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Family and Consumer
Sciences Department
University of Florida Extension
for Sarasota County



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Secret Ingredients for Healthy Holiday Cooking

Holiday meals don't have to be heavy and fat-filled. Try these simple secrets for cutting fat and adding more nutrition. Your friends and family won't notice a difference in taste – but they may notice a difference in their waistlines.

Soups. When making cream soups, substitute an equal amount of evaporated skim milk for cream. To thicken soups, add partially mashed canned beans or a potato that has been grated and microwaved first for 5 minutes.

Dips. For lighter dips, use half plain yogurt and half lowfat or fat-free sour cream or mayonnaise, then flavor with herbs and tomato paste, pureed spinach or other ingredients.

Sauces. Instead of high-fat sauces or gravies for meat and poultry, make simple fruit chutneys by simmering fruit – such as mandarin oranges, diced apples or pears – with minced onion, sugar, vinegar and raisins.

Stuffing. For a nutritious lowfat stuffing, use whole wheat bread cubes, dried cranberries, chopped and sautéed onion and celery. Season with dried parsley and sage, then toss with hot, fat-free, reduced-sodium, broth until moistened but not wet. Mix in chopped walnuts and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Place in a shallow pan lightly coated with olive or canola oil spray and cover with aluminum foil; bake at 325 degrees for 10 minutes per cup of stuffing.

Baked goods. To lighten baked goods like cakes, quick breads and muffins, substitute applesauce for half the fat. Prune puree works well in chocolate items, like cookies or lowfat brownies. You can also blend prune puree with cocoa instead of using higher fat chocolate.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter

If Not Carbs, Then What? (

Five years ago the diet “wisdom” was that the real reason we were overweight was that we were eating too much fat. People tried to go on fat free diets. Hundreds, if not thousands, of fat free, low fat, reduced fat, and no fat foods showed up on the grocery shelves. Aside from the fact that we must have some fat in our diets, a fat free diet tastes awful. So, no one managed to stay on a no fat diet very long. But we ate lots and lots of the low fat foods. In fact, we ate so many of them that, as a nation, we gained weight.

Now, carbohydrates are the bad guys, instead of fats. If we can just stay off the carbohydrates we will lose weight, so they say. Again, if you eliminate something that you usually eat a lot of from your diet, you will lose weight. But, can you stick to the diet? Is it healthy? So far, not enough people have been able to stay on a low-carb diet long enough to really evaluate its safety. And until we are ready to increase our exercise and decrease the calories, we will keep gaining weight.

But, that doesn't stop the people who want to make money on a fad. There are now dozens if not hundreds of things on the market claiming to be 'low carb', or 'carb free'. What do they put in the foods when they take away the carbohydrates? What's the effect on the nutritional value? There are only a few options for replacements.

They can replace carbohydrates with protein. Soy protein, either as simply ground soy flour, or processed textured protein will work in some foods. Or, they may use wheat protein, which has its own type of texture. However, it can be bad news for anyone with allergies. In a few cases, milk proteins or egg proteins may be used. There is even low-carb milk available now! The natural milk sugar has been replaced with artificial sweeteners and extra protein.

Proteins are good because they can be treated to have a texture like meat, or feel like fats in your mouth. However, if carbohydrates are replaced with proteins, the calories remain exactly the same. And too much extra protein puts an extra load on our kidneys. They are the organs that have to get rid of all the excess nitrogen that comes with protein.

Some foods will use more fats to take the place of the carbs. This is harder to do except in sweets like chocolate candies. But enough nuts will make a little chocolate bar look bigger. Nuts do provide protein, but also lots of fat. The good thing is that the fats in nuts are healthy for our hearts.

Unfortunately, fat has two and half times as many calories as the same amount of sugar. The difference between a regular candy bar and a low carb one is only 5 calories less and 2 g. more fat!

Fat also has a bad tendency to clog up our arteries. So far, most people have not been able to stay on a low-carb, high fat diet long enough to do much damage, so the jury is still out.

