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A healthy twist
on holiday favorites

Exploring the world of
winter traditions

The advantages of collagen
are more than skin deep

Unique gifts you'll
be glad to give

in this issue of
grin!

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



A healthy twist on holiday favorites

Cozying up with these festive flavors will surely make you smile. Try better-for-you versions of tasty drinks and learn about their surprising benefits.

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- 7 Readers ask, we answer: Is red wine bad for my teeth?
- 11 Do your holiday meals make your teeth happy?

NEWS + RESEARCH



The advantages of collagen are more than skin deep

Collagen benefits your body — including your gums — in many ways. See why you may want to supply your body more of it through diet and supplements.

- 4 On topic with Dr. Dill: it's time for a gut check (literally) about your oral health
- 17 Dental coverage equals a good value

FUN + INSPIRATION



Unique gifts you'll be glad to give

It can be tricky to find the perfect present, especially for someone who has everything. Need some inspiration? Discover these fun gift ideas.

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grin![®] more

Visit the *Grin!* website for more ways to keep your smile healthy.



View web-exclusive content, videos and more!

FUN + INSPIRATION

WELLNESS + NUTRITION



5 fascinating dental jobs you may not know about

There's more to the dental profession than you see at your dentist's office. Find out about those who work to improve oral health, help solve crimes and more.



3 great reasons to get a dental checkup

When it comes to your dental benefits, are you leaving money on the table? See how scheduling a dental exam can benefit your budget and your health.

Access the digital version anytime, anywhere at grinmag.com.



On topic with Dr. Dill: it's time for a gut check (literally) about your oral health

It may be called gut health but it actually concerns your whole body. Research links your gut to oral health issues like gum disease and other conditions such as anxiety and depression. It's even been associated with autoimmune diseases, when the body attacks its own healthy tissues.

Maintaining a healthy balance of bacteria is the key to good gut health. The bacteria in your gut help your body digest food, absorb nutrients, keep your pH balanced and defend against diseases. The gut also plays a critical role in your body's immune response.

Your gut and mouth can become unhealthy due to several conditions such as being under a lot of stress, not getting enough sleep or eating too much sugar. Signs of an unhealthy gut may include an upset stomach, weight changes, insomnia, heartburn or diarrhea.



Meet Delta Dental's Vice President of Dental Science and Network Strategy, Joseph Dill, DDS. With more than 30 years of experience in the dental field, including eight in private practice and 16 in dental insurance, Dr. Dill provides expert insights and helpful advice to keep you smiling bright.

ABOUT 1 IN 5 AMERICANS HAVE DIGESTIVE DISORDERS
such as acid reflux or irritable bowel syndrome.¹

An unhealthy gut can't do its job of protecting and defending the rest of your body, including your mouth. That's because bad bacteria in your gut or mouth can spread to other areas of your body and increase your risk of health problems, including heart, respiratory and autoimmune diseases.

Improve your gut and oral health



Stay hydrated with water.

This will help balance the good bacteria in your gut and keep your mouth clean.



Eat fruits and vegetables.

Packed with fiber, produce can lower inflammation, benefitting your gut and mouth.



Try probiotics.

Taken as a supplement or eaten in foods such as yogurt, these can help maintain a healthy balance of bacteria.



Exercise daily.

Moving your body can help you avoid stress-related problems such as stomach pain and teeth grinding.



Get enough sleep.

Allowing your body to recharge is good for all aspects of your health.

Check with your physician or dentist if you're experiencing acid reflux or other discomfort in your gut. They can recommend a solution that's right for you. ■

Mouth-friendly recipe: chocolate eggnog muffins

It's true — good things *do* come in small packages. These decadent muffins are bursting with rich festive flavors and are packed with ingredients that benefit your oral and overall health. Now that's a gift that keeps on giving!

