



Working for You! Autauga County

Quarterly Newsletter, December 2010



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www.aces.edu/counties/Autauga/

As we enter this holiday season, we hope that you will remember the reason for the celebration. As we pause to give thanks for our many blessings and challenges that have made us stronger, we give thanks for you and the many ways you have blessed us with calls, e-mails, volunteer services, program participation, sponsorships, and, most important, your friendships.

We know it's easy to overspend during the holidays. We try to make everything perfect for everyone, often causing the true meaning of the season to slip by unnoticed, thus creating a financial hangover in January. Christmas is the perfect time to practice the joy of giving and to show children why giving is as much fun as getting. You may be surprised to learn research shows what children really want for the holidays is a relaxed and loving time with family, an evenly-paced holiday season, reliable family traditions, and of course, a few gifts. However, research also suggests that children have much more reasonable expectations on the number and the amount of money spent on gifts.

As parents/role models, we must continue to be positive examples for our children - demonstrate how to solve problems, how to deal with a change in the budget, and how to make decisions. When our children see us handle a situation(s) with confidence, they learn that they too can handle life's challenges. What messages are you sending your loved ones this holiday season?

In whatever way you and your family choose to spend the holiday season, we hope you will enjoy each other and be blessed.

*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!
The Autauga County Extension
Office Staff*



The Alabama Cooperative Extension System provides expertise 24 hours a day at aces.edu (4 million site visits annually). Online services including articles, publications, blogs, Q&A, and more than 1,650 virtual events in 2009, saving many thousands of dollars and travel hours.

www.aces.edu/counties/autauga

IMPORTANT!

**THE ALABAMA COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SYSTEM OFFICES
WILL BE CLOSED BEGINNING
DECEMBER 18, 2010 THROUGH
JANUARY 2, 2011.**

**WE WILL RE-OPEN ON
MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2011.**

Autauga County Extension Office Staff

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County Extension Coordinator,
Family and Child Development
4-H/Youth Development
Community Resource Development

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Regional Extension Agent,
Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

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Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources

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Consumer Science and Personal
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Animal Science and Forage

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Animal Science and Forage

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Mallory Kelley

Home Grounds, Gardens and
Home Pests

Roosevelt Robinson

Forestry, Wildlife and
Natural Resource Management

Danielle D. Rudolph

4-H & Youth Development
Family & Child Development

Rudy Yates

Agronomic Crops

Create an Indoor Garden this Winter

Contributed by:

Mallory Kelley, Regional Extension Agent



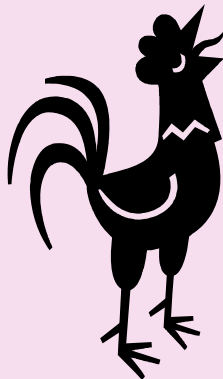
For a breath of spring in the depths of winter, it's hard to beat a pot of flowering paper-white narcissus. Paper-white narcissus are easy and foolproof enough that forcing them to flower is a good project even for the newest gardener and they make a beautiful decoration for your home or as a gift.

Purchase the bulbs anytime after October 1st from a reputable nursery or garden center. With paper-whites it is a good idea not to set them out all at once. Space out the time between when you set them out to every 10 days and then your blooms will not come all at once, then you will have blooms from December to Spring. Once you do set out the paper-white bulbs you should begin to see flowers in 4-6 weeks. Although the term "forcing" is used when speaking of Paper-whites in our area of the Southeast it might be better expressed as "fooling" since what you really do is fool the bulb into thinking winter is over and it is time to bloom. Paper-whites are the easiest indoor bulbs to force or "fool", and are usually available at local nurseries and home improvement centers, or through catalogs. Paperwhites are best grown in a shallow pot or bowl with no drainage holes in the bottom and best of all, no soil is re-

quire, only water. You will start by finding a container and filling the bottom with gravel, small stones, or even fun things like colored beads or marbles (there are tons of creative options). Then place as many paper-white bulbs as will fit on top of the gravel, with the pointed side up. Place the bulbs down in the gravel or marbles so that they act as support to hold the bulbs in place, but do not bury the bulbs. You want at least half of the bulb exposed. Add water up to the base of the bulbs and maintain it at this level making sure that the bulb does not stay in the water once it begins to send out roots or the bulb will rot. Place the container in a cool, dark place for two weeks before placing it in a warm, sunny location. Add water as evaporation and root uptake deplete the supply. Avoid disturbing the bulbs after planting as the roots are fragile.