Replacing carbs with fiber is another option. Fiber takes up lots of space, doesn't give us calories, and is good for our intestines. It has very little flavor, which is good because almost any other flavor can be added to it. But, if you are not used to a high fiber diet, the result of a sudden increase in fiber can be a lot of gas and cramps. Without enough fluid in the diet, fiber might cause constipation. With plenty of fluids, some people feel like they have a touch of diarrhea.

In sweet foods, sugar's volume and flavor can be replaced with sugar alcohols. These ingredients are based on sugar, but have a slightly different structure, so that we don't digest them very well. They are good because they are sweet, and do take up lots of space. They are bad because too much causes gas, cramps and diarrhea.

Source: Mary Keith, Food, Nutrition and Health Agent, Hillsborough, FL County Cooperative Extension

Clean Hand Statistics (December 2004)

The single most important thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness to others is to clean our hands! Here are the reasons why

Germs Are S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g

One of the most common ways people catch colds is by rubbing their noses or eyes after touching someone or something that's contaminated with the cold virus (rhinovirus).

Nearly 22 million school days are lost annually due to the common cold.

52.2 million cases of the common cold affect Americans under age 17 each year.

Some foodborne illnesses are spread through lack of hand cleaning. In fact, certain strains of E. coli, salmonella, and other bacteria can live on surfaces like cafeteria tables and doorknobs for up to two hours.

Rotavirus – a germ that causes gastrointestinal illness – can be transferred from a dry, smooth surface to a clean hand for as long as 20 minutes after the surface has been contaminated.

Illnesses Impact Students, Teachers, and Families ...

Infectious disease accounts for millions of lost school days each year.

Diarrhea is second only to the common cold as a cause of lost working time, with about 25 days lost from work or school each year for every 100 Americans.

Teacher illness costs time and money – not to mention the negative effects that teacher absences may have on student learning. In fact, teachers can be absent from school more days a year than students. One study found that teacher illness-related absences averaged 5.3 days a year, in contrast to an average of 4.5 days a year for students.

Who's Washing And Who's Not?

Students don't clean their hands often or well enough. In one study, only 58% of female and 48% of male middle and high school students washed their hands after using the bathroom. Of these, only 33% of the females and 8% of the males used soap.

Adult hand cleaning behaviors also need improvement. In one study, about 33% of adults using public restrooms didn't wash their hands after using the bathroom.

Education is Important ...

Hand cleaning and basic hygiene habits are generally learned during early childhood. But people need to be reminded periodically about the importance of clean hands and to wash them as often and thoroughly as they should. Research suggests that it is important for hygiene lessons to be repeated during the K-12 school curricula.

Hand Cleaning Helps Control Illness ...

One study involving Detroit school children showed that scheduled handwashing, at least four times a day, can reduce gastrointestinal illness and related absences by more than 50%.

A four-week handwashing program for a class of first grade students was associated with fewer absences and prescribed antibiotics than were reported the previous school year.

Source: School Network for Absenteeism Prevention

“Sell By,” “Use By,” Dates

The milk carton says “December 1” and now it’s December 3. Is it safe? Should you throw it out?

“**Sell by**” dates on perishable products are really about quality, not about safety. And they apply only as long as the product is at the supermarket, where storage temperatures are colder (usually around 30 degrees or so, depending on the product) than in home refrigerators. Home refrigerators should be kept at about 40 degrees, so the lettuce doesn’t freeze while the meat and milk are kept cold enough to slow bacteria growth.

Actually, the only sure thing a sell-by date tells you about a product is whether you should buy it. If the date has passed, don’t buy the product – otherwise you’ll bring home a food that is no longer at peak quality. If the date has not passed, buy it and follow these guidelines in order to ensure peak quality.

Use or freeze ground beef within two days of purchase, even if the date is later than that. It won’t be at peak freshness after more than two days in a home refrigerator.

Beef – other than ground beef – should be used or frozen within 3-5 days after purchase.