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons butter, softened
 ⅓ cup sugar
 2 large egg whites
 2½ ripe bananas, mashed
 3 tablespoons unsweetened apple sauce
 ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
 ⅓ cup low-fat eggnog
 1¼ cups whole-wheat flour
 ¼ cup oats
 ¾ teaspoon baking soda
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 ½ cup dark chocolate chips
 ½ cup pecans

Directions:

- ① Preheat oven to 325 F. Fill a muffin tin with 12 liners.
- ② In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar together.
- ③ Add egg whites, bananas, apple sauce, vanilla and eggnog to mixture.
- ④ Beat until mixture is well combined.
- ⑤ In a separate bowl, combine flour, oats, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg.
- ⑥ Slowly add flour mixture to other mixture, lightly beating until just combined.
- ⑦ Fold in chocolate chips and pecans.
- ⑧ Evenly pour batter into muffin tins.
- ⑨ Bake for 30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.
- ⑩ Enjoy! ■

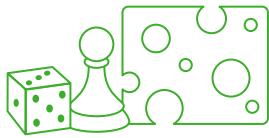
Oats
are rich in fiber, which helps promote healthy gut bacteria.

Bananas
are packed with potassium for strong teeth and bones.

Pecans
contain calcium and magnesium that can reduce inflammation.



HAVE A HAPPY, HEALTHY NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION



Break out the boards.

Keep things simple yet fun. Play your favorite board games and make a cheese board for easy, healthy snacking. You can make your cheese board even more delicious and smile-friendly by adding crunchy nuts and in-season pears.



Get a good laugh.

Watch a funny movie. It's not only fun but research shows laughing is good for your mental well-being, heart health and immune system. You can enjoy a tasty snack by adding lower-sugar dark chocolate and nuts to your popcorn, but skip the sticky dried fruit. This healthier snack mix is full of antioxidants, nutrients and fiber.



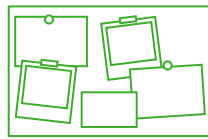
Show off your moves.

For an exhilarating form of exercise, dance the night away. Make a playlist and ask your family and friends to add their favorite songs. Upbeat music will put you in a good mood, and exercise is a great stress buster. Reducing stress can help you ward off some oral health problems, including gum disease.



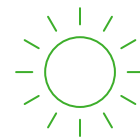
Start a new tradition.

People around the world have some interesting ways to mark the new year. Shake things up by finding different ideas for celebrating. Check out pages 18-19 for some healthy approaches for ending this year and beginning next year.



Look forward.

Write down your resolutions and create a vision board with images of what you want to achieve next year. One study showed people who document their goals are 33% more successful in reaching them than those who simply think about their objectives.¹



Wait to celebrate.

If you're looking for a quiet way to mark the new year, get up early and watch the first sunrise for an inspiring beginning. Get your smile off to a good start, too, with the chocolate eggnog muffin recipe on page 5. Pair them with a winter drink from pages 8-10.

While you look forward to next year, don't forget to take a few moments to reflect on your accomplishments from this past year. ■

¹Psychology Today

Readers ask, we answer

Michael asks:
"Is red wine bad for my teeth?"



Have a question you'd like us to answer? Send it to grin@deltadental.com, and it could be featured in an upcoming issue.

Hi, Michael! Sipping red wine in moderation can have plenty of health benefits. It could reduce your risk of a heart attack, combat inflammation, enhance your memory, boost your mood, maintain bone density and help you live longer.

The antioxidants in red wine may even lower your risk of plaque, cavities and gum disease by making it more difficult for bad bacteria to stick to your teeth. So cheers to all that!

But red wine is also acidic, so it can wear down your tooth enamel — causing sensitivity and increasing your risk of tooth decay. The deep color and tannins in red wine can also trigger migraines and stain your teeth a shade of purple. While a single glass of wine may create a temporary stain that can be brushed or rinsed off, drinking more frequently may lead to a more long-term change in tooth color. Here are some tips for enjoying red wine and still maintaining a healthy smile.