There may be a slight difference in flower timing depending on the temperatures. Higher temperatures encourage weak growth and poor flowering. Bulbs immediately placed at a temperature of 60-70°F will bloom in about 6 weeks. For later bloom you can delay setting them out or the pot can be maintained at 50°F, and then moved to the higher temperature. For late spring bloom, the bulbs can be stored dry at 50°F. When potted, these will usually bloom in 3-4 weeks. The cooler the room, the longer it will take the bulbs to flower and the longer they will remain in bloom.

Paper-white narcissus are tender bulbs that will not overwinter outdoors easily and they may be forced only once. After the foliage begins to turn yellow, discard the bulbs and the potting medium (Gravel or marbles may be washed and stored and used again next year). Wash containers immediately and thoroughly to remove salts and lime deposits and hopefully by now, warmer temperatures and outdoor spring flowers have arrived!



COMING IN February!!!!

We will be having a "Homesteading" series of workshops for the public which will be a six week series of informational workshops on topics such as:

- * **Beekeeping**
- * **Backyard Chickens**
- * **Growing Fruits**
- * **Growing Vegetables**
- * **Freezing and Preserving Foods**
- * **Backyard Meats- such as having your own goats, cows, ect.**

This will be a series of six workshops every Tuesday night from 6-8:00 starting:

February 1, 8, 15, 22, March 1, 8

The on site presentation will be from Comer Hall at Auburn University, but the Autauga County Extension Office will be a host site that will have a live broadcast of the presentations with opportunities to ask questions. Also there will be someone onsite that has a specialty in the area of that specific topic for additional questions.

There will be a small fee associated with each week.

Please contact our office (334) 361-7273 for more information if you are interested.

GROWING HERBS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Contributed by:
Wendy G. Ulrich
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Question: I started my first herb garden this year and would love to include some of my herbs in the coming holidays. Any suggestions?

Answer: I'm glad you had the joy of growing herbs in the garden this year and hope you also enjoyed experimenting with the wonderful flavors of cooking with fresh herbs. Some of my fond summer memories are of corn on the cob bathed in basil butter and vegetables grilled on rosemary stems sprinkled with fresh dill and thyme. If you didn't get a chance to try out some of these ideas it's still not too late to plan for some delicious, herbal, sensory delights during the upcoming Holidays!

Before the first frost takes the basil (which doesn't preserve very well by drying) harvest the tender leaves and make some basil butter to put in the freezer to use on root vegetables and on fresh baked breads. Herbal butters flavored with basil or sage is easy to make and worth the time you put into them now. Just mix softened, room temperature butter with some chopped basil leaves (or herb of choice) and blend well. You can roll the butter into a log with plastic wrap and freeze to slice later or use a butter mold or tub to store in the freezer until needed. Sage butter is "to die for" on hot biscuits; or try some chive butter on mashed potatoes. Basil may also be frozen in ice cube trays with just enough water to hold the leaves together, then store the cubes in a zip lock bag to add to soups and sauces this winter.



Be sure to label and date your herbs when you store them in the freezer. These butters may also be used right away but benefit from aging to blend the flavors. When planning for the Holidays these butters may also be created in decorative candy molds for festive individual butters at the table. Place enough butter in the molds and tap to be sure the butter fills all parts of the mold, place in the freezer until hard and unmold and place in a zip lock bag and refrigerate or freeze until right before it's time to set the table (the small individual butters soften quickly). Believe me these will be a hit that will be remembered and earn you rave reviews.

My favorite herbal butter recipe is for Orange Thyme Butter. It may sound complicated but it's really quite simple and you can't beat it for flavor.

Orange Thyme Butter

¼ pound unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)
¾ teaspoon fresh grated fresh orange zest
¾ teaspoon fresh orange juice
¾ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme

Blend all ingredients together and place in tub or mold, or roll into log. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator overnight to combine flavors. Butter may also be kept in the freezer for a longer period of time.

Amounts are to taste, I usually use closer to a tablespoon of each added ingredient to the butter.

This is a wonderful butter for Thanksgiving as the flavor compliments many of the traditional dishes served during this holiday. Herbal butter makes a wonderful "Hostess Gift" if you're not the one doing all the cooking for the holiday meal. To make it even better, gift it in a pretty dish or container.

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He who has not Christmas in his heart, will never find it under a tree.

~Roy L. Smith

Herbs... Continued from Page 3

Another great gift idea is herbal vinegars. And these are also a wonderful way to preserve the harvest. Steep herbs in vinegar just as you would make a fine cup of tea; bring some vinegar to almost boiling and pour over fresh herbs, cover and steep till the desired strength of flavor. Remove the herbs with a strainer, (for clearer vinegar pour through a coffee filter) and bottle in a pretty bottle with a plastic cap or cork. A great combination to try is rice vinegar and purple basil. This is light flavored and a pretty vinegar for fruits, vegetables, and salads. Experiment with different combinations of vinegars and herbs. Red wine vinegar and rosemary make a wonderful marinade for beef. These vinegars also make wonderful hostess gifts or are a great addition to a food basket.