Raw poultry should be cooked or frozen within two days of purchase.

For most other perishable foods – milk, juice and so on – quality begins to go down about a week after they’re placed in the home refrigerator. Again, that’s even if the date on the package will come later than one week after the purchase, because that stamped date is meant for the colder temperatures of the supermarket.

Eggs keep fresh for 3-5 weeks after you get them home.

Of course everyone has his or her own threshold, making decisions about what state of freshness is acceptable. They open the package or cap and sniff and that’s ok. Deteriorating freshness is not about bacteria that cause illness but about bacteria that can impart an “off” smell or flavor, change texture, and result in a lose of nutrients.

The exception is the “**use by**” date for processed meat like deli meat. Luncheon meats and such run a small chance of being tainted with listeria bacteria, which can cause illness, and these products don’t usually get heated so the bacteria remain alive. If the meat spends a lot of time in a home refrigerator, especially if the temperature is higher than 40 degrees, the listeria can multiply to dangerous levels. **That’s why you should throw out processed meats that aren’t used by the “use by” date.**

Baby food and formula also have a “use by” date, but that’s essentially for meeting nutritional and quality standards rather than for safety.

Need more specifics? Call the USDA’s Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

How Much Water Do You Need?

A healthy adult loses 8 to 12 cups of water each day as sweat and waste. You lose even more water if you:

- Exercise more than usual
- Sweat in hot weather
- Vomit or have diarrhea
- Have a fever
- Eat salty foods
- Drink coffee, tea, soda with caffeine, or alcoholic beverages (caffeine and/or alcohol cause you to urinate more often)
- Eat bran cereals and food with added fiber (these foods absorb lots of water)

Your body works best if water is replaced quickly. Beverages are a major source of water. Solid foods also contain water. Fruits, vegetables, hot cereal, soup, pudding, and yogurt are foods that can help you get the water you need.

Thirsty? Choose some of these every day:

- Water
- Lowfat or skim milk
- 100% fruit juices
- Vegetable juices

Choose less often:

- Soft drinks (diet or regular)
- Fruit-flavored drinks (powdered mixes, fruit punch and lemonade)
- Coffee
- Tea

Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension

A NEW CHECK LAW IS IN EFFECT

The Check 21 law (the Check Clearing Act for the 21st Century Act) took effect recently. This new law allows banks to replace original paper checks with "substitute checks" that are made from digital copies of the originals.

Check 21's biggest impact on consumers will be that checks will clear sooner, making it difficult to "float" checks. The faster processing time increases the risk that a check may bounce if the funds are not in your bank account when you write a check. Make sure that the funds are already in your account each time you write a check.

Substitute checks under Check 21 are different than checks processed through electronic check conversion. Under electronic check conversion, the check is used only as a source of information to create an electronic fund transfer and is not processed as a check. You must receive notice that your check may be processed this way. Electronic fund transfers are governed by different laws and have different consumer rights than check payments.

Source: Federal Reserve Board, <http://www.federalreserve.gov>

Forget-Me-Nots for 2004

Make cleaning often forgotten places your new year's resolution.

Inside bottom of dishwasher door:

Spray a non-abrasive, all purpose cleaner along it, then sponge clean it. You'll be amazed at what you pick up.

Interior walls and shelves of refrigerator:

For health and cleanliness, always remember to wipe up spills immediately. This keeps your refrigerator looking it's best and helps prevent the growth of bacteria. Use a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner or a solution of baking soda and water.

Inside of light fixtures:

Even a thin coat of dust can cut down on light output. First unplug the light and allow to cool. Then use a disposable dust cloth to clean.

Tops of ceiling fan blades:

Capture all that dust with special dusting mitts or dusters that are designed for getting to these hard-to-reach surfaces.

Ovens:

Cleaning spills as you go will make this tough job easier. First allow surfaces to cool before cleaning. Then use an oven cleaner; however don't use an oven cleaner on a self-cleaning or continuous cleaning oven because it may damage the surface. Always read the product label directions before using.

Exterior cabinet of range:

Again, allow cooking surfaces to cool before cleaning. Then use a nonabrasive all purpose cleaner.

Telephone receivers, door handles, computer keyboards:

Use disinfectant wipes on these surfaces to whisk away dirt and germs.

Source: Cleaning Matters, Tips and Trends from the Soap and Detergent Association

FDA Proposes Action Plan to Confront Nation's Obesity Problem

Since the late 1980s, adult obesity has steadily increased in this country. About 64 percent of Americans are overweight and more than 30 percent are obese. To help tackle what FDA is calling the "nation's obesity epidemic," the agency released, in March 2004, the final report of its Obesity Working Group. The group's long- and short-term proposals are based on the scientific fact that weight control is mainly a function of caloric balance. That is, calories in must equal calories out. So FDA is focusing on "calories count" as the basis of its actions and the message of its obesity campaign.

Recommended actions include:

- enhancing the food label to display calorie count more prominently and to use meaningful serving sizes
- initiating a consumer education campaign focusing on the "Calories Count" message
- encouraging restaurants to provide nutritional information to consumers
- stepping up enforcement actions concerning accuracy of food labels
- revising FDA guidance for developing drugs to treat obesity
- working cooperatively with other government agencies, non-profits, industry, and academia on obesity research

Source: U.S. Food & Drug Administration

Where to Write for Vital Records

Need a copy of your child's birth certificate, or maybe just your own? The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) provides a listing of state and U.S. territory vital statistics offices to contact for copies of birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates. The NCHS also offers tips on what information to provide when making a request and gives the approximate cost of obtaining each type of vital record in each state.

Find out where to write for vital records at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

Source: Federal Citizen Information Center's FEDINFO e-letter

Eating Habits Put Singles at Risk

New Brochure Encourages Healthful Cooking for One

The catch-as-catch-can eating patterns of people living alone are conducive to weight gain and long-term health problems, experts at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) warned today. Learning to cook for yourself may be the best way to care for yourself, they added.

“Families of one also deserve a delicious and healthy meal,” says Melanie Polk, RD. “With a little bit of planning ahead, singles can prepare meals for themselves that are nourishing and satisfying at the same time.”

Nearly 26 percent of Americans—73 million people—live alone. Whether single, widowed or divorced, many of these people eat an excessive number of their major meals at commercial eateries or assemble them at home from prepared foods.

According to a U.S. Department of Energy study, more than 42 percent of all singles do not cook even one meal per day at home. Figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that singles spend 47 percent of their food dollar on food prepared away from home as opposed to 42 percent for households of two or more and 37 percent for households of five or more.

“The more meals you prepare yourself, the more opportunities you have to introduce healthful basics like vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans. These foods help you manage your weight and offer protection against chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes,” Polk says.

The prospect of maintaining a kitchen for one, cooking alone and dining alone seems to drive many singles to eat out, take out, or order out. Unfortunately, commercially prepared meals often have too many calories, too much fat, too much sodium and too few vegetables and fruits for maintenance of a healthy weight and protection against chronic disease.

Cooking Solo Offers Strategies for Healthy Eating

“In fact it’s not hard for most singles to prepare healthy meals regularly for themselves. You need to have a few staples on hand and a few standard recipes for soups, casseroles and easy stir fries. Cook two recipes on Sunday, store individual servings in the refrigerator or freezer, and you’ll have something delicious to warm up all week when you get home from work,” Polk says.

To assist singles in meal preparation, AICR has published a new brochure entitled *Cooking Solo: Homemade for Health*. It explains how to organize shopping, storing and preparing food for the single household. It offers tips for fitting cooking and healthy meals into a busy contemporary life.

Cooking Solo has been reviewed by a panel of physicians and registered dietitians. It can be downloaded from the AICR web site, www.aicr.org/publications/brochures/sa.lasso. Or call toll-free 1-800-843-8114, ext 457, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, to order a single copy.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

Part 2 of 3

Three great ways YOU can eliminate waste and protect your environment!

