cooking was also an important part of Marissa's childhood: She helped her mother prepare lobster salad, cobblers and dips at Conner's, the family's gourmet-food market on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The authors suggest that book clubs enjoy this recipe for artichoke dip, the signature dish Marissa spent many afternoons preparing at her family store. ■

Judy Gelman is the creator of the website Bookclubcookbook.com.



JUDY GELMAN

Marissa's Artichoke Dip

½ cup sour cream
½ cup mayonnaise
8 oz cream cheese, softened
1¼ cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1 garlic clove, minced
½ tsp dried dill weed, divided
½ tsp kosher salt
¼ tsp ground black pepper
8 oz canned artichoke hearts (not marinated), drained and chopped
½ cup frozen chopped spinach, thawed and thoroughly drained
Chips or veggies, for serving

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly oil a 2-quart shallow baking or casserole dish.

Place sour cream, mayonnaise, cream cheese, 1 cup Parmesan cheese, garlic, ¼ tsp dill weed, salt and pepper in a mixing bowl; stir until smooth. Fold in artichoke hearts and spinach until well combined.

Transfer dip to the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and dill weed. Bake 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Serve warm with chips or veggies. Makes 6 servings.

Recipe adapted from Tastesbetterfromscratch.com

Meeting our goals

Updated Sustainability Commitment shares our ongoing efforts

by SHERI FLIES



© MALP / STOCK ADOBE.COM



© COSTCO PHOTO STUDIO

Sheri Flies is Costco vice president of global sustainability and compliance.



More people these days want to know what's behind the products they purchase. Were they responsibly produced, meaning was the land, sea or forest protected? How were the people who made them treated? Likewise, the animals? Is the packaging recyclable?

Costco buyers ask these questions when they negotiate with suppliers, as our goal is to follow sustainable sourcing policies. This pertains to the popular branded products we offer, as well as our own Kirkland Signature™ items. Ideally, if everything is done right, the people, animals and the planet are not negatively affected by the goods that come into your house and to your table.

Our Sustainability Commitment, posted at Costco.com, explains how Costco works toward that goal. It details the policies and approaches we take to seek improvements in responsibly sourcing merchandise—and in how we operate our warehouses as efficiently as possible.

The commitment's annual update, released in December, lets us review progress and see the evolution of our sustainability efforts. Those include our Climate Action Plan, which was created in 2020 and outlines

our progress on specific targets and actions we are taking to lower our greenhouse gas emissions. We have woven relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into our sustainability programs. And we've clarified how our sustainability principles go hand in hand with our corporate mission statement and our Code of Ethics.

Internally, sustainability is becoming more ingrained as a core principle for our buyers and our warehouse operators. For buyers, it includes asking suppliers key questions not only about their labor practices and the environment, but also about those issues within their supply chains. In operations, steps like replacing grass landscaping with drought-resistant plants and changing to LED lighting may seem small but can make a significant difference. Our STAR program—Sustainability Technical Assistance Review—helps our warehouses manage energy, water and waste.

While we still have a long way to go, we're learning more, making progress and seeking continuous improvement. One of our sustainability principles is that for Costco to thrive, the world needs to thrive. We remain committed to doing our part. ■

New this year

This year's update of the Sustainability Commitment has some design revisions intended to make navigat-

ing the document easier. If you haven't visited the Sustainability Commitment page, it offers information on everything we do related to sustainability in all elements

of our business: people and communities, operations and merchandise.

Search "Sustainability" on Costco.com to read our Sustainability Commitment.—SF

SPONSORED CONTENT

There for you

Custom Benefit Consultants offers business health insurance

by DAN JONES



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COSTCO CONNECTION

To learn more or to sign up with Custom Benefit Consultants services, visit Costcoquote.com. Browse other insurance offerings at Costco.com by clicking "Services."

Employee insurance plans can keep your team, and your business, healthy and happy.

The *Connection* recently caught up with Ben Hanson, sales manager at Custom Benefit Consultants (CBC), to discuss how the company is helping Costco members with convenient and comprehensive health insurance packages for small and big businesses.