Another great idea for the holidays is to garnish and decorate with fresh herbs. Turkey and ham are a treat for the eye when served up with a garnish of fresh herbs and they double duty as a seasoning to go with the meal. Try some sugared herbs along with sugared fruits as garnish or decoration, or you may even tuck some fresh herbs in with the folded napkins at each place setting.

These are just a few ideas for the holidays, not only for happy tasting, but also for gift giving. With the economy the way it is this year, gifts of food and homemade goodies are really going to be appreciated, so give the gift of love and you'll be a favorite on everyone's gift list this year.

Four Basics of Holiday Food Safety

Contributed by:

Janice Hall, Regional Extension Agent

Wash Your Hands



Mom and Dad'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.

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You've carefully laid all the plans for a lavish holiday party for out-of-town family and guests, adorned with all of those things that make the holidays so special — baked turkey, ham and finger foods.

You did it! Stop, before you get too carried away commending yourself on this awesome feat, answer this question: Have you taken adequate precaution against food-borne illness?

Millions of 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.

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

Holiday Food Safety...Continued from page 4**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 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.

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 defrost-

ing. 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.

**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.

**GET YOUR
2011 EXTENSION
MONEY MANAGEMENT
CALENDARS**

Pick yours up today at:

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

Safe Handling Instructions for Your Turkey

Refrigerator- A turkey that is thawed in the refrigerator can remain in the refrigerator for 1-2 days.

Freezer- For best quality, cook a whole turkey within 12 months, turkey parts (9 months) and ground or giblets (3-4 months).

Thawing your Turkey- There are three ways to thaw your turkey safely-in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave.

- ◆ **In the Refrigerator-**Allow approximately 24 hours for every 4-5 pounds. Keep the turkey in its original wrapper. Place it on a tray or in a pan to catch any juices that may leak.
- ◆ **In Cold Water-**Allow approximately 30 minutes per pound. Wrap your turkey securely, making sure the water is not able to leak through the wrapping. Submerge your wrapped turkey in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed. Do not refreeze.
- ◆ **In the Microwave Oven-**Check your owner's manual for the size turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. Remove all outside wrapping. Place on a microwave-safe dish to catch any juices that may leak. Cook your turkey immediately. Do not refreeze or refrigerate your turkey after thawing in the microwave oven.

REMINDER: Remove the giblets from the turkey cavities after thawing. Cook separately.

Safe Handling Instructions for Your Holiday Ham

Storage- Raw pork should be stored in the refrigerator at 40 degrees F. or lower and used within 3-5 days of the "sell by" date on the package or it should be frozen.

Freezer - For best quality, cook a ham within 2 months.

Thawing your Ham - There are two methods that can be used to safely thaw pork - the refrigerator method and the cold water method. Never thaw pork on the kitchen counter.

- **Refrigerator Method** - Allow approximately 4-5 hours per pound for a small ham and 5-7 hours for a large roast.. Keep the ham in its original wrapper or unwrap and loosely cover with plastic or foil. Place it on a tray or in a pan to catch any juices that may leak.
- **Cold Water Method** -Allow approximately 2-3 hours per pound for a small ham and 30 minutes per pound for a large roast. Wrap your ham securely, making sure the water is not able to leak through the wrapping. Submerge your wrapped ham in fresh cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the ham immediately after it is thawed. Do not refreeze.
- **Cooking Ham** - Set oven temperature to 325 degrees F. Before eating cook cured and fresh hams to 160 degrees F and fully cooked hams to 140 degrees F.

REMINDER: Ham can be cooked without thawing first. Increase the cooking time if starting with frozen meat. Larger cuts will require up to 1 1/2 times the cooking times of an unfrozen cut.

Holiday Splurging: The Right Way

Contributed by:

Valerie Conner, Regional Extension Agent



If you're one of countless Americans concerned that a little splurging this holiday season will blow your diet, relax.

Just remember that there is a

right way and a wrong way to splurge. So long as this splurging is confined to only a handful of meals --- Thanksgiving, Christmas and maybe an office dinner --- you'll be okay.

Enjoy that Thanksgiving or Christmas meal! Eat the food, enjoy it and don't worry about gaining weight on the basis of only one or two larger meals during the season.

Studies have shown that Americans gain an average 3 and

4 pounds during the holidays, but it's not because of that lavish Christmas or Thanksgiving meal. It's because many people don't apply the brakes after those first couple of holiday meals.

As the holiday reveling reaches full throttle, the temptations also multiply. On top of the traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, are the lavish holiday parties strung in-between as well as the food and beverages consumed on New Year's Day.

