Pickling Made Easy - Do you get excited thinking about yummy pickles and summer relish? Come learn how to make your own. This workshop will be a hands-on workshop for making pickles, relishes and fermented products. The class will cover the basics to ensure safe preservation of pickled foods. The participants will have the chance to make dill pickles and zucchini relish and take home a sample. The class will be held on Tuesday, July 17 from 10:00 am-2:00 pm at the North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Buncombe County Center in downtown Asheville. Preregistration is required by July 12; class size is limited to 10 so register early. A fee of $15 will cover the cost of materials and supplies.

Noonliting: Moving Towards a Healthier You - It may seem early to be thinking about the winter holidays, but in order to be prepared to avoid the weight gain that comes with the holidays and the slowing down during the colder months, Noonliting: Moving Towards a Healthier You, a weight management class, is starting in September. This 10-week program will meet on Mondays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm beginning on September 10 through November 19. Classes are held at North Carolina Cooperative Extension - Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville. Pre-registration is required and there is a fee of $20 for materials.

Basic Home Maintenance - If you are either a new homeowner or a long timer, this course could be for you. The Buncombe County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension is offering a five-session Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Thursday, September 27. The two-hour class will be held from 5:30-7:30 pm on September 27, October 2, 4, 9 & 11 at the Extension Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville. Some of the topics to be covered are: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscaping and lawn care, indoor air quality, common household pests, etc. The fee of $20 includes all materials.

➢ For more information or to register for any of the above workshops call 255-5522.

Protecting Small Children from Mosquito Bites

1. Do not use repellents on children under the age of *six months*. When in doubt, check with your pediatrician or family physician about using a repellent on your child.
2. Use long-sleeved shirts and long pants on children when they play outdoors. Use mesh covers on strollers and playpens for infants or small children who spend time outdoors.
3. Do not allow small children to apply repellents to themselves. Do not spray small children with repellents (you may accidentally spray their face). Apply the chemical to your hands and then rub it onto their skin (arms, legs and neck).
4. Never apply repellents to children's hands. They may rub their eyes or stick their hands in their mouths.
Safe Summertime Grilling

With the summer months here, everyone is using the grill more and more. Whether you are grilling red meat, poultry, pork or seafoods, you need to make sure that you cook it thoroughly. Summer vegetables are also tasty when grilled but you don’t want to end up crossing them with uncooked or undercooked meat products. Here are a few things to remember so that you end up with a safe and tasty grilled meal.

- Start with clean hands, utensils, dishes and work surfaces. If away from home, take some disposable wipes.
- Make sure you have your instant read thermometer out and ready to use.
- Keep meats cold until the grill is hot and ready to cook them. If away from home, keep them in the cooler with ice.
- Do all marinating in the refrigerator or cooler. Do not marinate on the counter.
- If you precook foods, immediately put them on the grill. The warm precooked foods are a perfect environment for bacteria and other microorganisms to grow.
- Once food is on the grill, cook it thoroughly to the needed internal temperature: Poultry – 165°F; Ground Beef – 160°F; Steaks, Roasts and Fish – 145°F.
- Keep all plates and utensils used with the raw meats, poultry and seafood separate from any cooked foods. Take them back to the kitchen to be cleaned and use new, clean plates and utensils for fully cooked food.
- Grill vegetables that need less time to cook separate from meats that need longer cooking time. You can use foil or special grilling pans.
- Refrigerate leftovers within one hour during the summer days that are over 90°F.

Some important safety tips when grilling to prevent injuries or fires:

- Be careful lighting the fire. Never use gasoline, fuel oil or kerosene.
- Keep clothes and hair restrained. Roll up shirt sleeves, tuck shirts in and avoid wearing loose, flowing skirts or scarves. Keep long hair out of the way with ties or restrictive hats.
- Use long-handled utensils and potholders. Keep cookware handles turned to one side away from the heat. Keep a water spray bottle or hose close by in case of a flare up.
- Be sure the fire is completely out before you leave it.
- Gas and charcoal barbecue grills must only be used outdoors.
- Keep a three foot “safe zone” around the grill from children and pets.
- Position the grill away from siding, deck railings and out from overhanging eaves and plants.

Save on Fresh Produce

During the summer months, local farms produce a wide assortment of produce. Most of the time, local in-season produce, which can be found at farmers markets, local farms and even the grocery stores are cheaper than produce shipped from other parts of the country or other countries. When you stock up on a variety of produce from summer squashes, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, and berries to cabbages and beets, you are able to get a rainbow of vegetables and fruits to round out your diet, as well. These local treats end up having more nutrients since they are bought closer to when they were picked.

