



December 2009

**Wibaux County
Extension Office**

Dear Homemakers,

As the end of another year draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to any and all who volunteered their time and talents to help make our community events throughout the year a success. I would like to wish you and your loved ones a Joyous Holiday and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

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Prairie Fare: Consider Holiday Gifts That Promote Health & Safety

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist

Here are several gift ideas that promote health and safety, and won't break your budget:

- t Food Thermometer: These internal temperature measuring devices are easy to use and don't take up a lot of drawer space. Only 5% of cooks regularly use a thermometer, although many people use their thermometer during holiday dinners. However, food safety experts encourage the everyday use of thermometers because color is not an accurate indicator of doneness.
- t Pedometer: These step-counting devices are powerful motivators as people set goals to increase their physical activity. If you want to enhance your gift with an MP3 player, add a gift card for "tunes" to download and listen to while walking.
- t Healthy meal/snack kit or "Meal IOU": Try creating your own healthy snack/meal baskets. For example, tuck a jar of chunky salsa, baked chips, bottled 100% juice, and some disposable cups and napkins in a reusable plastic bowl or basket. How about a soup, bread, and fruit basket? As another option, treat your friends to the promise of a home-cooked, healthy meal on a mutually agreeable date.
- t Storm Survival Kit: Winter weather sometimes is unpredictable and can result in emergency situations. Assemble an emergency kit for travelers. If your friend or family member already has one, discreetly check his or her supplies and assemble a kit with items the person needs. Be sure the kit includes: windshield scraper, battery-powered radio, batteries, flashlight, snack foods (nuts, dried fruit, jerky, trail mix), water-proof matches, and a can to melt snow for water.



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Prairie Fare: Bake Some Memories This Season

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist

Baking holiday cookies isn't just about making treats. We're making memories, too. Even though most cookies aren't "nutrition all-stars", we have room for some treats (discretionary calories) in an overall healthy diet. Enjoy your treats with some low-fat milk to get some calcium and vitamin D.

Children learn many things when they help you bake. They learn about language as they read recipes. Kids learn about math, especially if you are doubling or tripling recipes. They learn the importance of accuracy, since baking is a science and inaccurate measuring can greatly affect a recipe. They learn about science, if you explain the function of the ingredients. For example, baking powder interacts with the acidic ingredients to produce carbon dioxide during baking, which causes the cookies to rise.

Children may also learn a little bit about conflict resolution, especially if siblings are involved. Kids also learn about delayed gratification. Making cookies from scratch takes time.

Here are a few tips for this baking season:

- Measure accurately. Instead of scooping, spoon flour into the measuring cup and level off by scraping with a knife.
- Use the type of fat called for in the recipe. If you swap solid shortening, such as Crisco, for butter, then add the recommended amount of water specified on the package.
- Don't over-mix cookies or quick breads. They can become tough as the gluten protein in the flour develops with mixing.
- Don't eat dough that contains raw eggs. It could contain salmonella bacteria.
- Preheat your oven to the recommended temperature.
- For best results, bake one pan at a time. Let the baking pan cool in between batches.
- Have fun. Put on some festive music and take a dancing break.

Prairie Fare: Eat More Fiber This Holiday Season

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist

At this time of year, we are tempted by all kinds of goodies. As next month's resolutions will attest, holiday indulgences often lead to post-holiday diets. I'm going to make a radical suggestion: Eat more this holiday season. Allow me to clarify: Eat more high-volume, fiber-rich foods. Fiber fills you up without filling you out.

Most of us shortchange ourselves on the fiber recommendation, which averages about 25 grams per day for adults. Fiber is indigestible plant material found in foods such as cooked dry edible beans, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

**FIBER FILLS YOU UP
WITHOUT FILLING
YOU OUT!**

Fruit smoothies made with fresh berries fill the bill as a fiber-rich snack. They're easy to make at home, too, if you have a blender or food processor.