We enter the holiday season looking forward to all the parties with friends, family and co-workers and all the cakes, cookies and beverages that go with them. These, rather than the two traditional meals, are where the problems occur and the reason why it's so important during the holiday season to track calories.

You may want to go light on the breakfast and lunch if you're planning on a big meal later that evening. If you're going out, keep track of calories you've previously consumed throughout the day.

The important thing is to remain conscious of what's going on and to do a little dietary and weight correcting when needed. As long as you're following this general rule of thumb, you can enjoy those extravagant Thanksgiving and Christmas meals without the guilt.

Stress Free Holidays?

Contributed by:

Valerie Conner, Regional Extension Agent

NO holiday is without stress. You just need to recognize the signs of too much stress and set limits for an enjoyable Holiday with family and friends.

Have a stress-less holiday season by making your expectations for the season realistic and practical. It is okay to be choosy. Make sure you spend time with people whose company you enjoy. It's also important to make time for yourself. Let this be a time to get back to the reason you celebrate the season in the first place.

It is important to recognize the symptoms of stress so you can better manage it. Some signals that will alert you to excessive stress include:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Decreased satisfaction with tasks
- Constant feeling of urgency
- Tension headaches, backaches, stomachaches, or other physical discomforts



To minimize the stress, first make a list of everything you will attempt to get done in the weeks ahead. If looking at the list makes you tired, it's time to cut back on the volume of things you are planning.

Don't over-commit! If something doesn't sound like it will enhance your holidays or just can't be completed, "Drop it!" You'll enjoy the holiday that much better. Stay focused on the reason for the season.

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN ALABAMA MASTER GARDENER?
TO ATTEND THE 2011 AUTAUGA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**

YOU MAY DOWNLOAD AN APPLICATION AT:

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1155/>

Mail your application to
ACES, 2226 Highway 14 West, Suite E
Autaugaville, AL 36003

Or call the Autauga County Extension Office at (334) 361-7273



The perfect gift for your favorite cook!

The **Auburn**
COOKBOOK

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

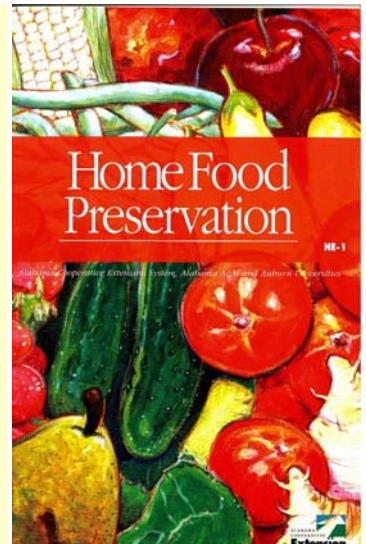
For Christmas delivery, orders must be received by Friday, December 15



Cookbooks available at the
Autauga County Extension Office
2226 Hwy. 14 W., Suite E
Autaugaville, AL 36003

Or send \$10 (check or money order to ACES)
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Publications Distribution
6 Duncan Hall Annex
Auburn University, AL 36849-5632
For credit card orders call (334) 844-1592
www.aces.edu

Get Your Auburn Cookbook or the Home Food Preservation Cookbook at the Autauga County Extension Office. The Auburn Cookbook costs \$10 and the Home Food Preservation Cookbook is \$9. These make great Christmas, Wedding and Birthday gifts!



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")

Budget Holiday Meal for Eight:

Contributed by:

Josine Walter, UNEP Agent Assistant, I

Turkey, stuffing, potatoes, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, a dozen dinner rolls, and pumpkin pie with low-fat whipped topping.

Shopping List:

- \$6.90 - A 10 lb turkey (10 lb. @ \$0.69/lb.)
- \$2.00 - Stuffing to fit the turkey (two boxes)
- \$0.50 - A can of low-sodium chicken broth
- \$0.96 - A can of cranberries

- \$1.28 - 2 cans of cream of mushroom soup
- \$2.40 - 4 cans of green beans
- \$1.83 - A can of fried onions
- \$3.84 - 2 cans of sweet potatoes or yams
- \$4.97 - 10 lbs of potatoes
- \$0.88 - 1 lb of raw onions
- \$0.88 - A can or jar of gravy
- \$2.50 - A dozen whole wheat dinner rolls
- \$3.00 - A pumpkin pie
- \$0.88 - A container of low-fat whipped topping

Total - \$32.82 plus tax

PREVENT FIRE IN YOUR HOME

Contributed by:

Yvonne Thomas, County Extension Coordinator

KITCHEN The number one cause of home fires is cooking. So you should avoid kitchen fires by eating all of your meals at restaurants, right? While that may sound appealing, the best course of action is to review your cooking activities to be sure that you are following best practices. For example, leaving the kitchen and stove top unattended when you've begun cooking is a poor cooking practice and the leading contributor to kitchen fires. Check around your cooktop. Are combustible items within three feet? Keeping things that can catch fire too close to a cooktop is considered a bad practice. A third bad practice is unintentionally turning on or forgetting to turn off cooking equipment. Take a moment to review your kitchen actions. Do they fall in the **safe practices** or the poor practices category?