Helpful tips when you sip

- **Brush and floss your teeth before drinking** to reduce the chance of wine sticking to plaque on your teeth.
- **Drink water between sips of wine.** This can help you stay hydrated, clean your mouth and reduce the potential harmful effects to your teeth.
- **Munch on cheese and crunchy veggies as you sip.** These foods can neutralize acids from wine, scrub away stains as you chew and restore calcium and phosphorus.
- **Visit your dentist for routine cleanings.** You can also chat with your dentist about how to prevent stained teeth.

Ways to avoid harming your smile

- **Wait at least 30 minutes to brush after your last sip.** Brushing too soon after acidic food or drinks can further erode your tooth enamel.
- **Be cautious of using "wine wipes"** to get rid of stains on your teeth. Many of these wipes contain hydrogen peroxide, the same chemical used in teeth whitening that can potentially damage your tooth enamel with continuous use.
- **Skip the trick of rubbing a lime wedge on your lips and teeth** to dissolve stains. Limes are very acidic and can increase the potential for tooth erosion and decay.

Red wine has 10 times more antioxidants than white wine and is less acidic, too. Enjoying a glass of red wine can provide health benefits — even if it's in the form of a delicious and festive mulled wine (see page 10 for recipe). Just be sure to take steps to protect your smile! ■

A healthy twist on holiday favorites

Sweet and spicy, minty or mulled, these festive drinks are sure to delight! Our delicious drink recipes have all the flavors you enjoy with the added bonus of ingredients that benefit your oral health. The hardest part will be deciding which one to try first, so go ahead and enjoy a cup of cheer.

Peppermint hot chocolate

Add a hint of peppermint to your next mug of hot chocolate for a refreshing take on the traditional.



HEALTHY SMILE BENEFITS

Dark chocolate fights bacteria and diseases in your mouth.

Almond milk provides vitamin E to reduce your risk of oral cancer.

Heavy cream contains riboflavin, which can help you avoid mouth sores.

INGREDIENTS

(FOR ONE SERVING):

- 1 cup almond milk
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1½ ounces dark chocolate
- ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine almond milk, cream, chocolate and peppermint extract in a small saucepan.
2. Heat on low, stirring occasionally until mixture reaches a gentle boil.
3. Remove from heat and pour into a mug.

Eggnog

Curl up with this cozy, creamy concoction with a dash of sweet spices.



HEALTHY SMILE BENEFITS

Eggs are rich in phosphorus that can protect and rebuild tooth enamel.

Honey contains antioxidants that can shield your body from diseases.

Nutmeg limits bacteria that can cause cavities and gum inflammation.

INGREDIENTS

(FOR TWO SERVINGS):

- 2 cups almond milk
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

DIRECTIONS:

1. Blend all ingredients together until smooth and creamy.
2. Place mixture in a saucepan and heat over medium low. Cook 4 to 6 minutes, stirring frequently. Turn heat off just before mixture starts to boil.
3. Strain through a mesh strainer before pouring into mugs.

Hot buttered rum

Wind down the day with a toasty cup of hot buttered rum.



HEALTHY SMILE BENEFITS

Butter has calcium and vitamin D for strong teeth and bones.

Cloves are rich in manganese, another essential mineral for bone strength.

Allspice can prevent infections and provide pain relief from toothaches.

INGREDIENTS

(FOR TWO SERVINGS):

- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar substitute
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- Pinch of salt
- 3 ounces dark rum
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of ground allspice

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine water, butter, sugar substitute, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and salt in a small saucepan.
2. Heat saucepan over medium heat until ingredients start to simmer.
3. Remove from heat and stir in rum and vanilla.
4. Top with a pinch of allspice.

Continued from page 9

Gingerbread latte

A little sweet and a little spice makes this gingerbread latte a whole lotta festive.



HEALTHY SMILE BENEFITS

Espresso could reduce your risk of dementia.

Cinnamon can help your body fight off infections.

Ginger keeps your mouth healthy by preventing bacteria growth.

INGREDIENTS

(FOR ONE SERVING):

- 1½ cups almond milk
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- Pinch of ground nutmeg
- 2 ounces espresso

DIRECTIONS:

1. Warm almond milk in microwave or on stovetop until desired temperature.
2. Combine almond milk with spices. Whisk for 30 seconds.
3. Pour into a mug and top with espresso.