In a U.S.D.A. study, women who doubled their fiber intake from 12 grams to 24 grams per day absorbed 90 fewer calories a day. This dietary change could result in a 9-pound weight loss in a year.

Besides helping with weight management, eating a fiber-rich diet also plays a role in helping prevent some chronic diseases, such as heart disease.

Remember to increase your fiber intake slowly. Adding fiber too quickly can cause gastrointestinal discomfort, such as gas, bloating and cramps.

Drink plenty of water when increasing your fiber intake because too much fiber without adequate fluid can lead to constipation. Fiber can absorb about 10 times its weight in water.

Before you go shopping or attend a holiday party, consider curbing your appetite with a fiber-rich snack, such as a piece of fruit, some veggies, a bowl of fiber-rich cereal, or some crunchy popcorn.

These are some additional tips to add fiber to your diet:

- < Enjoy whole-wheat pasta, brown rice and whole-grain bread.
- < Read breakfast cereal labels. Look for cereals with about 5 grams of fiber/serving.
- < Add beans, such as pinto, navy or kidney beans, to your favorite soups, casserole or salads.
- < Set out a bowl of fresh fruit so it's ready to

BEAN & PASTA SOUP

Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 Tbsp. tomato paste
2 cans (15 oz.) navy or cannellini beans, drained & rinsed
4 c. reduced-sodium canned vegetable or chicken broth
3/4 c. short, tubular pasta

grab and go.

Directions:

In stockpot, melt 2 Tbsp. butter over medium heat. Add onions & carrots. Cook until vegetables are soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic & cook for 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste, beans, broth & 4 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat & simmer, partially covered, until soup has thickened slightly, about 10 minutes. With a potato masher, mash some of the beans (still in pot) to thicken soup. Add pasta & cook about 10 minutes. Serves 6. Each serving 240 calories.

Prairie Fare: Don't Fumble as You Plan Super Bowl Snacks

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist

I located a study done by Cornell University researchers Brian Wansink and Collin Payne. The researchers invited 50 graduate students to a Super Bowl party with an all-you-can-eat snack buffet. Chicken wings were on the menu.

As the students munched, the researchers had the servers clear chicken bones from half of the tables. Other tables were left with piles of chicken bones. The people at the cleared tables ate about seven wings per person. The people whose chicken bones accumulated on their tables ate about five wings per person.

Perhaps having a pile of chicken bones on the table provided a visual, somewhat unappetizing clue that they should stop eating.

The researchers also noted that the same idea might hold true for beverages. If empty beverage containers are cleared from your table, you may forget how much you have consumed. I suppose your mental alertness also depends on what beverage you are consuming.

Overall, researchers have noted that people may eat and drink much more when there are no visual clues about how much has been eaten.

Bottom line: Maybe we shouldn't be so concerned about keeping our tables tidy during snacking. We should leave those containers, bones and other residues in sight so we can keep a running tally on our consumption.

Wansink and Payne also studied serving container sizes. They observed that people take less food from a smaller bowl. This strategy potentially has budget benefits and health benefits.

So, if you want to ration your "treats," use a smaller bowl. If you want people to eat more of a healthful food, such as fruits and vegetables, consider filling a larger serving bowl. Be sure to provide plates, too. People eat more chips and cookies from a bag or box.

Put this research to work during Super Bowl parties or any other time. If you like alcoholic beverages during game time, consider light beer, which has fewer calories. Try alternating calorie-containing beverages with an equal amount of water. Ice water quenches thirst quite nicely.

Try these healthful and tasty snack ideas:

- * Crunchy apple or pear slices with low-fat yogurt as a dip
- * Homemade trail mix with nuts, dried fruits and fiber-rich cereal
- * Crisp veggies, such as carrots, red and green pepper strips and broccoli
- * Whole-grain crackers
- * Popcorn (without a lot of butter and salt)
- * Pretzels with honey mustard sauce
- * Salsa or homemade bean dip with baked chips - Make your own baked chips by cutting corn tortillas into wedges, spraying with nonstick cooking spray and baking in the oven until crisp.