DRYERS A colleague mentioned that three of her friends had lost their homes last year because of **clothes dryer fires**. Failure to clean clothes washers and dryers is the leading cause of those fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). When was the last time you cleaned your washer and dryer? If you don't know how, learn.

SMOKING Does anyone in your household smoke? If so, you might remind them that smoking in the house is risky business. According to the NFPA, more than 114,000 fires were started in 2008 by smoking materials. Six hundred eighty people died and 1,520 were injured that year because of smoking-material fires. Reduce the risk of being included in future statistics by asking smokers to smoke outside, use deep, wide ashtrays, and make sure that all butts and ashes are out before throwing them away. You may save a life.

HEATING We all want heat in our homes when it's cold outside, but make sure that the heat doesn't become a fire that consumes the house. Half of the approximately

66,000 house fires involving heating equipment reported in 2008 occurred in December, January, and February. One-third of those fires were directly related to space heaters. How can you reduce your chance of a heating equipment fire? Follow these three safe practices: (1) Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, (2) if you have a fireplace or heater that uses solid fuels, hire a qualified professional to clean and inspect it every year, and (3) turn off portable heaters when you leave a room or go to bed.



SMOKE ALARMS CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE.

When was the last time you tested your smoke alarms? NFPA recommends that you test them once a month. If you use regular smoke alarms, replace the batteries at least once a year, and replace all smoke alarms every 10 years or sooner if they don't respond properly. Install smoke alarms on every floor of the house, including the basement and near bedrooms. If any member of your household is deaf or hard of hearing, consider installing smoke alarms that use strobe lights or other attention-getting options.

GET OUT! That's the immediate action you and your family should take if a fire erupts in your house. Time is your enemy in a fire. In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a major fire, and in just a few minutes a house can become filled with smoke and engulfed in flames. Create an escape plan, and practice two ways of escaping every room in the house. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a downloadable **fire escape** plan grid and fire escape planning tips for families with babies and toddlers. For more fire safety tips and topics, visit the following:

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Fire Safety Institute
Home Safety Council
National Fire Protection Association
U.S. Fire Administration*

Source: <http://www.aces.edu/eden/>



Autauga County PALS
Autauga - Prattville
Electronic Recycling Day
Saturday, January 22, 2011
Pratt Plaza
8 a.m. until 11 a.m.
Call (334) 361-2466 for more information

Happy Holiday Spending more joy, less debt

Contributed by:

Sharon Golden, Regional Extension Agent

Make a list and check it twice

Make a list of names and jot down gift ideas. Use your talent and imagination for creative gift ideas that can be less expensive like framed photographs, craft items, a coupon for babysitting or tennis lessons, etc. Assign a spending limit for each name.

Be realistic

Limit your budget to what you can realistically afford. Buy only one present per person. Buy only for people you really care about. Talk to family members about setting a dollar limit on gifts or drawing names.

More than gifts

Plan for other holiday expenses such as travel, decorations and food. Use the Holiday Spending Calculator online at www.bankrate.com.

Kid stuff

Ask your kids to prioritize their lists. Limit expensive gifts. Look for sales or coupons. Give jointly with grandparents on big ticket items. Shop discount and dollar stores for small gifts and stocking stuffers. Guide children to focus on the spirit of the holidays instead of gifts. Enjoy family traditions that cost little or no money. Watch your favorite movie and pop your own popcorn. Bake cookies or make wreaths and deliver to neighbors and friends.

Cash or Credit?

Pay with cash. If you must use a credit card, set up a strategy now to pay it off fast.

Shopping

Avoid impulse buys. Comparison shop. Watch for sales. Stick to your list. Remember, overspending now leads to financial stress in the New Year.

Prattville-Autauga
Character Coalition, Inc.
Building Communities of Character

Visions of Character

December 2010

SENSITIVITY vs. Callousness

Perceiving the true attitudes and emotions of those around me.

"Do not judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins."

Native American proverb

KEYS TO BUILDING SENSITIVITY

OBSERVE CLOSELY - Pay attention to others' posture, tone of voice, facial expressions or changes in habits. Examine your attitude and behaviors as you react with others. Observing others can help you empathize and understand them, and observing your responses can show you where your attitudes need adjustment.

