**EFNEP’S ABC’S OF HEALTHY HOLIDAY COOKING**

Holiday meals don’t have to expand your waistline or break the bank. Here’s all you need to know. Everything from A – Z to trim the fat, calories and cost from your menu.

**Always plan ahead.** No matter what type of meal you choose, planning well ahead of time makes a difference.

**Bags of produce such as carrots, oranges and potatoes are a better buy than purchasing them separately.**

**Canned fruits and vegetables are an inexpensive option – and just as nutritious.** Choose fruits packaged in their own juice. Canned vegetables should be no-salt added or just rinse them before using to eliminate the excess sodium.

**Dairy products provide calcium.** Be sure to choose low-fat products.

**Eggs are the ideal ingredient for a holiday brunch.** Serve a breakfast casserole, scrambled eggs or omelets. To reduce fat, substitute two egg whites for one whole egg.

**Freeze foods and use them as needed.** Many foods can be prepared ahead of time and frozen to save time.

**Get a folder and put your meal planning sheets, notes and recipes in the folder.** There’s nothing worse than getting to the holiday and not being able to find Grandma’s stuffing recipe.

**Homemade soups are a great way to use your leftovers.** Start a container in your freezer to save leftovers such as meat and vegetables for soup.

**Ice cream served with thawed frozen berries in light syrup makes an easy, elegant dessert.** Keep it healthy and select reduced fat ice cream or reduced fat yogurt.

**Jars of marinara or spaghetti sauce can be a lifesaver when you’re trying to get dinner on the table.** Use to top pizzas and whole grain pastas.

**Keep it simple, don’t plan more than you can do.** Nobody wants a stressed hostess.

**Leftovers extend meals to the next day.** Take advantage of them by refrigerating promptly to ensure food safety.  

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NC State commits itself to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. NC State welcomes all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.
Make meals and snacks as healthy as possible.

Nutmeg and other spices and herbs can be used to liven up the flavor of your foods without adding extra fat, calories or sodium.

Often family members or guests are very willing to lend a helping hand. They just don’t know what to do. Don’t be afraid to ask.

Plan for physical activity to balance out those extra holiday calories. Only 30 minutes a day can head off the extra pounds.

Quick, inexpensive fruit cobblers and crisps are easy with the help of fruits from the freezer case.

Reduced-sodium broths are great for reviving a turkey that’s a little too dry.

Shop ahead, take advantage of sales, save money and avoid the crowds.

Turkey is often a bargain during the holidays. Take advantage of the savings. A whole turkey will keep for up to a year in the freezer.

Understand the importance of food labels. Compare packages for calorie count, fat content and nutritional benefits.

Vegetables from the freezer case are quick-frozen to lock in freshness and nutritional benefits. They make quick side-dishes any time.

Whole grain, reduced fat crackers are a healthy choice for serving with low fat dips and cheeses. Choosing whole grain products is a healthy idea since they contain essential vitamins and minerals.

X-tra special holidays call for fancy desserts. When making your desserts use low fat or reduced calorie ingredients.

You would rather spend time with your family during the holidays instead of hours in the kitchen.

Zip into your grocery store or farmers market to make sure you have all the holiday ingredients you need.

Worried Holiday Weight Gain Will Weight You Down?

Join the Eat Smart, Move More…maintain, don’t gain!

Holiday Challenge. The Challenge begins November 24 and ends December 31. Get tips, strategies and recipes to prevent those extra pounds from creeping up on you!

When you join this free six-week program you will receive weekly e-newsletters with healthy recipes, tips and information geared to help you navigate the holiday season. Also available are a Holiday Challenge Blog, where you can follow other participants through the challenge, and an Ask the Expert column where your questions will be answered by experts in nutrition and exercise! Look for weekly Holiday Challenge Tips on our website at http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu. To join the Challenge go to www.myeatsmartmovemore.com.
Making Ends Meet

Consider starting a family budget during these difficult financial times to relieve the stress of getting to the end of the pay period without enough money for expenses. Some pitfalls to avoid that will allow you to reach financial security are:

- **Cutting out all the fun stuff** – All budgets should allow for entertainment. Think about where your recreation priorities lie and add up how much you spend each month on those activities. If the total is more than 10 percent (5 percent is ideal) of your total household budget, it’s time to scale back. But don’t blunder by eliminating recreation altogether or your best laid plans will eventually self-destruct.

