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OIL-RICH FISH FOR A HEALTHY HEART

“Eat at least one portion of oil-rich fish a week” is the message of a new heart healthy awareness campaign backed celebrities including James Martin, Gabby Logan, Rick Stein, Brian Turner and Nick Nairn.

The campaign promotes oil-rich fish such as mackerel, fresh tuna, herring, sardines, salmon and trout as high in essential long chain omega 3 fatty acids helping to reduce the risk of heart disease.

According to the latest data from the British Heart Foundation who are supporting the campaign, coronary heart disease is the nation's number one killer with up to 117,000 people dying each year and 2.6 million people living with heart and circulatory disease. (BHF Coronary Disease stats 2005)

Heart friendly oil-rich fish is the best 'natural' source of omega 3 long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids. These heart friendly fatty acids help lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of hardened arteries and dying prematurely from a heart attack.

Currently Brits only eat a third of the amount recommended (140g) by experts but most people think they are eating more. The campaign follows the ruling from the highly respected Joint Health Claims Initiative (JHCI) that long chain omega 3 essential fatty acids in oil-rich fish help maintain heart health.

Celebrity chef James Martin is fronting the campaign. He said: “Oil-rich fish is the most natural source of omega 3 fatty acids which are proven to help reduce the risk of heart disease. There are so many fantastic things you can do with oil-rich fish like fresh mackerel, filleted and grilled, served with salad and spiced gooseberries, just a simple classic dish that’s fantastically good for us. I always refer to the Mediterranean way of eating where fish like sardines appears on the menu and these types of oil-rich fish are a regular feature of my own diet at least once a week.”

Nell McAndrew is also a huge oil-rich fish fan. She said: “I always incorporate oil-rich fish into my diet, especially before a marathon. My favourite is mackerel but I love salmon and trout too. Oil-rich fish has so many health benefits. It’s good for your heart and can help boost brain power and is a great beauty tool too, helping your hair, nails and skin.”

Dr Ray Rice, who co-ordinated the Omega 3 Group’s submission to the JHCI and is Secretary of the International Society for the Study of Fatty Acids and Lipids (ISSFAL) said: "It has never been more important to be aware of heart health and with only a third of the UK population eating the recommended amount of oil-rich fish a week, two thirds may be putting their lives at risk. This campaign will not only raise awareness of the benefits of oil-rich fish but will also show the many different and delicious ways of

cooking it."

Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director of the British Heart Foundation (BHF), said: "There is consistent evidence that eating oil-rich fish containing omega 3 fatty acids can help protect against heart and circulatory disease – the UK's biggest killer. Omega 3 fatty acids can help to lower levels of fat in the blood and reduce blood clotting.

"Unfortunately, most British people do not eat enough oil-rich fish. We should aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be an oil-rich variety, such as sardines, trout, mackerel or salmon.

"By eating more fish, as well as more fruit and vegetables, consuming less salt and saturated fats, not smoking and increasing physical activity, the chances of developing coronary heart disease are significantly reduced."

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Notes to Editors

1. Photography of James Martin and oil-rich fish recipes are available from Alison Laing or Lynn Railston at 3x1 on 0141 221 0707.
2. This omega 3 awareness campaign is being run by The Omega 3 Group, comprising of representatives from the industry and main seafood, fish farming and economic development organisations operating in Scotland, such as the Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish), Seafood Scotland, Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO) and Scottish Food & Drink in association with Scottish Enterprise. The project is supported by the Scottish Executive with Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) funding.
3. The long chain omega 3 fatty acids EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) are derived from the parent essential fatty acid ALNA (alpha-linolenic acid). Long chain omega 3 EPA and DHA found in oil-rich fish are needed for growth, cardiovascular health and brain and body function.
4. The JHCI is the UK's regulatory body for health claims comprising manufacturers, regulators and consumer groups. The JHCI heart health claim is on www.jhci.org.uk and more information can be found on www.richinomega3.com.
5. The Food Standards Agency recommends people eat at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oil-rich. Yet 70 per cent of the population don't eat any fish at all.

Issued by:

Alison Laing/Lynn Railston

3x1

T: 0141 221 0707

M : 07879 621 139/07793 486 671

E: alaing@3x1.com/lrailston@3x1.com