Mulled wine

Warm up any wintry occasion with mulled wine that's infused with oranges, whole cloves and spices.



HEALTHY SMILE BENEFITS

Red wine can reduce the risk of several diseases (more on page 7).

Oranges are a great source of vitamin C, which helps maintain healthy gums.

Anise has the potential to prevent infections and bone loss.

INGREDIENTS

(FOR FIVE SERVINGS):

- 1 bottle merlot
- 10 cloves
- 1 orange
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 1-2 star anise
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ cup brandy

DIRECTIONS:

1. Pour red wine into slow cooker.
2. Push cloves into the skin of the orange.
3. Place whole orange in slow cooker with cinnamon sticks, star anise, nutmeg and brandy.
4. Heat on low for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.
5. Leave slow cooker on warm and serve. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, star anise and orange slices.

Take some time away from the hustle and bustle and create one of these cozy concoctions to enjoy at home. Sink into the wintry flavors you crave and the healthy ingredients your smile loves. ■

Do your holiday meals make your teeth happy?



What side dishes do you prefer?

- (A) I stick with veggies, salads, soups and whole grains. (3 points)
- (B) I usually eat one side full of carbs per meal. (2 points)
- (C) Bring it all on — mashed potatoes, stuffing, candied yams, cranberry sauce, etc. (1 point)

Starchy foods that are full of carbohydrates can break down into cavity-causing sugar on your teeth. If you enjoy healthy soups and salads, skip the croutons and crackers.

How do you prefer to eat the entrée?

- (A) A lean, juicy slice of turkey, ham, fish or plant-based protein tastes great by itself. (3 points)
- (B) I add a little gravy or a condiment to the main dish. (2 points)
- (C) I slather it in gravy, barbecue sauce, glaze or ketchup. (1 point)

The phosphorus in lean proteins helps protect your teeth's enamel. But check the label on condiments, as many are made with high fructose corn syrup and other sweeteners.

Do you have dessert during the holidays?

- (A) If I eat dessert, I tend to stick with plain fruit or lower-sugar dark chocolate. (3 points)
- (B) It's the holidays, I like to have a favorite sweet occasionally. (2 points)
- (C) 'Tis the season for sweets — pies, cookies and candy are all on the menu. (1 point)

If you do indulge in a special treat, eat it as part of a meal rather than as a snack. You produce more saliva during a meal to help wash sugar from your teeth.

Which of these best describes your beverage consumption during the holidays?

- (A) I stick with water. (3 points)
- (B) I have an occasional wine, eggnog, soda, juice, coffee or energy drink. (2 points)
- (C) During the holiday, I regularly sip on the beverages mentioned above. (1 point)

Be wary of most eggnog. It's usually full of cavity-causing sugar and often contains alcohol that can cause dry mouth — a doubly dangerous combo to your smile. Try our healthier version on page 9.

What's your overall attitude about holiday dining?

- (A) I eat one plateful at a meal and an occasional healthy snack and still feel satisfied. (3 points)
- (B) I tend to feel pretty full after meals and indulge in a few sugary or starchy snacks. (2 points)
- (C) I feel stuffed after meals and snack on treats throughout the day. (1 point)

There's always leftovers! Don't rush to fill a second plate. It may take 20 to 30 minutes for your brain to tell your stomach it's full.

Add up your points to see if your holiday meals are smile-friendly.

12-15 points

Celebrate your success

Congrats! You do your oral and overall health a favor by making smart choices.

10-11 points

Give your teeth more reasons to be thankful

You don't take a total holiday from good oral health, but you can still look for more ways to keep your smile healthy. (Rinsing with water after eating a treat can help!)

5-9 points

Consider starting some new traditions

Give your smile a gift — skip seconds and limit not-so-healthy desserts, drinks and snacks.