- **Being hit or miss with savings** – When it comes to money management, slow and steady wins the race. Once you’ve determined how much of your monthly income can be allocated to short and long term savings, make your deposits consistent by using automatic payroll deductions. By saving just $100 a month in a money market account earning 5 percent interest, you could accumulate approximately $6,800 in five years.

- **Overuse of your credit cards** – Money doesn’t grow on trees, of course, but debit cards sure fuel the impression that it does. Allot yourself a specific amount of cash for purchases during the week. Implementing a strict cash-only diet not only puts spending habits in perspective, but also helps you think before making that impulse buy.

- **Paying only the minimums on cards** – There is no better way to perpetuate debt, or waste your money, than to carry a credit card balance. Making only the minimum monthly payments will cost you thousands in interest fees that could otherwise be applied toward savings or entertainment. Send as much as you can to your credit card company each month.

- **Living without emergency savings** – If you haven’t set money aside for a rainy day, you’re one job loss or illness away from financial ruin. Most consumers should have saved between three and six months’ worth of living expenses in a liquid interest-bearing account. Those who are self-employed or work in a high turnover industry should have up to a year’s worth tucked away.

- **Spending more than you earn** – It’s the cardinal rule of household budgeting – live within your means. In our instant gratification society, however, it’s easier said than done. Experts insist living with less begins with changing your spending philosophy. Learn to moderate, resist reckless spending and, above all else, don’t take a vacation until you have money in the bank. You’d be surprised how gratifying it is to bid farewell to the financial treadmill.

Source: Bankrate.com

Don’t Pay for Holiday Spending 2008 in June 2009

As hard as it may be to believe, it is possible to have a wonderful Holiday Season with only inexpensive holiday gifts. It is important to remember that it’s about the “spirit” of giving and not necessarily the price tag. Do you really think that someone you care about and who cares about you will be depressed because you didn’t break the bank to purchase them an expensive present? There are many inexpensive things you can make or buy that are still cute, useful and memorable.

Homemade gifts have the added advantage of being personal and carry with them the message of caring – you actually created something yourself for the person receiving it. Knitting a scarf, making a calendar with family photos, or taking an elderly relative to lunch can all be inexpensive yet meaningful.

Cooking is a great way to create a gift for the entire family. Buy all the ingredients and bake someone a holiday cake. Starting with an empty basket from a dollar store, you can create endless possibilities. You could do a basket of hot chocolate, a pretty mug and some marshmallows! Craft stores sell cellophane wrap so you can encompass your basket gift, tie with a nice bow and presto!

If making something doesn’t fit into your holiday schedule, it is not impossible to buy inexpensive holiday gifts. You can still shop frugally and make sure children are not disappointed. Small card games, coloring books, comic book characters, etc. can be purchased inexpensively. All you have to do is shop around a bit, look for discounts and use coupons. If you budget and plan early, it’s very possible to buy gifts for everyone on your list and still have some money left to decorate the home and bake some cookies.
Online Shopping

If you are buying items from an online retailer or auction website, the Federal Trade Commission offers this advice to help you make the most of your shopping experience:

- Know who you’re dealing with. Which company owns the website that you are using?
- Make sure the page is secure before you enter credit card information. There must be a letter "s" after http (or https://) for the transmission to be secure.
- Know exactly what you’re buying.
- Know what it will cost.
- Check out the terms of the deal, such as refund policies and delivery dates.
- Keep a paper trail.
- Don’t email your financial information.
- Check the privacy policy.

Staying Safe During the Holidays

Trees

- Place your tree a good distance away from any heat sources like fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- If you purchase an artificial tree, make sure it's labeled “Fire Resistant.”
- Make sure your live tree is fresh. How to tell:
  - A fresh tree is green.
  - Fresh needles are hard to pull from branches.
  - When bent between your fingers, needles do not break.
  - The trunk butt of a fresh tree is sticky with resin.
  - When tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Cut about two inches off the trunk of your tree to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Make sure the stand has wide spread feet for stability.
- Keep the stand full of water - it can dry up quickly in the dry, heated air.

Lights

- Use only lights labeled as tested for safety by an independent testing laboratory.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.
- Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) to avoid potential shocks.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.
- Check all tree lights — even if you've just purchased them — before hanging them on your tree. Make sure all the bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- If your artificial tree is metallic, don’t put lights on it; they’ll create a fire hazard and risk of electrocution.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Keep bubbling lights away from children. These lights, with their bright colors and bubbling movement, can tempt curious children to break the candle-shaped glass, which can cut, and try to drink the liquid, which contains a dangerous chemical.

