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## Life in LAMORINDA

### Culinary Art at Artisan Bistro, Lafayette

By Linda U. Foley



Chef/Owner John Marquez, right

Photo Linda U. Foley

New places and good eats are the top of the news in foody Lamorinda. Artisan Bistro is the newest iteration of a quaint, historic building and California/French cuisine in Lafayette. This is Chef John Marquez's—a local boy with a culinary degree from DVC—first restaurant. Just opened in March, his reputation already defines him in terms of organic local produce and creative cooking. To produce everything in house eventually—from butter and ice cream to bread—is the Bistro's artisan focus.

I don't have a reservation, but the young waitress graciously seats me on the sun porch. It is lunch time

and busy. The building has received a facelift outside and in. Colorful Picasso-esque artwork (by the Chef's uncle John Earl) hangs on the Bistro's mustard colored walls which, unfortunately, are not sound proofed. The erstwhile Kaffee Barbara and the subsequent Gigi's had the same noise issue, however, to many, din in is as in "instant atmosphere." Probably not good for a quiet romantic outing, unless you're into texting.

The good sized wait staff dressed in licorice and brandy-wine—I mean, black and burgundy—adroitly wends its way between the closely spaced tables.

Artisan Bistro, 1005 Brown St., Lafayette, 925-962-0882

When my coffee arrives, I am pleased to see that it is French press and hot, not two things that often happen simultaneously. Cream arrives eventually.

I try to make a selection from the interesting menu but feel slightly distracted "eavesdropping" on so many conversations. I take a look at the plates passing me by all of which look intriguing and artfully displayed. A scramble of gapping slick mussels. Plump, succulent, marinated beets. A star burst of endive and frisee salad. A dark round chocolate cake with an explosion of something white and rich curling above. Usually saving my calories for either wine or dessert, I taste the bread which arrives in a nifty bronze wire basket. But my European taste buds crinkle snobbishly at the soft baguette lacking character. Probably something to be corrected in due time.

The menu offers an array of dishes from artichoke soup with marcona almond and mint pesto, to monkfish wrapped in bacon. I decide on lighter fare and order the baby spinach salad with anchovies and then goat cheese cake. Love the white anchovies, my favorite, and wished there'd been more, vinaigrette was very light and the homemade crou-

tons most plentiful. The cheese cake looked like something one would see on the cover of Bon Appetit. While too pretty to eat, I'd expected a different crust, and the "goat" deceptively tasted like cream cheese.

I meet Marquez in a kitchen which, in my view, is just big enough to cook for a normal-sized family. The heat is staggering but, amazingly, everyone keeps their cool and no one collides with each other entering and leaving the kitchen like figures rotating on a cuckoo clock. Chef John Marquez appears to be too young to have carved such a resounding culinary career path which includes Bridges, Picasso (Las Vegas) the French Laundry, Per Se (N.Y.), Coi and Fringale in San Francisco.

The restaurant seats about 60 inside and about 40 on the patio which would probably receive a lift from some plantings. Lunch and dinner menus are similar; the latter includes herb crusted rack of lamb (\$25) and rib eye steak (26). A favorite appears to be croque-madames and croque-monsieurs, a classic French sandwich of toasted bread, jambon de Paris ham and a mild Gruyere. For more information including a solid wine list go to <http://artisanlafayette.com/home.html>.



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### Summer Heat, Sports and Nutrition

"When you're thirsty it's too late to think about digging a well" Japanese Proverb

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis, D.C., M.S.

As we head into the intensity of summer sun and look to have fun, it's wise to have both common sense and access to knowledge from studies of exercising in warm temperatures. Let's outline a few basic nutrition pointers for athletes, weekend warriors, and families:

**• Dehydration**

Most people are slightly dehydrated, especially if coffee and alcohol are on their list of daily consumed beverages. It's a little known fact that fluid loss of as little as 2% of body mass cause changes in body temperature. Unfortunately, the sensation of thirst often lags behind the hydration levels needed for health and good athletic performance. Water may be an adequate replacement fluid for shorter events, but for longer ones a good electrolyte, carbohydrate and protein replacement drink is much better. Studies show that pre-exercise hyperhydration can significantly improve endurance and performance. Note though, that it is also harmful to drink excessive water, which can cause a dangerous condition known as hyponatremia. How much is enough and not too much? One way is to observe your urine output. If it is dark yellow, there is probably dehydration. If the urine is light yellow and no weight loss of over 2% after exercise, fluid intake is probably at a good level. Weight gain after exercise and symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, headache and malaise are symptoms of hyponatremia, which demands medical attention. Electrolyte sports drinks, when consumed moderately, can balance body fluids and help maintain energy. Some of those drinks are healthier than others (hint: look for ones without a litany of dyes, ar-

tificial flavors and colors). The critical key here though, is moderation and monitoring of symptoms.

**• Magnesium** – Many adults do not consume even the RDA (350 mg. elemental) for magnesium, but

amino acids in a sports beverage. Among the preferred forms are branched-chain amino acids (valine, leucine, and isoleucine), which readily convert into fuel and therefore help spare muscle breakdown. In the critical two hour time period after exercise, studies have shown that refueling with both carbohydrates and protein results in significantly greater muscle gain and recuperation than with carbohydrates alone.

Other considerations regarding muscle building and repair include the body's ability to digest protein. If one of your goals of exercise is muscle building and it is not happening, digestive enzymes may help.

Summer fun is what great memories are made of. Add to that fun by following sunscreen advice and keeping yourself healthy from a nutrition perspective!

this mineral plays a critical part in over 300 chemical reactions in the body. Some symptoms of magnesium deficiency are migraines, muscle cramps, PMS, joint pain, palpitations, and anxiety. Exercise further depletes magnesium stores, but most sports drinks don't include it because it can cause diarrhea. The average American diet is deficient, since magnesium is found in small amounts in nuts, seeds, vegetables and whole grains. The solution? Supplement with an absorbable form such as magnesium glycinate, aspartate or chelated magnesium. When inspecting a supplement bottle, note that the "elemental magnesium" amount listed is the relevant number. Taking 400 to 600 mg. of elemental magnesium in divided doses can alleviate deficiencies; consult with a nutritionist or medical doctor if you have any pre-existing conditions.

**• Protein** – Muscles can break down during exercise and be converted to sugar for the brain's energy supplies. This muscle protein can provide up to 10% of the energy of sustained exercise if not prevented. To avoid this situation, supplement via small amounts of



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