Prairie Fare: Nourish Your Skin During Cold Weather

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist

During January, usually our coldest winter month in the Midwest, we may find ourselves struggling to keep our skin hydrated. Our skin is exposed to freezing temperatures, blustery winds and indoor heat. We dress more heavily and we may be perspiring without even knowing it.

While slathering ourselves with lotion can help moisturize dry skin, think about hydrating from the inside out, too. Since our body is about two-thirds water by weight, staying hydrated is critical. Drinking plenty of fluids and eating a variety of skin-nourishing foods play a vital role in maintaining healthy skin.

According to a University of New Hampshire study, cold weather actually may increase our risk of dehydration. Cold weather affects the release of a hormone responsible for making us sense thirst. If we don't feel thirsty, we may not drink enough fluids.

Like our heart or kidneys, our skin is considered an organ of the body. Considering surface area, our skin is the largest of all our organs.

In addition to protein and fluids, several vitamins, including vitamins C, A and E, are vital to skin health. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, peppers, broccoli and several other foods. It acts as a natural antioxidant to protect and help repair our skin.

Low-fat milk provides vitamin A and fluid for skin health. Try featuring dark orange vegetables, such as pumpkin, carrots and squash, more often in your winter menus. These foods are rich in beta carotene, which our body converts to vitamin A. Vitamin E, another natural antioxidant, is found in vegetable oil, nuts and sunflower seeds.

Consider these tips to help keep your skin healthy and hydrated the rest of the winter:

- Wear gloves, a hat and scarf to protect exposed skin.
- Shorten your showers and cool down your baths. Lounging in a hot tub may warm you, but a long soak can dehydrate your skin.
- Wear moisturizing sunscreen on your face. Snow effectively reflects damaging sun rays. Skin damage can occur both summer and winter.
- Eat a variety of healthful foods and beverages. Aim for at least 2 quarts of fluids daily. The water in vegetables and other moisture-rich foods counts toward the total.
- Steer clear of alcoholic beverages. While a nip of brandy may feel warming, it actually dehydrates.
- Keep a container of water beside you to sip. Consider green tea as a warming, antioxidant-rich beverage to hydrate and nourish your skin.
- When you pass a water fountain, pause for a drink.
- Have a beverage with every meal or snack.
- Start meals with soup.



Prairie Fare: Be Prepared to Survive Frigid Temperatures

By: Julie Garden-Robinson, NDSU Extension Food & Nutrition Specialist



Having lived in the Midwest my entire life, I am accustomed to frigid temperatures. What we consider "extreme cold" in this part of the country differs from the perspective of someone in warmer areas of the U.S. In other parts of the country, temperatures near freezing would be considered "extreme cold."

From a safety and health perspective, extreme cold can be deadly if you were to become stranded after a vehicle stalls. The best thing we can do is be prepared with water, food and other supplies in the event of vehicle problems.

Nutritionally, we can survive without food for days, but staying hydrated is a concern. Keep at least a gallon of water in the passenger compartment of the vehicle so it doesn't freeze in the event of an emergency. Experts advise allowing a gallon of water per person for every three days of planned travel.

Pack high-energy foods such as snack mixtures that include nuts, dried fruit and chocolate. Canned goods can be kept in the vehicle as an emergency food supply, but be sure to have a can opener available.

Avoid eating snow because it can lower body temperature in already cold conditions. You can melt snow in a can in a pinch for a water supply, but only if you have no other liquids available. Snow can contain various chemicals and bacteria, so it's a last resort.

Maintain your body temperature. Run the car's engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour, but be sure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

If you are with a companion, take turns sleeping and huddle closely for warmth. Wear a hat or hood and wrap up in a blanket or sleeping bag. If you are in a situation where no blankets are available, use newspapers, maps or car mats. Do some light exercises in the car to aid circulation and stay warmer.

For more information about other tips, visit the Centers for site at



assembling a winter survival kit and Disease Control and Prevention Web

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp#stranded>.