LISTEN CAREFULLY - "How are you doing?" should be more than just a passing nicety. Take the time to lend an ear to those who are unusually quiet, seemingly agitated or upset. When others need time to think, give them space and check back later. Many times the simple act of listening provides more encouragement than anything you might say.

TRY TO UNDERSTAND - Even if you may not understand immediately, ask non-threatening questions so that the other person can sort out and explain their thoughts. Do not ask questions out of curiosity, but out of a sincere effort to understand. Put yourself in the shoes of those you need to understand. Misunderstanding does the most damage when individuals do not honestly confront others, do not realize real issues, or do not know how to approach conflicts.

EMPATHIZE - Arguing about something will not change feelings and attitudes except for the worst. The sensitive individual seeks to identify with others' feelings and experiences without being critical or negative.

DO WHAT YOU CAN - Have you neglected to help when you knew you could have? The more you know about a person, the greater your responsibility to that person. Discern what you can do, whether it be listening or doing something specific.

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Diabetic Double Layer Pumpkin Cheesecake

Number of Servings: 8

Serving Size: 1 slice

Overview

Preparation time: 10 minutes, Total time: 30 minutes

Recipe Source:

American Diabetes Association. You can order cookbooks from their online bookstore or call 1-800-232-6733.

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INGREDIENTS:

2 pkgs (16 oz.) Fat Free Cream Cheese, softened
1/2 cup Sugar
1/2 tsp. Vanilla
2 ea. Eggs

1/2 cup
1/4 tsp.
1 dash
1/3 cup
1/2 cup

Canned Pumpkin
Ground Cinnamon
Ground Nutmeg
Graham Cracker Crumbs
Whipped Topping, thawed

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Mix cream cheese, sugar and vanilla with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add eggs; mix until blended. Do not overbeat after adding eggs. Remove 1 cup batter; stir in pumpkin and spices. Spray 9-inch pie plate with no stick cooking spray; sprinkle bottom with crumbs.
2. Pour remaining plain batter into crust. Top with pumpkin batter. 3. Bake at 325 degrees F for 40 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool. Refrigerate 3 hours or overnight. Top each serving with 1 Tbsp. of the whipped topping.

NUTRITION:

Total Calories: 150, Calories from Fat: 22, Total Fat: 2g, Saturated Fat: 1g, Cholesterol: 65mg, Sodium: 340mg, Potassium: 2mg, Carbohydrates: 23g, Dietary Fiber: 1g, Sugars: 18g, Protein: 9g, Vitamin A: 2%, Vitamin C: 2%, Calcium 2%, Iron: 2%, Folic Acid: 2%



Diabetic Broccoli Casserole

Number of Servings: 12

Serving Size: 1/2 cup

Recipe Source:

The New Soul Food Cookbook for People with Diabetes

©2009 American Diabetes Association

INGREDIENTS:

2 ea. 12 oz. pkg frozen chopped broccoli, defrosted
1/2 cup Egg Substitute
1 ea. 10 oz. can low-fat cream of celery soup
1 medium onion, chopped

1 Tbsp Clove garlic, minced
1/4 tsp Pepper
2 tsp Low-Calorie Margarine
1 ea. 8 oz. Stuffing Mix
4 oz. Shredded Reduced-Fat Cheddar Cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and place the broccoli in the dish. Mix the egg, soup, onion, garlic, and pepper together and pour over the broccoli. 2. Melt the margarine and stir it into the stuffing mix. Pour the stuffing over the broccoli, spread evenly, and sprinkle the cheese on top. Bake for 35 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

NUTRITION:

Total calories: 150, Calories from Fat: 35, Total Fat: 4g, Saturated Fat: 2g, Cholesterol: 8mg, Sodium: 560mg, Potassium: 2mg, Carbohydrates: 21g, Dietary Fiber: 3g, Sugars: 3g, Protein: 8g, Vitamin A: 2%, Vitamin C: 2%, Calcium: 2%, Iron: 2%, Folic Acid: 2%

Add a dash of good health to your holiday feast this year by incorporating recipes from Families, Food & Fitness. Try these tasty additions to your celebration.



Lighter Carrot Cake

Number of Servings: 20 Cream Cheese Frosting

2 c. all purpose flour 1 tsp. salt 2 egg whites 4 oz fat-free cream cheese
 1/2 c. sugar 1/2 c. apple butter 3 cups shredded carrot 1/4 cup butter, softened
 1/2 c. packed brown sugar 1/2 c. vegetable oil cooking spray 1/2 tsp vanilla
 2 tsp. baking soda 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla 3 c. powdered sugar
 2 tsp. cinnamon 2 eggs

Cake:

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Mix together flour, sugar, brown sugar, baking soda, cinnamon and salt.
3. Combine apple butter, oil, vanilla, eggs, and egg whites.
4. Stir flour mixture and apple butter mixture together, just until moist.
5. Fold in shredded carrot.
6. Spray 9x13 inch baking pan with cooking spray. Pour in batter.
7. Bake for 35 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

Frosting:

1. Beat cream cheese, butter and vanilla together on medium speed until smooth.
2. Gradually add sugar and beat at low until blended.
3. Spread on cooled carrot cake.