Waste, and how we choose to handle it, affects our world's environment -- that's YOUR environment, everything that surrounds you including the air, water, land, plants, and man-made things. And since by now you probably know that you need a healthy environment for your own health and happiness, you can understand why effective waste management is so important to YOU and everyone else. The waste we create has to be carefully controlled to be sure that it does not harm your environment and your health.

What exactly is "waste"?

Simply speaking, waste is anything discarded, rejected, surplused, abandoned, or otherwise released into the environment in a manner (or quantity) that could have an impact on that environment.

How can you help?

You can help by learning about and PRACTICING the three R's of waste management: **Reduce**, **reuse**, and **recycle**! Practicing all three of these activities every day is not only important for a healthy environment, but it can also be fun too. So let's take a minute right now to learn more about waste and waste management, so you can become a key player in making our world a safe and healthy place. In this issue we address reusing materials.

Reuse

You can "reuse" materials in their original form instead of throwing them away, or pass those materials on to others who could use them too! Remember, one man's trash is another man's treasure! Here are some examples of reuse ...

- Take along washable cups or travel mugs instead of disposables; a lot of restaurants and convenient stores will be glad to fill or refill your own mug.
- When you do use disposables like plastic cups, plates, utensils, and plastic food storage bags, don't throw them away! Wash and reuse them -- most of them will last for a long time with many uses. They may not cost much to replace, but it doesn't make any more sense to throw away those things than it does to throw away your bicycle after one use.
- And speaking of bicycles (or other durable goods like washers, dryers, etc.) -- why not repair them rather than replace them when they break? This is another form of "reuse". New is not always better, nor it is always necessary. You'll be helping your environment, but your pocketbook will thank you too!
- When you do decide to replace something large and "reusable", be sure to donate the old one to charitable outlets like Goodwill, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Vietnam Veterans, and the many others that are probably in your area. Most of the time the item can be repaired by one of those groups, and then redistributed into other homes rather than landfills.

Reuse (continued)

- Hold a yard sale or give-away. And ask your neighbors to join in too -- this shares the work and increases the number of unused things that can find new homes and new uses. And your local recycling/solid waste office may run a "swap shop" at a recycling centers.
- When you do need to purchase something, check those yard sales and charitable outlets first to see if they have what you need before selecting something new.
- Use cloth gift bags and stop ripping the paper off gifts! If you remove the wrapping paper carefully, you can use it again, and there's nothing wrong with doing just that! And don't forget to use canvas or cloth bags when shopping so you don't need to make the choice between "paper or plastic."
- Use washable table napkins instead of paper napkins -- cloth napkins are usually much larger and more absorbent than paper products, and they can dress up your dinner table too!
- New baby? Buy washable cotton diapers (look for them at yard sales or charitable outlets). Check the yellow pages to see if there is a diaper service in your area. If you select those with velcro wraps, reusable diapers are just as convenient and may even be cheaper than disposable diapers.

Source: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIH

A Winning Game Plan for Super Bowl Meals and Snacks

Super Bowl Sunday is always filled with food, festivities and fun – not to mention football.

Fans, you can have a great time watching the game without fumbling your diet. Mix up your play-calling and serve your fellow fans fresh vegetables with low-fat dip, fruit kabobs, whole-grain breads and a variety of lean meats for sandwiches. Snack on popcorn, pretzels with mustard dip, baked tortilla chips and salsa, apple slices and low-fat caramel dip.

You'll score points with your guests and help guarantee your Super Bowl get-together will be a hit right up until the final whistle.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Physical Activity

A new program from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, entitled "Physical Activity: Your Heart, Your Life – A Lay Health Educator's Program" has just gone live on the NHLBI Web site.

The effort is an outgrowth of the popular "Salud para su Corazon" program, an exciting comprehensive community-based heart-health promotion initiative from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It targets Latinos living in the United States, but the information (both in English and Spanish) is also suitable for a wide audience. The project raises awareness of the risk factors and promotes lifestyle changes to reduce the chances of developing heart disease.

