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**A**s we embark upon this holiday season, I want to share with you a story that I received from a colleague. I hope it will be a blessing to you as it has been to me.

How often do you let other people's nonsense change your mood? Do you let a bad driver, rude waiter, curt boss, or an insensitive employee ruin your day? Unless you're the Terminator, for an instant you're probably set back on your heels. However, the mark of a successful person is how quickly one can get back their focus on what's important.

Sixteen years ago I learned this lesson. I learned it in the back of a New York City taxi cab. Here's what happened.

I hopped in a taxi, and we took off for Grand Central Station. We were driving in the right lane when, all of a sudden, a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his breaks, skidded, and missed the other car's back end by just inches!

The driver of the other car, the guy who almost caused a big accident, whipped his head around and he started yelling bad words at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, he was friendly. So, I said, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!" This is when my taxi driver told me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck."

"Many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it. And if you let them, they'll dump it on you.

When someone wants to dump on you, don't take it personally. You just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. You'll be happy you did."

So this was it: The "Law of the Garbage Truck." I started thinking, how often do I let Garbage Trucks run right over me? And how often do I take their garbage and spread it to other people: at work, at home, on the streets? It was that day I said, "I'm not going to do it anymore."

I began to see garbage trucks. Like in the movie "The Sixth Sense," the little boy said, "I see Dead People."

Well, now "I see Garbage Trucks." I see the load they're carrying. I see them coming to drop it off. And like my Taxi Driver, I don't make it a personal thing; I just smile, wave, wish them well, and I move on.

One of my favorite football players of all time, Walter Payton, did this every day on the football field. He would jump up as quickly as he hit the ground after being tackled. He never dwelled on a hit. Payton was ready to make the next play his best.

Good leaders know they have to be ready for their next meeting. Good parents know that they have to welcome their children home from school with hugs and kisses.

Leaders and parents know that they have to be fully present, and at their best for the people they care about. The bottom line is that successful people do not let Garbage Trucks take over their day. What about you? What would happen in your life, starting today, if you let more garbage trucks pass you by?

Here's my belief. You'll be happier.

Life's too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so love the people who treat you right. Forget about the ones who don't. Believe that everything happens for a reason. If you get a chance, TAKE IT! If it changes your life, LET IT! Nobody said it would be easy... They just promised it would be worth it!

Merry Christmas and don't let any garbage trucks ruin your holidays!

*Wishing You and Your Families Joy and Happiness  
During the Christmas Season!*

*The Autauga County Extension Office*



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## Four Basics of Holiday Food Safety

You are about to pull off a miracle, balancing your fulltime job with all the demands of holiday entertaining — or so it seems. You've carefully laid all the plans for a lavish holiday party for out-of-town family and guests, replete with all of those things that make the holidays so special — baked turkey, ham and finger foods.

Congratulations. But before you get too carried away commending yourself on this awesome feat, answer this question: Have you taken adequate precaution against foodborne illness?

Millions of other Americans, in their haste to keep pace with all the demands of the holiday season, are likely to overlook basic hygienic practices around the kitchen. The fact that only one drop of juice from a contaminated turkey or chicken is enough to cause food poisoning is a strong incentive to follow these basic practices carefully, said Janice Hall, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System Regional Extension Agent in Food Safety, Preservation, and Preparation.

Following are what Hall describes as the four basics of holiday food preparation:

### 1.) Wash Your Hands

Mom's constant admonishment to wash your hands is the cornerstone of safe food handling and preparation. Hands should be washed a full 20 seconds, using soap and water, before and after handling raw products. It is a good idea to scrub vigorously and make lots of bubbles when washing. Then rinse thoroughly to get rid of any germs that may be trapped in the bubbles. Dry your hands with a single use paper towel. Dish cloths and towels harbor bacteria and should not be used to dry hands when preparing food.

Kitchen sinks should be used only for hand washing associated with food preparation. Hand washing related to other household chores, such as gardening, should be confined to bathroom sinks.

Bar soaps should be kept clean and left on a soap dish that allows water to drain. Otherwise, the soap is liable to become contaminated with germs like any other kitchen item. Pump-action liquid soap dispensers provide strong protection against contamination.