Costco Connection Why is business health insurance important?

Ben Hanson Business health insurance is a key tool business owners can use to recruit and retain employees. Coverage under an employer-sponsored plan typically offers a larger selection of plans and doctor networks to choose from compared to individual plans, and provides peace of mind to employees that their health-related needs are supported. Likewise, most plans have a wide array of resources, including wellness, preventive visits, physical therapy and mental health support.

CC How is Custom Benefit Consultants helping small businesses?

BH We have helped thousands of small businesses find health insurance solutions for their employees at our dedicated online portal: the CBC Health Insurance Marketplace for Costco Members. Members can shop and compare plans, generate a

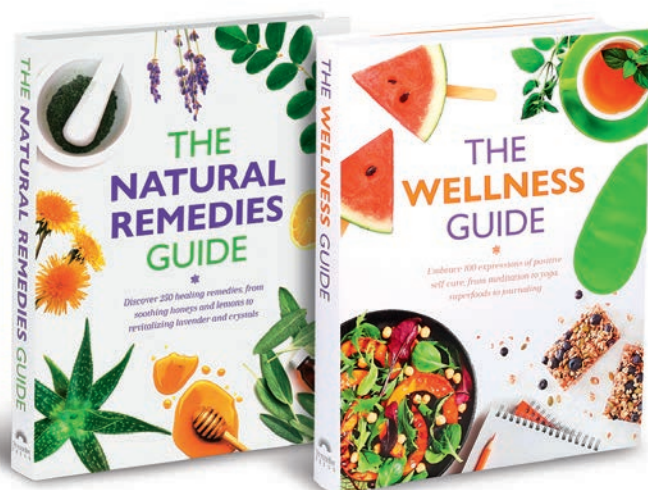
custom proposal and speak with a licensed health care ambassador for personalized support. The technology and resources that we make available help members find the right solution for their businesses.

CC How does CBC serve large businesses?

BH The CBC Health Insurance Marketplace for Costco Members is helping large employer groups to successfully implement effective cost-containment strategies, efficient and time-saving administrative solutions and prescription drug savings. In addition to finding the right plans and rates, large businesses may require a substantial amount of administrative and compliance support. Our platform has been designed to help relieve the administrative burden.

CC What benefits do you offer to Costco members?

BH Members in many states have access to custom medical and dental plans that aren't available anywhere else. Dedicated resources allow small businesses to create a plan online that is specifically tailored to their budget, and all members get a health advocate service along with their plan that assists with coverage issues and access. For large businesses, benefits administration support helps members save on the costs of managing their plans. ■



The Natural Remedies Guide or The Wellness Guide
Flexibound Book

Both books cover wellness and home remedy topics. Learn which herbs can help ease a cold, aid digestion or relieve mental fatigue, or understand meditative techniques to help boost your mental health and discover practical ways to improve social wellness. Item 1707331.

Warehouses only.

Weatherproof Vintage Men's Long-Sleeve Brushed Crew 2-Pack
Stay warm when the temperature drops with this long-sleeve knit crewneck with rib cuffs, flat seams and a tag-free neckline. Color selection varies by warehouse. Sizes: S–XXL. Item 1617614.
Warehouses/Costco.com. Additional sizes available at Costco.com.



The latest Costco finds



Orgain Organic Protein Powder
Peanut Butter Cup

Each serving in the 2.74-lb. tub has 21 grams of plant-based protein, 1 gram of sugar and 5 grams of prebiotics and fiber. Item 1697160. **Warehouses only.**



SCS Smith Cage
Fully Loaded

The Smith Cage System comes with the SCS complete unit, SCS weight bench and SCS preacher curl attachment. It's the best of both worlds, with free weights and a functional trainer machine all in one. **Costconext.com only.**



Ninja® Foodi™ XL Pro Countertop Air Oven

Cook family-size meals on two levels faster than a full-size oven. With True Surround Convection™, flipping food or rotating pans is not required. Ten cooking functions and a digital display on the handle make this oven extremely versatile. Includes two wire racks, two sheet pans, two air-fry baskets and one roast tray. Item 8413025. **Costco.com only.**