Get Your Canner Gauge Checked – Remember to get your pressure canner gauge checked before you begin to harvest your fresh produce. Pressure canner gauges will be tested most Friday mornings but may be able to fit in testing at other times. Call 255-5522 to schedule an appointment or with any of your canning questions.
Look at Your Refrigerator—Not in It

In most households, the refrigerator is the kitchen appliance that consumes the most power. Whether a refrigerator is new or old, pay attention to how you use the appliance to achieve its peak performance. Following are some ways to get the most out of your refrigerator:

- Position the refrigerator away from heat sources such as ovens, dishwashers, or direct sunlight from a window.
- Allow air to circulate around the condenser coils by leaving a space between the wall or cabinets and the refrigerator or freezer. Keep the coils clean.
- Ensure that the door seals are airtight. Test the seals by putting a piece of paper or dollar bill half in and half out of the refrigerator. If the paper pulls out easily, check the latch and seals to determine if either needs to be replaced.
- Keep the refrigerator between 34° and 38°F and the freezer at 0°F.
- Make sure that manual-defrost freezers stay frost free. Frost buildup reduces energy efficiency.
- Cover liquids and wrap foods before storing them in the refrigerator. Uncovered foods release moisture and tax the compressor unnecessarily.
- Open the refrigerator door only when necessary, and keep it open for as little time as possible.

If you are shopping for a new refrigerator, look for an Energy Star model. Energy Star refrigerators use high efficiency compressors, better insulation, and more precise temperature and defrost mechanisms. These refrigerator models consume a minimum of 15% less energy than their standard counterparts, about 40% less than a standard model from 2001, and about half the energy of a model older than 1993.

To Supplement or Not to Supplement?

As we get older, many of us are taking all kinds of pills, some of them being vitamins and minerals. These dietary supplements are not meant to take the place of foods and in some cases the cost for them can really add up. These micronutrients are needed by our bodies in regular amounts and when we don’t get enough from the foods we eat, we may need to supplement with them. Vitamins are important in growth, digestion, converting food to energy and nerve function. Minerals are important for teeth, bones, building blocks for cells and enzymes, help in carrying oxygen to cells, as well as for the regulation of fluids and controlling nerve impulses.

- If you need a supplement, read the label carefully.
- Many supplements require you to take them more than one time a day.
- Avoid “megadoses” which are the supplements that provide high percentages of the daily needed micronutrients.
- Look for multi-vitamins that provide close to the same percentile of most vitamins and minerals.
- Also, remember to count up the amount of the vitamins and minerals in all supplements. For example, if you take a multi-vitamin and then also take a single calcium supplement, you need to add the amount of calcium from each supplement.
- Look for “USP” on the label. This means that the supplement meets the standards for strength, purity, disintegration and dissolution established by the testing organization, U.S. Pharmacopeia.

Check for expiration dates so that your supplement does not lose its potency before you get to use them all. Hot temperatures and humidity can decrease the shelf life of supplements. Remember, store all supplements as you would medicines. Store supplements in a cool dry place and out of reach of children. Supplements, like iron, can be toxic to children. And beware of gimmicks or supplements that promise to cure you. Always remember to let your medical provider know the supplement and herbal remedies that you are taking. Many may interact with medicines.
Keeping the Power Bill Low

Some no-cost or low cost changes to your behavior and home can help reduce your summer cooling costs. Reducing your energy demands this summer is easy, and many times free:

- In the summer, set your thermostat to 78°F, or your highest comfortable setting. For each degree you raise your thermostat, you can reduce your cooling costs by as much as 3-5%.
- Use ceiling fans and other cooling fans to circulate air. Remember to turn fans off when no one is in the room. Adjust the home’s thermostat higher to take into account the cooling effect of the fans.
- Educate family members about energy conservation – keep doors and windows closed while the air conditioner is on.
- Cook during temperate hours. On hot days, try not to prepare meals that require extensive use of the range or oven.
- Clean or replace HVAC unit filters every month.
- Keep air registers clean and opened in all rooms.
- Keep furniture away from the registers and air returns of your home. Placing furniture on top or against them will cause loss of air circulation.
- Use kitchen and bathroom ventilation fans wisely – use them for short periods to draw moisture and odor out of your home. Running them for extended periods can allow cool air to escape outside.
- Use shade trees and other landscape features and awnings to keep the sun from overheating your home.

Summer Season = Mold Season

This seems to be the year of allergies with individuals who have never experienced a symptom in the past now suffering reactions. Along with pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds, molds are an important cause of seasonal allergic reactions. They can be found outdoors on plants, foods, dry leaves, and other living material. Although our mold season often peaks from July to late summer, it is important to remember that mold can thrive indoors all year. The spores are very tiny and lightweight, allowing them to become airborne. Mold growth can often be seen in the form of discoloration, ranging from white to orange and from green to brown and black.

There is not a need to test for the presence of mold. If you can see it or smell an earthy odor, you have an active mold growth. Although it may go dormant when the relative humidity falls below 55%, it doesn’t go away on its own. Unless the moisture is removed and the contaminated area is cleaned and disinfected, mold growth is likely to reoccur.

Following the proper clean up procedure is the only method for getting it out of the house. You will first have to identify and remove the source of moisture, before beginning remedial action, since mold growth will return shortly if an affected area becomes wet again. Substances that are porous and can trap molds, such as paper, rags, wallboard, and rotten wood should be decontaminated and thrown out. Harder materials such as glass, plastic, or metal can be kept after they are cleaned and disinfected. Prior to disinfecting, clean the areas to remove as much of the mold as possible, protecting your health while doing so. Start by using non-ammonia soap or detergent, or a commercial cleaner, in hot water, and scrub the entire area affected by the mold. Use a stiff brush on block walls or uneven surfaces. Rinse with water. A wet/dry vacuum is handy for this. Dry as quickly as possible.

