

Italian Food Contributes To A Healthy Lifestyle

(NAPSA)—Mediterranean food without tomatoes? Never! Or, as they say in Italian: *Non mai!*

“Nothing’s as consistently delicious and convenient as canned tomatoes that have been ripened naturally on the vine,” says Chef Biba Caggiano of Biba’s in Sacramento, California. Referring to recent research that shows levels of the antioxidant lycopene are greatly enhanced in tomatoes that have been canned, the TV chef, author and teacher of Italian cooking adds, “With basic ingredients like canned tomatoes in the pantry, any home cook can quickly prepare Italian food that’s authentic, hearty and healthy.”

Now being coined “the Italian enigma,” the belief that Italian food provides exceptional health benefits was bolstered by a study published recently in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition that suggests that typical Italian ingredients found in pizza, including processed tomato products, may play an important role in protecting against heart disease.

Visit www.californiatomatoes.org for more heart-healthy recipes from Biba’s.

Macaroni with Vodka Sauce (Maccheroni con la Vodka)

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
- 4 slices (4 ounces) pancetta, diced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vodka
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whipping cream
- 1 pound grooved macaroni, such as penne or rigatoni
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

To make tomato sauce, heat oil in medium saucepan over



Canned tomatoes, a staple of Italian cuisine, have enhanced levels of the antioxidant lycopene.

medium heat. Press tomatoes through food mill or sieve and discard seeds. Add tomato pulp to saucepan. Simmer uncovered 15 to 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Melt butter in large skillet. When butter foams, add pancetta. Sauté over medium heat until lightly colored. Add vodka and stir until it has evaporated. Stir in tomato sauce and cream. Simmer uncovered 8 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Fill a very large saucepan two-thirds full with salted water. Bring water to boil. Add macaroni. Return to boil, cooking macaroni uncovered, until tender but firm to the bite, 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and return to skillet with sauce. Toss macaroni and sauce over medium heat until sauce coats macaroni, 20 to 30 seconds. Serve with Parmesan cheese.

Serves 4 to 6

Adapted from Biba’s “Northern Italian Cooking.” 2002. By Biba Caggiano, HP Books.