Looking for another way to make your holiday meals more smile-friendly? Try altering recipes to cut carbs and sugar. You will likely never miss what's missing. ■

UNIQUE GIFTS
you'll be glad to give

Giving gifts is a great way to give smiles to others. Does gift giving make you grin, too? It usually does because the act of giving releases chemicals in your brain, providing a boost to your physical and mental health. Here are some healthy and fun gift ideas for any occasion.



For outdoor enthusiasts

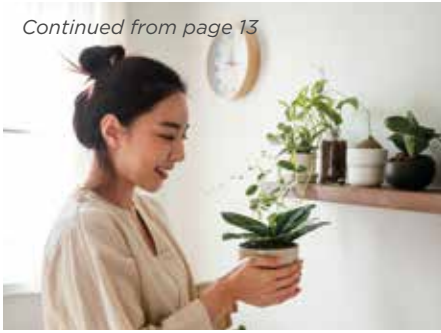
A reusable water bottle, polarized sunglasses and SPF 15+ lip balm create the perfect care package to stay healthy and protected from the sun. This gift will help them hydrate, keep their mouths clean and prevent their lips from burning.



For self-care lovers

A weighted blanket, colorful yoga mat and relaxing aromatherapy candles can help your friends or loved ones relax. This will allow them to sleep better and avoid stress-related conditions such as teeth grinding and canker sores. Self-care can also improve energy, focus, productivity and happiness.

Continued from page 13



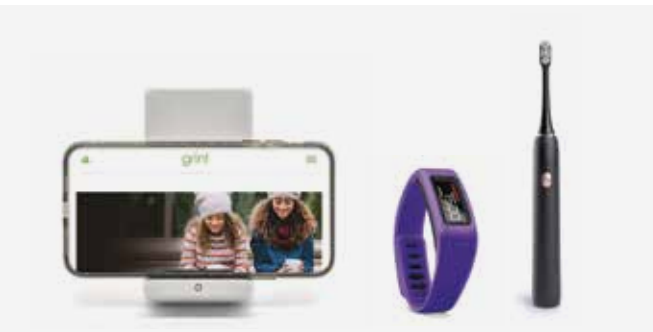
For plant parents

An indoor countertop garden and a watering can will empower your loved ones to grow fresh herbs and vegetables all year long. Gardening season doesn't have to end when the weather isn't quite as nice outside! Give a gift that keeps on giving — chives, peppers, carrots and leafy salad greens all grow well indoors and are also great for your oral and overall health.



For foodies and home entertainers

A fondue set, cheeseboard and a monthly fruit or cheese subscription are trendy and also great for your oral health. Fruit is packed with nutrients such as vitamin C and fiber. The calcium and phosphates in cheese help rebuild tooth enamel. Cheese is also a great saliva-generator, so it helps keep your mouth clean.



For techies

A charging dock, fitness tracker and electric toothbrush will help your loved ones keep track of their exercise, water and more. They'll use technology as a tool to stay healthy each day! Electric toothbrushes with built-in timers can also take the guesswork out of getting a full two minutes of brushing, twice a day. ■

Your winter smile list



1

Boost your mood
by getting out
on a sunny
winter day.

- ② Celebrate the season with freshly baked chocolate eggnog muffins! See recipe on page 5.
- ③ Make someone smile this gift-giving season. See gift ideas on pages 12-14.
- ④ Dress your bed with festive flannel sheets.
- ⑤ Whip up some homemade hot chocolate. Try a minty version on page 8.
- ⑥ Research your family tree.
- ⑦ Have a pajama day and snuggle in when it's too chilly outside.
- ⑧ Start a scrapbook filled with your favorite smiling faces.
- ⑨ Donate toys that will put a smile on a child's face.
- ⑩ Get creative in the kitchen by taking a cooking class. ■



The advantages of collagen are more than skin deep

The most plentiful protein in your body is also one of the most useful. Collagen is found in your skin, muscles, bones, tendons and cartilage — and acts like glue to hold your body together and make your skin more flexible. As you age, your body produces less collagen protein, which can result in dry skin, wrinkles, joint pain and even tooth loss. The elasticity of your skin actually starts declining in your 20s.