Follow the cleaning procedure with disinfecting. All surfaces where mold was previously seen should be cleaned with a household bleach and water mix - 1½ cups of bleach mixed in 1 gallon of water. With good ventilation, apply the bleach water mix to the surface with a sponge, let it sit for 15 minutes, and then thoroughly dry the surface. Do not rinse. Be sure to wear a dust mask, rubber gloves and open windows when cleaning with bleach water.

When cleaning up areas with mold, always protect yourself by wearing rubber gloves, eye goggles, outer clothing that can be removed in the work area and easily laundered (long sleeved shirt and long pants) and a medium-efficiency or high-efficiency filter dusk mask.
Protecting Yourself From Unwanted Travelers

One of the disadvantages of hot weather can be the abundance of ticks and the concern of tick-borne illnesses. The best protection against ticks is personal protection:

Whenever possible, avoid likely tick-inhabited areas. Ticks will be more abundant in areas frequented by wild animals. These areas are typically overgrown and weedy or covered with leaf litter and particularly during those hot summer months - they're often well-shaded.

Whenever possible, avoid likely tick-inhabited areas. Ticks will be more abundant in areas frequented by wild animals. These areas are typically overgrown and weedy or covered with leaf litter and particularly during those hot summer months - they're often well-shaded places where the animal rests. Try to keep the ground cover in these areas trimmed back as much as possible. Keep leaf litter and other debris out from under and around picnic tables.

Apply repellents to your clothing, particularly shoes, socks and pants. If you're wearing shorts, you can also spray your ankles and calves. Be careful about using (or overusing) repellents on small children. Check out our website for additional information about repellents at: http://insects.ncsu.edu/Urban/repellents.htm

If you wear long pants while working or hiking outdoors, tuck the pants leg into your socks.

**Inspection** - when your kids come inside from playing outdoors, check them over carefully for ticks. Likewise, if you've spent time working in your garden or taking a hike, spend some additional valuable time checking yourself thoroughly for any hitchhiking ticks. You may want someone to check for you. If you find a tick on yourself, your children or your pets:

- Remove the tick carefully by grasping it firmly with tweezers or with a tissue (not with your bare fingers) until it dislodges. This is generally considered to be the best method to tick removal as opposed to using lit matches, oil (motor or mineral), detergent or some other chemical to try to dislodge the tick.
- Wash the bite area with soap and water and then apply an antiseptic such as alcohol.
- Record the date of the tick bite on a calendar. Then, watch for any symptoms within the next 10-14 days.

Tick-borne disease symptoms are described in our online publication: http://insects.ncsu.edu/Urban/ticks.htm

Making Your Dollars Stretch

This summer finds many of us having to dig deeper in our pockets to meet the price of gasoline and other energy costs. With food costs also rising there are some areas in your shopping where you may be able to experience some budget relief.

While clipping coupons, watching for sales, and buying in larger quantities have long been methods to save money, your biggest savings may be when you take the time to compare private label (store brand) and manufacturer brands. Years ago most supermarkets sold generic items that had plain, no frills packaging and simple black lettering. While generic foods were less expensive than brand-name products, they were generally considered to be low quality.

The world of private label and store brands has changed markedly with supermarkets featuring attractively packaged private label items that are of comparable quality to their brand name cousins. While many of us are attached to brand name products, it is worth it to take a look at potential savings we can realize in different areas of the store by buying private label versus brand name. Take a look at some of the brand name products that you buy regularly and then look for their private label equivalent; you may be surprised at how much money you'll save!

**Source:** Leah McGrath, Ingles Dietitian
**Babysitting Cooperatives: An Alternative to Paying a Babysitter**

A babysitting cooperative is a group of families in a community who work out a way to share babysitting among themselves without the exchange of money. These arrangements are usually for occasional care and not for regular child care. The members keep the records and the other responsibilities of running the cooperative. The benefits of the cooperative are:

- children make new friends and develop social skills
- children become close to other families besides their own
- there is not a cost for the care, families are helped with occasional day, evening or emergency care
- provides parents with free time when needed
- provides parents with an opportunity to see their child interact with others

The co-op is run on a points system where families earn points as they care for others and use points when they need a babysitter. Membership can be large or small, but regular meetings are suggested and a planning meeting is needed when beginning a cooperative. The cooperative also needs a secretary who keeps records of points earned and used and the coordination of needed care. It is important to keep in mind the needs of children when utilizing or starting a babysitter cooperative. Children need to be prepared when they are going to go to other houses or have someone come in to care for them at their own home. Keep in mind that as with any care for your children, pick a cooperative that matches your values and lifestyle. For more information on beginning a babysitting cooperative or joining an existing one, call our office or go to:


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*On the Home Front* is a newsletter produced by the Family and Consumer Sciences Agents in Buncombe County. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate Buncombe County residents on workshops and issues that affect them, and to provide ideas for helping improve their quality of life.

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Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at...[http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu](http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu)