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Our favorites alfresco

We recently asked a select group of Urban Times neighbors to describe their favorite alfresco dining experiences, so that contributing editor Kim Galeaz, a professional nutrition expert, could use the neighbors' ideas as the basis of her latest commentary. This feature is the result.

BY KIM GALEAZ

I ENVY ALL OF YOU WHO CAN EASILY IDENTIFY A FAVORITE ALFRESCO dining experience. Favorite implies one choice and I just can't narrow it down. It could be making homemade ice cream in the electric cedar ice cream-maker on my front porch, but then I remember hot dogs at the ballpark.

And eating homegrown tomatoes right off the vine standing on my back deck. And sitting on the back porch with Jeff, my eating, drinking and exercise partner, sipping Amarone wine and nibbling on three different cheeses with whole grain crackers. They're all favorites because they bring immense pleasure and enjoyment.

Seems like a lot of Downtown neighborhood folks are enjoying their food and dining experiences, too, at least in the summertime. This thrills me because food enjoyment and pleasure seem to be missing for so many nutrition-obsessed consumers today. Join me as I share tidbits, trivia and practical tips about dining alfresco Downtown, based on the ideas of some Urban Times readers:

Blissfully watching the morning rush hour traffic whiz by, Bob Kennedy of the Old Northside has breakfast at Henry's On East Street, while his wife, Sheila, reads the newspaper. ►



Jay Parks of Cottage Home: *Here in Cottage Home I really enjoy edible flowers from the many gardens. Nasturtiums are peppery and spicy and the flowers are delicious stuffed with cream cheese. Pansies make great decorations for salads and cakes, and are tasty by themselves. Tuberous begonia flowers have an acid almost lemony flavor. Flowers that grow on salsify or oyster plant are good in Oriental stir fries. My partner is turned off by eating flowers, and tends to scoot the chive blossoms to the side when I include them with a salad. Flowers are usually high in vitamins and tasty, as well as visually stunning, and if you garden organically, you can probably eat blooms right out of your own garden.*

Jay definitely gets the award for most unique and unusual alfresco idea with edible flowers. Visually stunning? Undoubtedly. Tasty? Most likely. High in vitamins? Hmm..... in all my years as a registered dietitian, I don't believe I've ever seen nutrient composition databases on edible flowers. The Purdue Extension Service didn't have anything on edible flowers. Apparently not many Hoosiers eat flowers. I would be one of them, tending to view flowers exactly like Jay's partner. The Colorado Extension Service stated edible flowers can be good sources of vitamins and minerals but didn't list which vitamins. So I checked the USDA's database and although I couldn't find Jay's specific varieties, I did find pumpkin flowers. One pumpkin flower contains zero calories, a trace of Vitamin C and 39

IU Vitamin A. (The daily value for Vitamin A is 5000 IU). If you eat a whole cup of pumpkin flowers, you'll rack up 5 calories, 9 mg Vitamin C and a whopping 13 percent of your daily value for Vitamin A. I doubt any of this vitamin enlightenment will sway Jay's partner. Me either. Oh, and I do hope Jay is stuffing those Nasturtiums with reduced-fat, light cream cheese and not full fat.

Clay Miller of Chatham Arch: *Hands down, my favorite alfresco dining Downtown is the annual fish fry at the Roberts Park United Methodist Church, typically held on a Thursday and Friday in mid-September. For several years running, I've strolled over at midday with friends from my office on Meridian Street and dined at one of the tables set up under the largest tree in the mile square. For well under \$10, one can have a fish sandwich, coleslaw, chips, a drink and a homemade cookie or brownie, or opt as I do for two fish sandwiches and a drink for the same price. The lovely setting draws a steady crowd in good weather, including several police officers and firemen and firewomen, but any line moves quickly thanks to the efficient volunteers from the church.*

You know my philosophy: eating fried foods is perfectly fine every now and then. And since this fish fry is only once a year, that definitely fits in the every-now-and-then category. But I'm wondering why Clay doesn't want that nutrient-rich coleslaw. Even if it's made with full-fat and caloric mayon-



**Urban Times
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enjoy
dining (and
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outdoors.
Our
dietitian
rates their
choices**

◀ Fred Hash enjoys cooking out on the roof of the six-story Lockerbie Grove Co. condominium building.

ALFRESCO DINING / page 3

naise, the cabbage is chockfull of disease-fighting nutrients and antioxidants. And no cookie or brownie?! Well, normally I'd say never pass up a brownie, but in this case, Clay is practicing discipline and moderation because he's indulging in two fish sandwiches. He could go ahead and have a brownie along with the two sandwiches if he just picked up the pace on that stroll over from Meridian Street and even walked a few blocks out of his way for extra calorie-burning steps.

Micci Richardson and Duane Henry of Chatham Arch:

Our favorite is wine while sitting in the gazebo in our own yard in Chatham Arch.

After reading everyone's entries for this alfresco dining piece, I can say one thing for sure. There is a LOT of wine drinking going on in our Downtown neighborhoods! Good thing wine contains natural grape components (resveratrol) that can help keep your heart healthy. Hopefully Micci and Duane are drinking more reds, because reds have more resveratrol than white and also contain anthocyanins, powerful antioxidants. But all this wine-drinking made me think about the dietary guidelines recommendation for "consuming alcoholic beverages in moderation." The recommendation is one drink daily for women and two for men. That would be one or two measly 4- to 5-ounce glasses of wine daily. I find that amusing, since two people usually share one entire bottle.

Frank and Marsha Hanou of Lockerbie Square:

Ahhhhh, combining good food and drink with music in a beautiful setting. Thursday nights at the "Concerts on the Canal" series at the Indiana History Center. Sitting in our lawn chairs in the grass overlooking the canal, listening to great music with the summer sun in our faces. Some beer and wine go well with the appetizers – smoked oysters and/or sardines with cheese and crackers. Nothing particularly healthy, but a great way to spend a summer evening in Downtown Indy.

Another wine lover. I'm so excited to tell Frank and Marsha that their smoked oysters and sardines are indeed healthy. In fact, they contain more heart, brain and eye protective omega-3 fatty acids than all other fish except for mackerel and salmon. As for cheese, well, I know the regular versions are high in total fat and saturated fat, but look at the bright side. You're getting bone-building calcium and protein. Besides, only full-fat, decadent cheeses are allowed when combined with wine. Save the reduced-fat light versions for recipes and cooking. The crackers? I'll bet/hope Frank and Martha are choosing only whole-grain crackers for maximum fiber and nutrients.

Marjorie Kienle of Lockerbie Square: *Could not have a backyard cookout without brats from Claus' German Sausage & Meats (Fountain Square area) –best in the city. They also sell imported German beers. Our son, Andy, once asked Claus which was the best and he said, "Ahhh, it depends on the time of day and the mood you are in!"*

I sure do hope Marjorie serves those sausages on whole-wheat buns and plenty of sauerkraut, sautéed bell peppers and onions. Ever the practical and realistic dietitian, I think serving plenty of these cancer- and heart-disease-fighting vegetables

along with sausage somehow justifies the fat excess. You absolutely *must* serve German beer any time hearty stone-ground mustard is present. Moderate drinking for beer translates to one or two 12-ounce beers. Oh, and the darker the beer, the higher the calories.

Randy Jones of Ransom Place: *Eating South Bend Chocolate Co. ice cream on the steps of Monument Circle (and people-watching); enjoying a sea salt chocolate or dark chocolate-covered pretzel from Best Chocolate in Town while walking Mass Ave on a First Friday; corn on the cob, lemon shake-ups, elephant ears and Italian sausage – all while walking round the loop of the Indiana State Fair. (And our dog enjoys a walk to Three Dog Bakery on Mass Ave for a doggie bagel).*

I'll bet Randy prefers those dark chocolate candies and pretzels because he knows dark chocolate contains far more antioxidants than milk chocolate. Glad to hear he walks around the State Fair loop, too, so he can work off some of those indulgent State Fair calories. Since the State Fair rolls around only once a year, you should go ahead and (over)indulge in whatever you want. I'm making the assumption, of course, that you go only once or twice. If you're there daily, you'd better walk the State Fair loop at least two hundred times to compensate for the excess calories. But no matter how often you go, make sure you celebrate the good in everything. Corn on the cob – high in fiber and nutrients for healthy vision. Lemon shake-ups – high in antioxidant Vitamin C. Elephant ears – well that's pure enjoyment of fat, sugar and more fat and sugar.