So how can you restore collagen? When possible, it's best to get essential vitamins and minerals through a balanced diet. Your body produces collagen naturally when you consume protein-rich foods — like beef, fish, chicken, eggs, dairy products, beans and nuts — combined with the nutrients you get from fruits and vegetables. In addition, healthy habits like getting enough sleep, wearing sunscreen, avoiding tobacco and controlling stress can lessen the decline of your body's collagen.

When your body produces additional collagen, it can slow the aging process and help keep skin, hair, nails and bones in better shape. If you need more collagen, supplements are available. Studies show several potential health benefits with few side effects. Collagen supplements are usually made from fish scales or cow bones and are available in pill and powder form. Don't let the ingredients alarm you! These supplements are virtually tasteless and can easily be added to foods and drinks like oatmeal, coffee or smoothies.

Potential health benefits

- Improves heart health
- Strengthens bones
- Maintains skin elasticity
- Reduces joint pain
- Stimulates hair growth
- Increases muscle mass
- Promotes gut health
- Heals receding gums around exposed roots
- Reduces tooth sensitivity and decay

Possible side effects

- Heartburn, a symptom of acid reflux that can erode tooth enamel
- A bad taste in your mouth
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Feelings of fullness
- Fatigue
- A reaction for those allergic to fish, shellfish or eggs

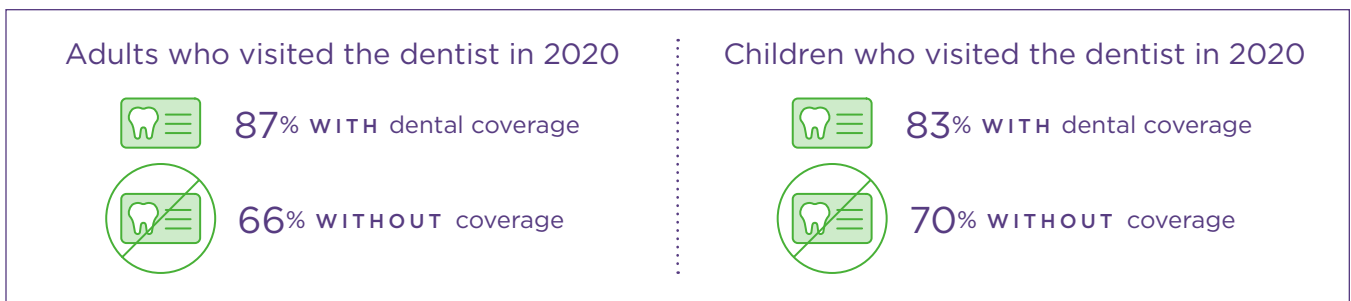
Our verdict: While side effects of collagen supplements are minimal, it's important to check with your physician and dentist before taking these supplements. ■

Dental coverage equals a good value



Considering whether to get dental coverage for the upcoming year? Trends show that U.S. adults and children with dental coverage are more likely to see the dentist for preventive care than those without coverage.

In fact, more than 9 in 10 American adults say having dental coverage gives them a reason to go to the dentist at least once a year, according to our research.¹



But what do you get from dental coverage beyond regular checkups? The vast majority of those with dental coverage say they experience a wide range of benefits. Here are just a few of them:



Choosing to have dental coverage and getting regular checkups save money by helping identify issues early and avoiding costly and complex procedures. Preventive checkups are generally covered 100% by most dental plans. In addition, dental coverage provides access to a network of dentists who have agreed to accept fees lower than they'd typically charge.

Taking care of your teeth and gums also benefits your overall health. Research shows a connection between oral health and conditions such as dementia, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, Crohn's disease and HIV. During a routine exam of your mouth and jaw, your dentist can potentially detect early warning signs of these diseases — leading to earlier diagnosis and treatment.