Free 2B Ladies' Braided Butter Fleece Jacket

Perfect for colder months or as an effective additional layer, this jacket is made to move with you and provide comfort with textured double-faced Butter Pile®. Colors: Black, cream, purple. Sizes: XS–XXL. Item 1614516 **Warehouses/Costco.com.**



Sur La Table 2-Slice Toaster

This LED touch-screen toaster upgrades any kitchen; wide slots make it easy to toast bread, bagels and pastries. Features include seven toast functions, seven shade settings, single-slice option and removable crumb tray. Item 1693805 **Costco.com only.**

Boston Traders Microfiber All-Purpose Towel 8-Pack

These ultra-soft, durable and highly absorbent microfiber towels are perfect for cleaning in the kitchen or bathroom, plus windows and car surfaces. Also ideal for absorbing water from wet hair or for drying pets. Available in several color palettes. Selection varies by location. Item 1631011. **Warehouses/Costco.com.**



NordicTrack Elite 1000 Treadmill

The 3.0 CHP smart-response motor is ready to power through your toughest workouts, while iFIT technology gives you access to thousands of on-demand workouts with trainers who will lead you toward your fitness goals. A 30-day iFIT® family membership is included. Other features include a 10-inch smart HD touch screen, zero to 12 mph speed control and zero to 12% incline control. Item 2100006. **Warehouses/Costco.com.**

FOR SCHEDULES & DESCRIPTIONS

Go to Costco.com and search “Special Events.” Or, download the Costco mobile app from the Apple or Google Play app store, open the app, click “Savings” and find “Special Events” to view the online items and events schedules.

Sebamed

For over 50 years, Sebamed skin care products have protected sensitive skin by supporting the skin's natural barrier.



Cariloha

Sleep comfier, cooler and cleaner with Cariloha premium bed sheets made of ultra-soft, sustainable viscose derived from bamboo, which naturally repels odors, allergens and bacteria.

A limited-time showcase of exciting products



Ackland Premium Waterproof Flooring

Add durability and style to your home with Ackland waterproof flooring. This worry-free vinyl flooring creates an upscale vibe that is fit for any room in the house, and has an attached acoustic pad and 20-mil wear layer. DIY-friendly and ready to install the same day you purchase it.

WAREHOUSE HOURS

Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–8:30 p.m.
Saturday 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Pharmacy closed Sunday
Costco.com 24 hours a day,
7 days a week



Infinity PR PRO Endurance Percussion Massager

Infinity®, the Ultimate Massage Experience, designs and builds premium-quality, high-performing products for a healthier lifestyle. The Infinity PR PRO Endurance Percussion Massager helps address muscle aches, pain, tension and soreness.



GREG WOODS

GROWING UP

Toy libraries have become a growing trend as parents realize the convenience, sustainability, cost savings and benefits of borrowing toys rather than purchasing them.

There are about 400 toy lending libraries in the United States, according to the USA Toy Lending Association. Visit Usatla.org to find a toy library closest to you.—DJ



BETH JENSEN

The joys of toys

The Toy Lending Library of South Dakota is making every day feel like Christmas for local children. The library (toylendinglibrarysd.org), which was co-founded in 2015 by director Anelis Coscioni, creates opportunities for children up to 5 years of age to enhance their learning development through play. To do that, the nonprofit boxes one or more donated toys and a

book, and circulates them free of charge from 14 locations.

“Our vision is to expand to 100 locations in the state,” says Coscioni, who explains that they check all donated items for recalls and sanitize each item the library lends out. It currently has more than 900 toy boxes in circulation. Coscioni notes, “Since the start of the organization in 2015, our toy boxes have been borrowed or renewed more than 16,000 times.”—*Dan Jones*

Clockwise from top: Toy Lending Library of South Dakota director Anelis Coscioni; 4-year-old Ella Hinrichs at play; Kayla Hinrichs interacts with her daughter at the library.