Members of the public can now interact with Angela - a virtual lay health educator - to learn how making some simple changes in their lives can significantly reduce their risk of heart disease. The program is at <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/salud/pa/index.htm>.

Angela teaches by using interactive quizzes, offering visitors a downloadable set of stretching exercises, and even suggesting a sample walking program. She also addresses common barriers to starting a moderate physical activity program. A Spanish language version of this program is also available at <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/salud/pa/indexsp.htm>

Source: NHLBI Health Information Network

A Nuttier Solution to a Healthy Diet

Enjoying a handful of nuts is a pleasure for most people. But the thought of fat in nuts may keep some from savoring that pleasure. Nuts are high in fat, but the fat in most nuts is healthy, monounsaturated fat, which can help lower blood cholesterol. Good sources of monounsaturated fats include peanuts, pecans, walnuts and almonds.

In addition, research studies have shown that many different nuts are helpful in reducing the risk of cancer and elevated blood pressure.

Nuts also provide protein, carbohydrates and a wide variety of vitamins and minerals.

But wait, there's more. New research shows that eating plans which include nuts are more satisfying, leading people to eat less and control their weight. So, enjoy nuts in your eating plan. The key is watching your serving sizes.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Florida Food Fare

By Mary King

Cooperative Extension for Sarasota County

Loquat

Description. The loquat, commonly called Japanese plum, comes to us originally from China. It is popular as an ornamental tree, having deep green foliage and lovely white flowers. Small, delicious yellow-gold fruit is an added attraction. Loquats are juicy, tangy and usually contain 2 or 3 large brown seeds. They are round to oval shaped and average about 1 1/2 inches in length. The flavor resembles a sour cherry, yet is pleasing to the taste. Although loquats adapt to almost any section in the world's Temperate Zone, more are found in Florida than in many other state. Grafted trees or seedlings will grow in Sarasota, but grafted trees are preferred as you can determine the specific variety more easily. Recommended varieties for high quality fruit are; Advance Champagne, Gold Nugget, Oliver, Premier, Tanaka and Wolfe.

Availability: Florida loquats usually ripen in the winter and spring, from February to the last of April. Loquats bruise easily so are not sold commercially. Some oriental markets sell them canned.

Nutritional Value: Loquats are low in calories and are a good source of potassium and vitamin A. One cup of cubed loquats yields about 70 calories, 129 g water, 2 g fat, 23 mg calcium, 396 mg potassium, 20 mcg folate, 2276 IU vitamin A, and 18 g carbohydrate.

Selection and care: Tree ripened loquats have superior flavor. Look for golden, fully ripe fruit that are not excessively soft. They bruise very easily and do not keep long even when refrigerated. If necessary to store, keep in polyethylene bags in the refrigerator. Slightly under-ripe fruit makes jelly of superior flavor. The number of loquats needed for a definite measure varies with the size of the fruit. On the average, 14 to 16 loquats seeded and peeled will make 1 cup.

Preparation and Use: Fresh loquats make a tasty dessert, an unusual sauce or dessert topping and add variety and color to fruit salads. The peel is edible. They also make excellent jams, preserves and relishes. They can be frozen or canned for longer storage.

Freezing: Select firm, ripe loquats. Wash, remove stem, blossom end and seeds. Pack into containers and cover with a 30% syrup (made of 1 3/4 cup sugar to 4 cups water). Leave headspace. Seal and freeze.

Fresh Loquat Relish

2 cups prepared loquats	1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup candied orange peel	2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 cup candied grapefruit peel	1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1/2 cup raisins	2 tablespoons candied ginger
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon	

Prepare loquats by washing and removing the blossom ends, stems and seeds. Peel if peeling is objectionable. Measure loquats and other ingredients and blender chop until finely mixed. Refrigerate overnight in covered glass container to allow flavor to develop. Use within 7 – 10 days.