Having dental benefits supports your overall health and helps you live your healthiest life. There are affordable options for dental coverage available. To learn more or to find an in-network dentist, visit deltadental.com. ■

¹Delta Dental's 2020 State of America's Oral Health Report, based on findings from two surveys of 2,000+ American adults and parents of children 12 and under



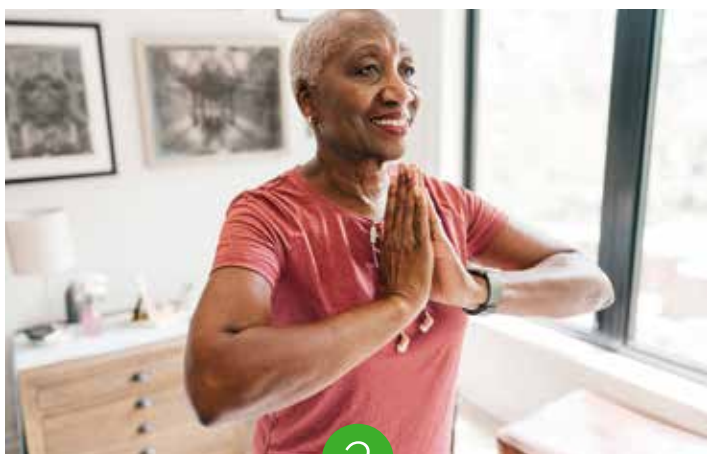
Exploring the
world of
**WINTER
TRADITIONS**



1

Exchanging apples in China

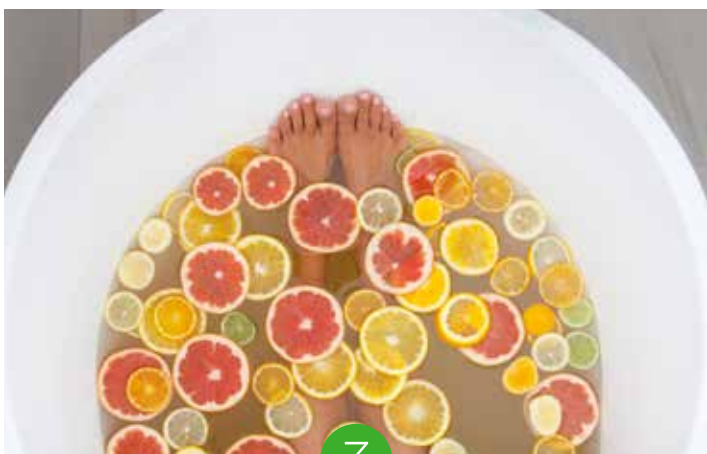
Loved ones give each other fancy decorated apples with holiday messages on Christmas Eve. It's always a good idea to reach for an apple! They're full of fiber and help clean your teeth as you chew them.



2

Meditating in North America

The Kwanzaa celebration begins the day after Christmas and concludes on New Year's Day with The Day of Meditation. Practicing meditation can help reduce anxiety, depression and high blood pressure. It's also been linked to reducing the risk of many diseases caused by stress.



3

Taking fruit baths in Japan

During winter solstice, it's considered good luck to take a relaxing bath filled with yuzu, an aromatic citrus fruit that resembles a lemon but tastes more like a lime. Citrus fruits are full of vitamin C, which has a host of health benefits. But eat them in moderation as they are highly acidic and can damage your teeth's enamel.



4

Eating grapes in Spain

It's believed that eating a dozen grapes at midnight on New Year's Eve will bring you good luck. Grapes are full of antioxidants and vitamins A and C. Some research also suggests they may help prevent tooth decay.