Nutrition Information per Serving: Calories: 260, Fat 8.5g, Protein: 3g, Carbohydrate: 43g, Fiber: 1g, Sodium: 185mg



Recipe for Turkey Leftovers

Turkey and Cheese Enchiladas

Number of Servings: 8 (1 enchilada)

1 medium onion, chopped 1 tsp. ground cumin
 1 Tablespoon margarine 8 flour tortillas (6-inch)
 1 1/2 cups leftover turkey, cooked and shredded 2 cups (8 oz.) extra-sharp, low-fat, cheddar cheese shredded & divided
 1 (13 oz) jar salsa, divided Non-stick cooking spray
 1 package (3 oz) 1/3 less fat cream cheese, cubed

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (unless you choose to use the microwave). Lightly spray baking dish.
2. Cook and stir onion in margarine in large skillet until tender.
3. Stir in turkey, 1/4 cup salsa, cream cheese and cumin. Cook until thoroughly heated.
4. Stir in 1/2 of shredded cheese.
5. Spoon about 1/3 c turkey mixture in center of each tortilla; roll up.
6. Place seam side down in 12x7 inch baking dish. Top with remaining salsa and cheese
7. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes or microwave 3 to 5 minutes or until heated through.

Nutrition Information per Serving: Calories: 280, Protein: 19g, Total Fat: 9g, Saturated Fat: 4g, Total Carbohydrate: 25g, Dietary Fiber: 1g, Sodium: 760g

Recipe for Giving & Sharing

Hot Cocoa Mix

Number of Servings: 45 (15 cups)

10 c. dry non-fat milk powder 1 3/4 c. unsweetened cocoa powder
4 3/4 c. sifted confectioners' sugar 1 3/4 c. powdered non-dairy creamer

1. Combine all ingredients in large bowl. Stir until thoroughly combined. Store in an air-tight container.
2. To make cocoa, place 1/3 c. mixture in a coffee cup or mug. Add 3/4 c. boiling water. Stir to dissolve.



Nutrition Information per Serving: Calories: 140, Fat: 1.5g, Carbohydrate: 27g, Protein: 6g, Fiber: 1g, Sodium: 85mg



Crème De Menthe Brownies

Ingredients

1 cups (2 sticks) butter, softened
2 cups sugar
4 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour

3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 (10-ounce) package Creme de Menthe baking chips (recommended: Andes)
Shaved Creme de Menthe thins (recommended: Andes)
Chocolate frosting

Frosting:

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, melted
1/3 cup cocoa
2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 13 by 9 by 2-inch pan.

Using an electric mixer, combine butter and sugar in a large mixing bowl; beat at medium speed until creamy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla, mixing well.

In a separate bowl, combine flour, cocoa, and baking powder. Gradually stir into butter mixture. Fold in mint chips. Spoon into greased pan. Bake for 35 minutes.

While brownies are baking, prepare frosting. Combine butter, cocoa, confectioners' sugar, vanilla and milk in a large mixing bowl; beat at medium speed with an electric mixer until dry ingredients are moistened. Beat at high speed until spreading consistency.

Remove pan from the oven and allow brownies to cool in pan on wire rack. Spread with chocolate frosting. Top with shaved mint thins.

Source:

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/paula-deen/creme-de-menthe-brownies-recipe/index.html>

Red Velvet Mini Pie



Ingredients:

For the pies:

3 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
 1 1/2 cups canola oil
 1 teaspoon white vinegar
 One 1-ounce bottle red food coloring
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 1/2 cups sugar
 2 eggs
 1 cup buttermilk

For the filling:

5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 1 cup milk
 1 cup sugar
 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, softened
 1/2 cup solid vegetable shortening, such as Crisco
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease two cookie sheets. Sift the flour, baking soda, and cocoa together. In a separate bowl, combine the oil, vinegar, food coloring, and vanilla.

Using an electric mixer, beat the sugar and eggs together until they turn pale and double in volume. Add the oil mixture and beat to combine. Add the flour mixture and buttermilk alternately in five small additions, starting and ending with the flour.

Drop the batter by teaspoons onto the baking sheets, allowing 1 inch between drops, as the cookies will spread. You'll be making 48 cookies. Bake until the cookies are firm but not crisp, about 12 minutes. Transfer immediately to racks to cool.