### 2.) Avoid Cross-Contamination

Cross-contamination occurs when germs from one food are passed to another. This most often occurs when raw meat, poultry or seafood touch uncooked foods such as salads and

by  
**Janice Hall,**  
**Regional Extension**



fruits. Cross-contamination also can occur when these foods come in contact with unwashed hands, utensils or countertops that have previously been used with raw meat products. This is why raw meat products should be stored on a plate or tray in the bottom of the refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods.

Cutting boards for raw meat products should not be used for salads and other uncooked foods unless they have first been thoroughly sanitized. As an added precaution, finish preparing raw meat products and return them to the refrigerator or place them in the oven. Then, clean and sanitize your kitchen before starting work on other foods.

Dirty sponges, dishcloths and towels are breeding grounds for legions of harmful pathogens. Always use paper towels or freshly cleaned cloths with soap and hot water to wipe kitchen surfaces.

### 3.) Cook Safely

The first rule of thumb when cooking a turkey is to allow sufficient time --- up to four days, in some cases --- for it to defrost in the refrigerator. Be sure to place the bird on a dish or tray on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to ensure none of the drippings come in contact with other foods while it defrosts.

The bird should be cooked within a day of defrosting. Before cooking, insert a meat thermometer into the turkey's inner thigh closest to the breast, to monitor its internal temperature. Whole turkeys should reach an internal temperature of between 160 and 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving.

Stuffing typically should be cooked separately from the turkey. If you insist on cooking stuffing with the turkey, contact your local Extension agent for advice about how to do this safely.

Never use recipes that call for raw eggs. All egg dishes should be cooked until they reach 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

During microwaving, make sure there are no cold spots in foods. For best results, cover, stir and rotate food for even cooking.

Sauces, soups and gravies should be brought to a boil before serving. Leftovers should be heated to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving.

**Continued on Page 3**

## ***Have you always wanted to become a Master Gardener? It's not too late!***

The 2008 Master Gardener Course is scheduled to begin Tuesday, January 22nd.

Class times will be each Tuesday from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. through the end of April.

For more information or to request a Master Gardener application contact the Autauga County Extension Office at (334) 361-7273



**Food Safety Continued from Page 2****4.) Follow the Two-Hour Rule**

Potluck dinners are especially popular during the holidays, but they are fraught with risk if the food is left out for more than a couple of hours. All perishables should be returned to the refrigerator after two hours. Be sure to divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Also, avoid stuffing the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate for the food to remain safe.

As an added precaution, make sure the refrigerator temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below and zero degrees Fahrenheit or below in the freezer. Occasionally verify these temperatures with an appliance thermometer.

For questions or additional food safety or food preparation questions, please contact Janice Hall with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at 334-361-7273.

**TO ARRIVE SOON!****Money Management Calendars**

**The Alabama Cooperative Extension System Money Management Calendars will be ready for pickup in early January at**

- ◆ Financial Institutions  
(with the exception of Credit Unions)
- ◆ County Court House
- ◆ City Hall
- ◆ Prattville Library
- ◆ The Autauga County Extension Office

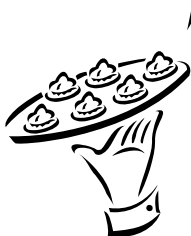
**Cranberry Party Meatballs**

- 2 (1-pound) bags frozen cocktail-size meatballs (about 64 meatballs)
- 1 (16-ounce) can Ocean Spray® Jellied [Cranberry Sauce](#)
- 1 (12-ounce) bottle [chili sauce](#)
- 1 teaspoon [ground cumin](#)
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne

1. Combine cranberry sauce, chili sauce, cumin and cayenne in a large saucepan. [Cook](#) over medium heat, whisking occasionally, until the cranberry sauce is melted and smooth.
2. Add meatballs; stir gently to coat. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, 12 to 15 minutes or until meatballs are heated through. Place in chafing dish or slow cooker to keep warm.

Makes 30 servings.

[Recipe](#) provided courtesy of Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.

**Mini Ham Puffs**

- 1 pkg (2.5 ounces) processed ham or smoked turkey or chicken finely chopped
- 2 TBS finely chopped onions
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded Swiss or cheddar cheese

- 1 egg
- 1 TBS snipped fresh parsley
- 1 1/2 tsp Dijon Mustard
- 1/8 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 pkg (8oz) refrigerated crescent rolls

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly spray mini muffin pan with vegetable oil.

Finely chop ham and onion using food processor; place in small batter bowl. Add cheese, egg, parsley, mustard, and black pepper; mix well. Unroll crescent dough and press into one large rectangle. Cut dough into 24 squares using a pizza cutter. Press one square of dough into each muffin cup using a lightly floured tart shaper (optional). Fill each muffin cup with a scant scoop of ham mixture.

Bake 12-14 minutes or until puffs are light brown. Remove from pan; serve immediately.

Yield: 24 appetizers

## Assessing the Perils of Holiday Gorging

by Jim Langcuster

Specialist III, Communication & Marketing-Dept



It's enough to scare anyone.

One of the stories making its rounds in daily newspapers around the country and on the Internet is that an unusually heavy holiday meal may increase the risk of heart attack by as much as four times within two hours after consumption.

consumption.

The finding is based on a study presented shortly before Thanksgiving at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2000.

The study found that overeating causes some bad things to happen. For example, your blood clots more easily and quickly after consuming a big meal. Likewise, the fat levels in your blood increase along with your blood pressure.

"All of this has been well documented and there is nothing new about these findings," says Dr. Robert Keith, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System nutrition and health specialist and Auburn University Professor of Nutrition and Food science.

Even so, he says these factors probably don't pose any significant threat to healthy people even as old as age 50 who have no significant risk of heart problems.

"Healthy overeaters probably won't suffer any effects other than just feeling bad the rest of the day," Keith says.

Simply put, the effects occur but not to a degree that likely will harm healthy people, Keith says.

Even so, Keith offers somewhat different advice for people who are sedentary and obese, or who already are dealing with heart problems, or face a higher risk of heart disease.

"If they go and do this — eat this huge meal — things like blood clotting and elevated blood pressure could turn out to be the factor that pushes things over the edge," Keith says.

Keith says it's especially important for these at-risk people to take stock of these risks, especially at this time of year when the allure of big meals typically is stronger than at any other time.

"Obviously, if you have a history of heart problems, diabetes and similar types of obesity-related conditions, you do need to be more careful about how you eat," he says.

Yes, you still can enjoy the traditional Christmas Day feasting, for example, but just make sure you go easy on the calories.

"Instead of pigging out and consuming thousands of calories, you should pace your eating and limit this intake to only a more reasonable, normal amount," he says.

With that in mind, Keith offers a few overeating safeguards.

First, eat slowly. Granted, it's no sure guarantee against overeating, but it can help slow down the number of calories you consume, Keith says.

And when you're beginning to feel full, make a conscious effort to back away from the table.

"Go off and do something else," Keith advises. "And if you can't get a certain food out of your mind, come back and eat only a smaller portion."

Second, be sure to exercise. Keith considers walking one of the single most effective safeguards against holiday weight gain, simply because many people, even physically active gym rats, often find strenuous exercise unappealing at this time of year.

"You don't feel like going to the gym or running 4 miles and you often make some excuse not to do that, but it's still easy to go out and walk around the block," Keith says.

"I think that during the holidays, walking is one of the best things you can do to aid digestion, burn some calories and get out of those typical holiday doldrums."

Walking is helpful in getting you out of the house and away from food, and as an aerobic form of exercise, it also can counteract some of the physiological effects associated with overeating, such as quicker blood clotting.

Adequate intakes of vitamin E and omega 3 fatty acids readily available in fish, also can safeguard against the quicker blood clogging associated with overindulgence. So can a daily dose of baby aspirin.

But, Keith also stresses the importance of understanding the big picture: assessing your overall risks.

"You should look over your whole lifestyle and your risks and act accordingly," he says.

"The important thing to bear in mind is that if your profile is not good and you eat this heavy meal, it may be enough to push you over the edge," Keith says.



**And the Grinch with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.**

**Dr. Seuss**



**Congratulations go out to Ginger Gaines who was recently crowned as the 2007 Miss Autauga County Agriculture.**

Ginger is the 21-old-daughter of Hank and Dianne Gaines of Autaugaville. While growing up on her family's farm, Ginger was active in 4-H as an exhibitor of both cattle and sheep. While in high school, she served as president of the Jr. Cattlemen, and was part of the Livestock Judging Team. Currently, she is a senior at Auburn University majoring in Animal Science with an emphasis on Production and Management. Ginger is a member of the College of Agriculture's Ag Ambassadors, the Auburn University Block and Bridle Club, and is the former chairman of the Auburn University Young Farmers program. In addition to these many activities, she will be going to Texas in January as part of the College of Ag's Academic Quadrathlon Team, which will be competing for the Southeast Regional title. But before that, Ginger will be proudly representing Autauga County in the Miss Alabama Agriculture pageant in Mobile .

**HOLIDAY TIP HOTLINES**

Butterball Turkey Talk-Line	1-800-Butterball	www.butterball.com
Fleischmann's Yeast Bakers Helpline	1-800-777-4959	www.breadworld.com
Land O' Lakes Holiday Bakeline	1-800-782-9606	www.landolakes.com
Rhodes Frozen Dough Bakelone	1-800-876-7333	www.rhodesbread.com
ShadyBrook Farms Dial-a-Chef Holiday Hotline	1-888-723-4468	www.shadybrookfarms.com
USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline	1-888-674-9854	www.fsis.usda.gov (Go to "Ask Karen")

*The perfect gift for your favorite cook!*

**The Auburn COOKBOOK**

- 480 pages of recipes, nutrition information, meal planning tips, cooking techniques



**For Christmas delivery, orders must be received by Friday, December 15**

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\* Or send \$10 (check or money order to ACES)  
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[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)

**ACES Welcomes  
 Patrick Cook  
 to the Autauga County Staff!**



Patrick will serve as a Regional Extension Agent in Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources. He is a graduate of Auburn University, earning a Master's Degree from the University of Georgia. He has lived and worked in Virginia for the past seven years and has recently moved back to his hometown of Autauga County. Please feel free to contact Patrick with any Forestry, Wildlife or Natural Resource questions you may have at (334) 740-4396.

# Give Your Tree to the Fish

by

Patrick Cook, Regional Extension Agent



When the holidays are over and it's time to take down all the decorations, there is one item that can not go into storage for those who use real Christmas trees. However, the usefulness of these trees does not have to end with the holidays. One of the most popular uses for the trees is to sink the trees for fish. Submerged Christmas trees provide great habitat for many fish species and can greatly improve fishing success. Smaller fish use the trees for protection from larger fish and also feed on aquatic insects found on the trees. Larger fish are attracted to the trees by the smaller fish that have congregated there.

To submerge the tree, you must first attach a weight to the base of the tree. A concrete block works well. To attach the block, drill two holes in the trunk of the tree roughly 8-10 inches apart. Slide the tree trunk through the hole in the block. Run wire through the lower hole, around the block, and then through the upper hole. Finally, twist the two ends of wire together several times. It is best to use wire to attach the tree to the block instead of rope which will not last as long. Sink the tree in 4 to 10 feet of water.

Don't own a fish pond? Not a problem. Your tree can still go to the fish. Last year, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources began sinking Christmas trees in local lakes that they manage. To donate your tree, contact Graves Lovell at (334) 358-0035.

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## Packing and Mailing Your Holiday Goodies

**T**here is a proper way to pack cookies and other holiday goodies for shipping.

Improper packing often results in broken or crumbled cookies.

Don't send tender, fragile cookies because they often crumble when shipped. Bar, drop and fruit cookies are the best types to mail, says Jean Weese, a food scientist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

It's probably not a good idea to send anything with powdered sugar on it this year, unless it is sealed tightly in a plastic bag. Mail or packages with any white substance showing will probably be stopped.

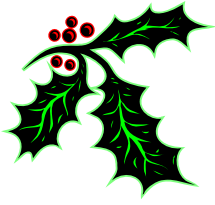
When shipping baked goods, use a heavy cardboard or styrofoam box or an empty coffee can as a mailing container. Line the container with aluminum foil or plastic food wrap. Then, wrap four to six cookies of the same size in foil or plastic food wrap, and place them in a plastic food bag and seal securely. Don't over fill the plastic bag.

Place the heaviest cookies at the bottom of the container. Use crumpled paper towels or newspaper between layers of wrapped cookies. Top with crumpled newspaper or styrofoam kernels. Seal the container with freezer, plastic or adhesive tape.

If you use a coffee can, you can pad the cookies even more by placing the can in a small box. Place the coffee can in the middle of the box and tightly stuff sides with crumpled or torn newspaper or fill with styrofoam packing kernels to prevent the can from sliding around in the box.