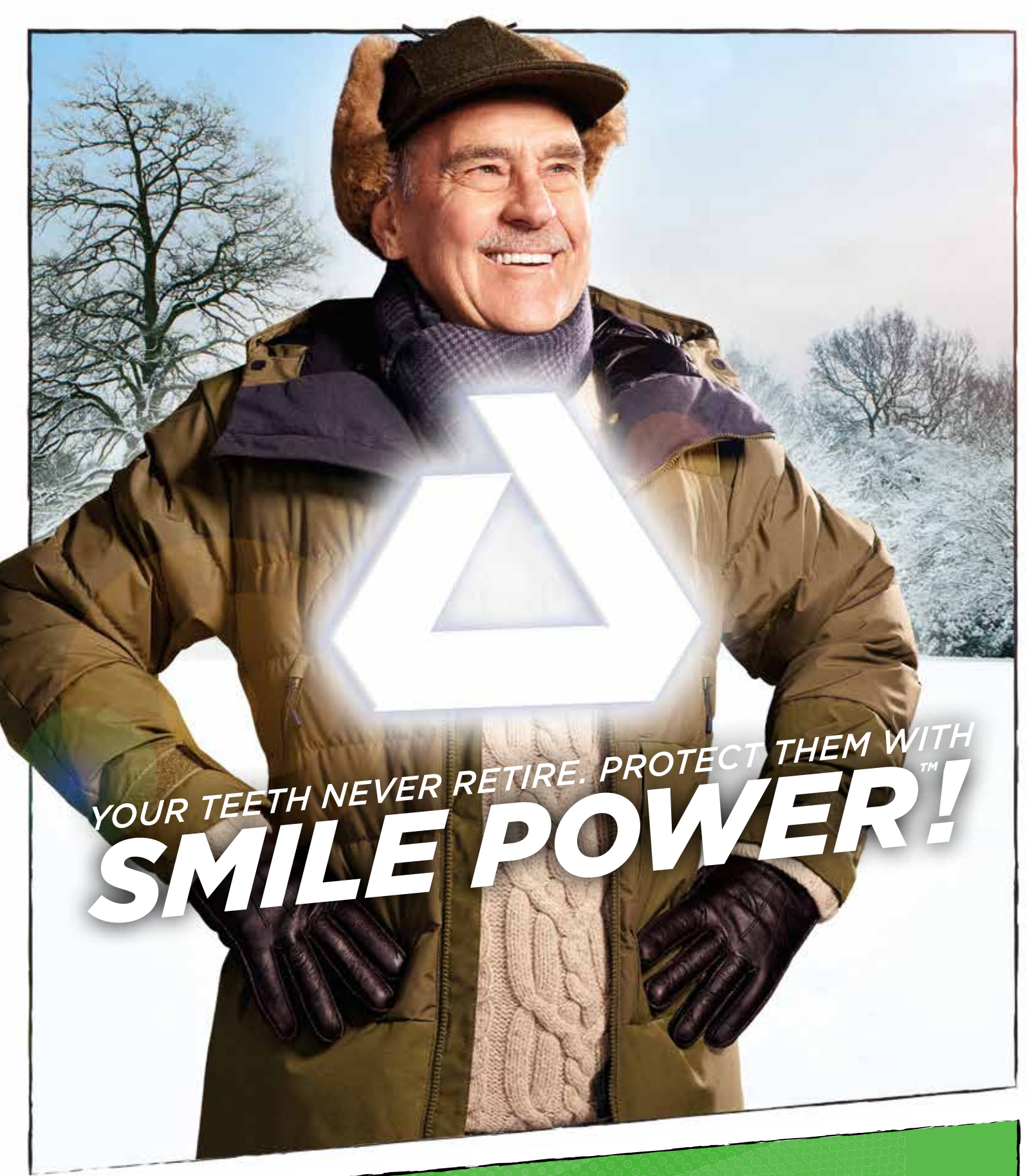


5

Feasting on fish in Italy

The Feast of Seven Fishes is a lavish meal served on Christmas Eve and centered on seafood dishes. Research suggests fish may help you live longer. Some kinds of seafood are rich in calcium, phosphorus and vitamin D, which work together to keep your teeth strong.

You can start some new traditions of your own this winter. For inspiration, see our tips for a healthy New Year's celebration on page 6. ■



YOUR TEETH NEVER RETIRE. PROTECT THEM WITH
SMILE POWER!TM

Own your retirement by keeping your healthy smile protected with high-quality dental benefits at an affordable price.

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