Fred Hash of Lockerbie Square: *I like to cook out on the Lockerbie Glove rooftop deck, with some wine for health reasons, and topped off with my homemade key lime pie.*

And yet more wine drinking. Fred's Key lime pie is rich in the antioxidant Vitamin C and other nutrients that can help maintain healthy vision. And when you're going to enjoy a dessert as decadent as key lime pie, I wouldn't worry about topping it with an extra dollop of whipped cream.

Cheryl Strain of the Old Northside: *Jim and I love sipping a dry French rose in our courtyard. It's delicious with tapenade on crostini. Close your eyes and you're back to Provence.*

More wine drinking. Tapenade is a thick paste made from capers, anchovies, ripe olives, olive oil, lemon juice and seasonings. All that unsaturated-type fat from the olives and olive oil is protecting Cheryl's heart. I realize it's probably difficult and unrealistic to serve whole wheat crostini, but that's okay. Only half your grains daily need to be whole. I'm just a little too over eager when it comes to whole grains.

Jim Strain of the Old Northside: *I love sitting in the outside patio area of the Chatterbox Jazz Club and having a campari and soda while listening to the latest gossip and chatter from friends and neighbors. Second, there is no more elegant evening I can think of than being with my wife, Cheryl, in our courtyard area in the Old Northside, dining on wild caught*

King Salmon or fresh halibut, perhaps cooked on a cedar plank, and enjoying either a Merry Edwards Sauvignon Blanc or Merry Edwards Klopp Ranch Pinot Noir.

And more wine drinking. One of the best things about neighbors is all the new things you can learn. I had never heard of Campari but learned it's a popular bitter, bright red Italian aperitif, often mixed with soda. It has an astringent, bittersweet flavor. Glad to hear Jim enjoys omega-3 rich salmon and halibut, but he didn't mention what else he serves with it. I'm suspecting/hoping he grills some vegetables and even peaches or pineapple over that cedar plank, too.

Bob Kennedy of the Old

Northside: *Scrambled egg croissant for breakfast while watching the morning "rush" on East Street in front of Henry's coffeehouse.*

Bob gets a star for simply *eating* breakfast. It's the number-one most skipped meal for adults and kids. But I'll only give him a silver star because that croissant is loaded with saturated fat (butter and more butter.) I'm sure he only gets the croissant "once in while" and most of the time orders a bagel, English muffin or whole grain toast sandwich. Oh, and we all should consider eating more eggs for breakfast as they provide satisfying and filling protein along with natural components for healthy eyes. Don't forget the juice or some fruit to round your breakfast meal.

Mike Garber of Lockerbie Square: *A bone-in rib-eye from Goose the Market, Meredith's béarnaise sauce, button mushrooms from Mallies, grilled asparagus from the City Market's Farmers Market, an Argentinean Malbec from Mass Ave Wine Shop, and something sweet from that little chocolate shop next door. Of course, all related calories are burned-off in advance by having biked the Downtown food loop.*

Even more wine drinking. Mike has this whole-balance thing down pat by combining lots of exercise with decadent higher-calorie eating. Even though a rib-eye is one of the highest fat cuts of beef, it's my favorite steak for grilling, too. More marbling and fat means more flavor. Mike continues his balance theme by serving plenty of antioxidant-rich asparagus and the newest super-food veggie – mushrooms. They are the only natural fresh vegetable or fruit with Vitamin D. Plus they contain selenium, a powerful antioxidant.

Meredith Garber of Lockerbie Square: *We really enjoy chilas (Mexican beer like Sol in a glass with lime juice, ice and a salted rim) and Mike's fresh salsa and guacamole on the deck after work watching the 5 p.m. traffic speed home. We*



Photo by Jace Harper

▲ Lee Ann Harper enjoys sipping beverages on her Woodruff Place veranda, watching neighbors walk their dogs on the sidewalk below.

always laugh and say, "If you lived here, you'd be home now." I'm also especially fond of the hotdog vendor at University Park. I can't think of a nicer place to enjoy a dog, unless it's at the ballpark.