Candles

- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- Always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
Create a New Holiday Tradition: Sharing

This year try creating a new holiday tradition with the children in your life. Whether they are your children, grandchildren or children in your community, come up with a plan for increased sharing. Children gain a sense of responsibility and learn empathy when they are involved in helping others. The holiday time provides a perfect opportunity to do this. Here are a few ways you and your family can share this year.

- Recipes and/or food: Have a holiday recipe contest with families you know. Do this instead of exchanging gift. You can then plan to share these recipes with community members who are shut in during the holidays or don't have family living close enough to visit during the holidays.
- Decorations: Do you have an abundance of decorations that have accumulated over the years? Go through them and pack up ones that aren't sentimental and donate them to families that may not have decorations or to retirement or children’s homes in need of more decorations. If you do this, take your children along and spend some time there helping to decorate with older residents or families.
- Holiday Cards: Donate your old cards not used from years past to people who could use them. Or if you are purchasing new cards this year, look at the cards being sold by charities, so that some of the cost ends up supporting a cause you believe in supporting.
- Clothing: Make a plan to go through your clothes before the New Year and in time to donate them to a charity. There are many organizations that could use the donations for the families and people they serve.
- Have a Holiday Charity Party, where people who come donate items or money for an identified charity.
- Consider giving a gift of giving this year. Do all your usually gift receivers need more “stuff”? Maybe giving a donation to a charity or organization that they support will be a way of giving twice with one gift.

When we involve the children in our lives and let them experience the act of giving in these ways, they learn that there are many ways to give besides the usual material gifts we so often give.

A healthy attitude about sharing encourages cooperation among children.

Holiday Cooking with Arthritis

If you suffer with Arthritis, the holiday cooking can cause more pain than pleasure. Here are a few ideas to help decrease the pain while still providing foods that spread the holiday joy during this season.

- Look for recipes that have a limited number of ingredients and steps.
- Look for recipes that combine ingredients you know and like.
- Look for spice mixes that combine the spices needed in a recipe like pumpkin or apple spice mixes for pies.
- Create your own spice mix by using larger quantities of the spices or herbs used in the recipe. For example, it may be easier to use a tablespoon instead of a teaspoon so if a recipe calls for 1 tsp of cinnamon, 1 tsp of ginger, ½ tsp of allspice, mix up 1 TBL cinnamon, 1 TBL ginger, ½ TBL allspice and mix well and use 2 ½ tsp of this mixture in your recipe.
- Use pre-prepared products like shredded cheese in your recipe instead of trying to shred the cheese yourself.
- Invite your younger relatives, neighbors or members from your church or community to join you in cooking the dishes they love to eat. This way you can share the recipes with them as they do the harder preparation steps.

Remember that during the holidays it can be more important to visit with our loved ones and the last thing they want is to have you feeling pain from preparing those holiday dishes.
Holiday Turkey Tips

Look for us on the Buncombe County TV station this season for tips on cooking a safe holiday turkey. If you can't catch us there, follow these tips, call our office at 255-5522 or use the hotline contacts below.

Safe Thawing Times: Give yourself enough time to safely thaw your frozen turkey in the refrigerator. You need about 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds of turkey.

- 4 to 12 pounds   -   1 to 3 days
- 12 to 16 pounds   -   2 to 4 days
- 16 to 20 pounds   -   4 to 5 days
- 20 to 24 pounds   -   5 to 6 days

Remember to thoroughly cook your turkey at 325° to an internal temperature of 165°F.

HOTLINE NUMBERS:
Turkey Talk Line – 1-800-BUTTERBALL (288-8372) Week Days Only
Online Assistance: http://www.butterball.com

November 3-26 9:00 am-9:00 pm  Nov 28-Dec 23 9:00 am-7:00 pm
December 22-23 9:00 am-7:00 pm  November 22-23 9:00 am-7:00 pm
December 24-25 9:00 am-7:00 pm  Thanksgiving Day 7:00 am-7:00 pm
December 26 9:00 am-7:00 pm

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline – 1-888-674-6854 – You may speak with a food safety specialist from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Eastern Time on weekdays year round. On Thanksgiving - 8:00 am - 2:00 pm, Eastern Time. Online Assistance: www.fsis.usda.gov (general food safety, preparation and handling of meat and poultry products).

Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in this newsletter but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.