To make the filling, put the flour into a medium saucepan and slowly add the milk, whisking until smooth. Set over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly with a whisk, until very thick, about 3 minutes. Allow to cool completely.

Cream the sugar, butter, shortening, and vanilla with an electric mixer. Add the cooled flour mixture and whip until fluffy. Spread onto one cookie and top it with another to make a sandwich; repeat with the remaining cookies and filling. Cover the filled whoopee pies with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator.

Servings: 24 Pies, Prep Time: 20-30 Minutes, Cook Time: 12-15 minutes, Difficulty: Moderate

Cranberry Hootycreeks

A beautifully festive cookie in a jar recipe. These make great gifts."

Ingredients

5/8 cup all-purpose flour
 1/2 cup rolled oats
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
 1/3 cup white sugar
 1/2 cup dried cranberries
 1/2 cup white chocolate chips
 1/2 cup chopped pecans



Directions

Layer the ingredients in a 1 quart or 1 liter jar, in the order listed.

Attach a tag with the following instructions:
 Cranberry Hootycreeks

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease a cookie sheet or line with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, beat together 1/2 cup softened butter, 1 egg and 1 teaspoon of vanilla until fluffy. Add the entire jar of ingredients, and mix together by hand until well blended. Drop by heaping spoonfuls onto the prepared baking sheets.
3. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until edges start to brown. Cool on baking sheets, or remove to cool on wire racks.

Buffalo Chicken Dip Recipe

Ingredients

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
 1 can (10 ounces) chunk white chicken, drained
 1/2 cup buffalo wing sauce
 1/2 cup ranch salad dressing
 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
 Tortilla chips



Directions

Spread cream cheese into an ungreased shallow 1-qt. baking dish. Layer with chicken, buffalo wing sauce and ranch dressing. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve warm with tortilla chips. Yield: about 2 cups.

Nutrition Facts: 1 serving (2 tablespoons) equals 156 calories, 13 g fat (7 g saturated fat), 38 mg cholesterol, 484 mg sodium, 2 g carbohydrate, trace fiber, 7 g protein.

Buffalo Chicken Dip published in Taste of Home December/January 2007, p17

White Chocolate Party Mix Recipe

Ingredients

5 cups Cheerios
 5 cups Corn Chex
 2 cups salted peanuts
 1 pound chocolate M&M's
 1 package (10 ounces) mini pretzels
 2 packages (12 ounces each) white baking chips
 3 tablespoons canola oil



Directions

In a large bowl, combine first five ingredients; set aside. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat chips and oil at 70% power for 1 minute, stirring once. Microwave on high for 5 seconds; stir until smooth. Pour over cereal mixture and mix well. Spread onto three waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Cool; break apart. Store in an airtight container. Yield: 5 quarts.

Editor's Note: This recipe was tested in a 1,100-watt microwave.

Nutrition Facts: 1 serving (3/4 cup) equals 547 calories, 27 g fat (10 g saturated fat), 9 mg cholesterol, 589 mg sodium, 70 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 11 g protein.

White Chocolate Party Mix published in Taste of Home December/January 1996, p64



Baked Brie with Pecans

Prep: 10 minutes Total: 45 minutes

Serves 8

Ingredients:

- 1 small wheel of Brie or Camembert (about 9 ounces)
- 1/2 cup pecan pieces
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- Crackers or sliced baguette, for serving

Source of recipe:

Marthastewart.com

This recipe is by Everyday Food reader, Kathy Quinnof Montclair, New Jersey.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place cheese on a rimmed baking sheet; bake until softened, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a serving plate; cool about 20 minutes.
2. While cheese cools, place nuts on a clean baking sheet; bake until toasted and fragrant, 7 to 10 minutes. Sprinkle nuts over cheese.
3. In a small saucepan, combine sugar and maple syrup. Bring to a boil over medium heat; simmer until foamy, 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Drizzle warm sauce over slightly cooled cheese and nuts; serve with crackers or baguette.



Holiday Cider

Makes 1 Gallon

Ready in 1 - 2 hours

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 1/2 cup light or dark brown sugar
- 1 can (6 oz.) lemonade concentrate
- 1 can (6 oz.) orange juice concentrate
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 1 tablespoon whole allspice
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Oranges slices for garnish, if desired

1. Tie cloves and allspice in cheesecloth.
2. In large Dutch oven or 1 gallon crockpot, simmer sugar, lemonade concentrate, orange juice concentrate, all spices and 1/3 cup water for 1 hour.
3. Add cider and reheat. When cider is hot, remove spices in cheesecloth and garnish with orange slices, if desired.