Hot dogs do seem better at the ballpark, don't they? But since ballparks and fairs serve only the full-fat versions, I'm sure if Meredith cooks hotdogs at home, she opts for the reduced-fat, light versions. Here's why: one regular hot dog contains between 12 and 20 grams of fat. A light version has between 5 and 9, usually. Meredith and Mike are getting lots of cancer-fighting lycopene from the salsa (tomatoes) and heart-healthy fat in the guacamole (avocados).

Tiffany Benedict Berkson of Herron-Morton Place: *Last summer, a bunch of friends would come over on the weekends to hang out in my back yard, since I have a pool. My neighbor, Emilee, got me hooked on quartered strips of zucchini tossed in olive oil, salt and pepper, maybe some dried herbs and grilled on the barbecue. Slices of heaven!*

Sometimes the simplest foods are the best and Tiffany's neighbor knows this well. Grilling zucchini, summer yellow squash, eggplant and even asparagus is easy and extremely flavorful. Just prepare it exactly like Emilee does. Don't stress about all the olive oil you'll use to grill vegetables either; your body really does need fat.

Martin J. Wagner of Chatham Arch: *Sitting in Victory Field watching the Indianapolis Indians while enjoying a frosty cold Miller Lite on a Friday night; enjoying a half-priced martini on a Thursday night at the Scholars Inn outdoor patio; people-watching outside of Starbucks on Mass Ave while enjoying*

an iced coffee.

I sure do hope Martin eats some nutrient-rich peanuts-in-the-shell while he's drinking that frosty cold beer at Victory Field. He'll probably be glad to hear that his coffee beverage actually contains phenolic acid, antioxidants that can contribute to a healthy heart and healthy vision.

Lee Ann Harper of Woodruff Place: *My most frequent alfresco experience is a glass of wine on the veranda of my house in Woodruff Place. Either a pinot noir or a cabernet, preferably. During the week, I keep the quantity to just one glass...usually. The 12x7-foot space is outfitted simply, with just a wicker couch and chair, but the view is stunning. The forest of trees against a blue sky, the blooming esplanade with gurgling fountains, and neighbors walking their dogs and waving hello all make for the perfect blood-pressure-lowering experience. With my wine, I can read the newspaper or a good book, or just breathe in the outdoors after a work day in my windowless office. I have even added patio lights and lots of candles so that I can read well into dusk. It is my favorite place to enjoy the outdoors and I usually have the space all to myself.*

On warm mornings, I also enjoy my coffee and newspaper there. And the veranda's second-floor location means I can stay in my pajamas!

Back to more wine drinking. Lee Ann totally understands the "consuming alcohol in moderation" concept though, since she admits to just one glass a night during the week. Usually. And while eating more fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy foods have been scientifically proven to lower blood pressure, Lee Ann knows first hand the positive impact relaxation can have on your health.

Roy and Tree Hedeon of Lockerbie Square: *When we want to take advantage of our back yard at the end of a long day we love to sit out back and drink a glass of wine. We have found our new favorite wine to also be one of the most inexpensive available. Sutter Home White Merlot is a great light red wine that is good to both sip on its own or complement a meal. If we are in the mood for a light dinner there is nothing better than a stuffed baked potato. We will microwave the potato, roll it in a potato aluminum foil wrap, cut it open and add a variety of ingredients. Butter, sour cream, real bacon bits, cheese and our favorite, chives cut fresh from our herb garden.*

And...more wine drinking. In my dietitian-opinion, there are a few specific foods that must have massive amounts of butter and/or sour cream (i.e., fat and more fat). Those would be corn on the cob, mashed potatoes and a baked potato. Roy and Tree will be delighted to know those homegrown chives are packed with powerful natural phytonutrients that help keep your heart and immune system healthy. Plus, the potato itself is rich in potassium, Vitamin C and fiber.

Ann Moore of Chatham Arch: *For many years I have eaten, alfresco, at this Downtown place located in Fountain Square. As a matter of fact, "in the open air" is the only way*

to eat there – the place has no inside seating; no outside seats, either. Appropriately, this tiny place is open only during warm months.

This menu is easily memorized; I usually know what to order long before arriving: Reese's peanut butter cup blizzard; hot fudge sundae with nuts, whipped cream and cherry; dilly bar; chocolate-dipped cone. You guessed it! Dairy Queen. Home to childhood nostalgia, warm evenings, bare feet on hot pavement, your cone dripping down your arm.

Does Ann really order all four of those items in one visit?! She said she knows what to order before she visits and then proceeded to list four items. Is her Blizzard a small, medium or large? My head is spinning. I hope/suspect she exerts extreme moderation and discipline at DQ and orders just one treat per visit...but visits many times during the summer. Ann must not be aware of that concrete slab bench on the left side of the DQ. That's where Jeff and I sit and enjoy every bite of our medium blizzards. We tried to downsize last year to a small, but we're just too darn gluttonous. Using Ann's favorite Reese's blizzard as an example, this is how much we'd all save just by downsizing:

- ☐ Small – 550 calories, 22 grams fat.
- ☐ Medium – 770 calories, 32 grams fat.
- ☐ Large – 1080 calories, 46 grams fat.

Tom and Joann Ulsas of Lockerbie Square: *We like a medley of our own garden-produced veggies on the grill or as a salad. They include onions, leaf lettuce, radishes, tomatoes, bell peppers and zucchini. It's fun knowing that these vegetables are organic and didn't require any gasoline to get them delivered.*

Sounds like Tom and Joann are great role models for the "Fruits and Veggies: More Matters" campaign; that's the new slogan replacing "5-A-Day." But even better, they are helping reduce their carbon footprint by growing their own produce. Hmm...I wonder if they'll have an overabundance of zucchini at the end of the season and share it with their non-gardening downtown neighbors?

Jeff Cowsert of Chatham Arch: *My favorite outdoor dining experience would be in my own little private backyard that consists of shade trees, privacy fencing, brick patio, strings of low wattage-lights hung from cables spanning across the yard, water feature, lots of perennials, some cocoa bean mulch and my own herb garden. The evening would begin around 7 p.m. with friends joining for a unique wine from Mass Ave Wine Shoppe or a bottle of my own homemade wine from the cellar (some of my friends like it, or at least pretend to / some do not). If wine isn't the flavor of the evening, then mojitos made with my own mint is always a hit. Grilling would start around 8 p.m. The menu would consist of a lettuce salad that would have a fruit or two mixed in, then topped with raspberry vinaigrette. The entrée could be thick cheeseburgers or chicken, corn on the cob, and Caprese salad (the tomatoes and basil home-grown). If trying to keep a lower calorie menu, then dessert would simply be a little sherbet. If in the mood to really*

indulge, the dessert would be vanilla ice cream with a brownie and fudge. Either would be garnished with mint from the herb garden.

That Jeff, he sure is ambitious. Growing his own herbs and tomatoes *and* making his own wine! Apparently he's a stickler for time, too. Wine and appetizers at 7 pm, grilling at 8 pm. All I want to know is what time is dessert so I can pop over. And it better be the ice cream/brownie/hot fudge night. Forget this lower calorie cookout stuff. Oh, and I do hope Jeff's cheeseburgers are made with ground chuck instead of extra lean ground beef. Yes I know, ground chuck is higher in fat than I'd normally recommend (85 lean 15 fat is my guideline and ground chuck is 80/20 typically), but a fattier ground beef makes a much more flavorful burger. Jeff and his guests can indulge in higher fat, higher calorie choices because he does such a beautiful job of providing balance from all the food groups at his cookouts: fruits, vegetables, grains and meat. And I'll lay odds that he serves that cheeseburger on a whole wheat bun.