Next, wrap the box with an outer paper wrapper and mark "Perishable Food" on it to ensure rapid delivery and careful handling.

**Source: Dr. Jean Weese, Food Scientist, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, (334) 844-3269**



# After the Holiday Housekeeping Tips!

**How to Remove Wax from Carpeting** – Place a paper towel over the stain and draw the wax up into it by placing a warm iron over the paper towel (this is called “capillary action”). Repeat if necessary. Sponge the stained area with 1-cup rubbing alcohol and 2 – 3 cups water if the stain remains. Sponge from the outside to the inside of the stain. Be very sure not to get the area too wet or you can bring up a stain from the padding.

**How to Remove Candle Wax from Furniture** – Turn stained furniture upside down. Put a piece of cotton cloth (T-shirt) over the wax. Using a hot chrome or metal finish curling iron, heat the wax and let it melt into the cloth. This may take several applications to fully remove the wax.

**Remove Candle Wax on Fabric** – Remove the excess wax as best you can. Put an ice cube on the wax to harden it, then peel or scrape off the excess wax. Place an absorbent piece of paper underneath, such as a brown paper bag. Put a white paper towel on top. Place a warm (not hot) iron on top over the paper towel and it should draw the wax up to the towel.

**Table Linen Tips** – Take a few simple steps to keep your linens in fine shape for years to come. Always clean linens before storing to prevent stains and creases from setting. Do not starch before storing, as starch may attract unwanted insects. To store linens without unsightly creasing, roll them around empty paper towel rolls, or wrapping paper tubes, or hang on hangers in the closet.

**Removing Holiday Stains** – During the Holiday Season, stains on fabrics are sure to appear. Following are some stain removal methods for washable fabrics. Remember, removal methods may vary depending on the fiber content of the fabric and the type of stain.

**Coffee, Tea, Cola, Fruit Juice:** Wash immediately. If the stain has aged, pour boiling water on it first from a height. Wash in synthetic detergent. Do not use soap. Bleach with sodium perborate or chlorine bleach, if necessary.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** *CAUTION: Treat immediately, as alcohol may remove fabric dye. Sponge stain promptly with cool water.* If stain remains, soak 15 minutes in a solution of lukewarm water, light-duty liquid detergent and a few drops of white vinegar. Launder. If stain remains, use chlorine bleach if safe for fabric.

**Lipstick:** Apply non-flammable dry-cleaning solvent or a prewash soil-and-stain remover. Blot with absorbent material. Continue treatment until pigment is removed. Rinse. Rub light-duty liquid detergent in the stain until outline is gone. Launder, and repeat if necessary.

## NEVER FAIL RED VELVET CAKE

2 1/2 c. Cake flour	1 1/2 c. Oil
1 1/2 c. Sugar	1 t. vinegar
1 t. Soda	2 eggs
1 t. Cocoa	1 oz. bottle red food coloring
1 c. Buttermilk	1 t. vanilla



### Directions:

Sift together flour, sugar, soda, and cocoa. Add other ingredients in order listed and mix thoroughly. Bake in 3 cake pans which have been greased and floured at 315 degrees for about 15 minutes. Check cakes and take out when firm in center. DO NOT BROWN.

### Frosting:

1 Stick Margarine	1 box confectioner's sugar
1 8-oz. Cream cheese	1 t. vanilla
1 c. Chopped nuts	

Let margarine and cream cheese soften at room temperature. Cream well. Add confectioner's sugar and continue beating until creamy. Add vanilla and nuts. Spread on cake.

## Christmas Trail Mix

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- 1 (16 ounce) jar salted peanuts
- 1 (12 ounce) box corn and rice cereal
- 3 cups honey and oat granola
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vegetable oil
- 8 ounces red candy-coated chocolate pieces (M&M has red and green at Christmas)
- 8 ounces green candy-coated chocolate pieces
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups raisins

Preheat oven to 250 degrees

In a large roasting pan, combine peanuts, cereal, and granola.

In a small saucepan, combine honey and oil. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat and pour over peanut mixture, tossing gently to coat.

Bake mixture for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour mixture in a single layer on wax paper; allow to cool completely.

Spoon trail mix into a large bowl; stir in candy-coated chocolate pieces and raisins. Store in airtight containers.

Makes about 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  quarts

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