Dorothy L. Ilgen of Lockerbie Square: *Petite Chou in Broad Ripple; the cafe chairs in front of Goose the Market on North Delaware Street; the Dairy Queen on Prospect Street in Fountain Square (sitting in your car, eating a buster bar).*

I wonder what Dorothy eats while she's sitting outside at Goose the Market. Maybe it's The Batalia, a standout Italian sandwich according to the August issue of Bon Appetit magazine (Congrats to Chris and Molly for getting mentioned in Bon Appetit!) Back to that Buster Bar at DQ. It's a great choice because it has nutrient-rich peanuts and, in case you're curious, it contains only 480 calories and 31 grams of fat. Wait. That's nearly half the fat recommended on a 2,000 calorie diet (65 grams). Oh well. Remember, we should eat some foods just for sheer pleasure.

Maribeth Bailey of Cottage Home: *How about a nice glass of white wine with some cheese and fruit – on the rooftop of the Fountain Square Theatre Building.*

Another wine lover. Healthy cheese and fruit, too.

Andrea Jackson of Lockerbie Square: *Sitting on the roof top at Lockerbie Flats with a bottle of white wine and cheese cubes with my wonderful neighbors in the building.*

More wine drinking and cheese eating. Don't forget the fruit! Hmmm....Wine. Rooftops. I sure do hope those rooftops have railings.

Emilie Colzani of Lockerbie Square: *A must for us every Thursday evening are the Concerts on the Canal at the Indiana History Center. We usually take our own picnic with ingredients purchased at the Farmer's Market the day before. A must is red sangria. To any bottle of red wine we add two sliced, peeled peaches, a peeled and sliced orange and lemon, two tablespoons of sugar, and four tablespoons of apricot brandy. It's best to marinate the fruit a day or two before you're going to serve the wine. On really hot days we add sparkling water to the sangria. We've been attending the concerts for years and*

have made friends with some of the regulars there. It's a great venue.

Here's to more wine drinking with a fruit twist. A red wine Sangria like Emilie's contains more heart-healthy ingredients than a white wine sangria (Sangria blanco), but both are a cool, refreshing summertime beverage and a great way to use up fresh fruits.

Monice Leeuw of Lockerbie Square: *The ultimate alfresco experience is chunks of warmed brie over O'Malia's/Marsh's French bread, a platter of sweet grapes, and a glass of good Chardonnay – by candlelight on our patio with hushed strains of big band or American standards coming from inside, while catching up with an old friend.*

Wine drinking again. Monice's nibbling choices with her Chardonnay are very balanced: bread from the grain group, cheese from the dairy group and grapes from the fruit group. In fact, the only way I'd boost the nutrients is serve whole grain bread.

Julie Rhodes of Cottage Home: *During these lazy days of summer, we have been enjoying our old antique wooden table a great deal for spreading out meals of all sorts. Whether we are picking strawberries from the berry patch that lines the patio, or breaking off a stalk of broccoli from the backyard garden, everything just tastes better sitting leisurely on the old granite curbstones that make up our deck. A veggie burger – with fresh baked burger buns, a nice sliced tomato, a sliver of Vidalia onion, a crunchy organic pickle, a freshly plucked leaf of lettuce – has so much flavor when eaten in the backyard with a side of fried sweet potatoes and barely steamed broccoli. Of course there is nothing to compare than eating a buttery piece of corn on the cob outdoors, or better yet, a juicy slice of Posey County watermelon. Eating outdoors requires fewer napkins and allows for more “dripping.” And, when it's all said and done, we enjoy walking directly to the backyard compost pile and adding that peel or core or cob into the mix to start creating new, rich humus for next year's garden –where we'll do it all over again.*

Ah, watermelon. It's about time someone mentioned that as a favorite. It's perfect for outdoor eating because you can be as sloppy and messy as you want and have plenty of “dripping” room as Julie calls it. Men listen up: watermelon is the lycopene leader when it comes to fresh fruits and vegetables. Lycopene is a natural component that has been scientifically proven to lower prostate cancer risk. You'll find lycopene in not only watermelon, but tomatoes (cooked and processed tomatoes contain far more lycopene than fresh tomatoes) and red and pink grapefruit. I wonder if Julie makes her own veggie burgers or buys one of the many, great-tasting frozen or refrigerated varieties. No matter what form, it most likely has far less fat, saturated fat and no cholesterol compared to regular all-meat burgers.

John Kinsella of Chatham Arch: *The rotating Chatham Arch dinner club in the summer, wherever it is. What a neighborhood! Edible landscape from our yard; a breakfast of*

berries from an Amelanchier (serviceberry) grove on top of Traders Point yogurt and granola (before the birds process and redeposit them). And for dinner, daylily buds in a salad. Also, hot dog and beer at Victory Field (the presentation is not outstanding, it's all about the ambience). A great German brew (Optimator) and brat and music in the Athenaeum Biergarten. How often have I been at a great place like that while traveling the world and said "Wouldn't it be great if we had a place like this in our neighborhood?" A great martini at the Scholars Inn patio (after that I don't remember the food but it must have been good because I was grinning).

Hey! Another edible flower eater! And a fellow breakfast eater, too. A gold star goes to John for his balanced breakfast choices: calcium-rich yogurt (dairy), fiber-rich granola (whole grain) and fresh berries (fruit). Wish I'd been on the patio the last time I had a martini(s) at Scholars Inn. Instead I was upstairs on the second floor on a bar stool and after two high-octane martinis, I sat frozen, wondering how I'd get out of the stool safely without embarrassing myself or banging my head open.

Don and Kathy Willing of Lockerbie Square: *Tea's Me Café is intimate, charming and delicious. Paninis come with a mixed greens salad and either chips or the best potato salad you've eaten since Grandma stopped bringing it to the family reunions. Of course the feature is the expansive selection of teas – hot or iced. Carrot cake and other delicacies are irresistible. The patio is entered from the Café and has six shiny stainless steel tables. An awning is anchored between the two brick buildings. Landscaping includes a water interest and Arts and Crafts decorative lights. Two speakers provide soft music. Our favorite panini is the tuna melt with lettuce and tomato.*

I'm so excited Don and Kathy can't resist that carrot cake. It contains a hefty dose of antioxidants from the carrots and if it contains nuts, that's even better because they're getting some trace minerals and heart-healthy fat. Their favorite panini is made with tuna, rich in omega-3 fatty acids for better heart, eye and brain health. (I hope it's served on whole grain bread.) Don and Kathy's mention of hot or iced tea made me realize not one Downtowner said Southern-style Sweet Tea was their favorite alfresco beverage. I guess we're all too busy drinking wine. Sweet or unsweetened, green or black, all teas are filled with powerful antioxidants for better health. Potato salad is a Vitamin C-rich summertime tradition and it's even more nutritious if the skins are left on the potatoes. That means more fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Kimberly Key, Jacob Miller and Lauren Miller of Chatham Arch: *There is nothing better than a root beer float on a hot summer evening, sitting in our rocking chairs on our own front porch in Chatham Arch. The root beer float specifically is made from Homemade brand Vanilla Bean ice cream and Stewart's root beer from a glass bottle. The experience includes walking and visiting neighbors, lightening bugs and a pick-up soccer game across the street with all the neighborhood kids. Most importantly it must be enjoyed during one of those endless summer evenings.*

Kimberley's root beer float is the perfect no-cooking-required summertime dessert. Open, pour, scoop, drink. If she makes those floats with calorie-free diet root instead of regular, she can pack more ice cream in the glass! Assuming, of course, that it's a light ice cream with no more than 4 grams fat in a serving. A regular ice cream could have between 8 and 20 grams fat per serving. And speaking of serving sizes, do you actually know what the suggested ice cream serving size of half-cup looks like? Just once, pull out the measuring cups and scoop up a half-cup of ice cream. It's a great way to get a good laugh, because the typical bowl of ice cream you and I scoop is about 1½ cups of ice cream – three times the suggested serving size. Which is perfectly fine in my book as long as you enjoy every last bite. No guilt. No regret. And remember to take walks to visit the neighbors, catch lightening bugs and maybe even join in a neighborhood soccer game with Kimberley, Jacob and Lauren.

Happy, healthy summertime to all my neighbors! ■

Kim Galeaz, a Chatham Arch resident, is a registered and certified dietitian. She is a freelance food and nutrition writer and consultant to the food and beverage industry.