

To Your Health

May 2009

Clean the Kitchen - Make it Safer

It's time to clean the kitchen - and I mean inside the cabinets and pantry.

- Remove everything from shelves. Toss cans showing signs of leaking or bulging, as well as any packages you've opened but haven't used up in the last 6 months.
- While the shelves are empty, wipe them with a clean, damp cloth to remove dust, spilled food, etc.
- Check for dates. Most packaged foods display expiration dates.

... "Sell By" tells the store how long to display the product for sale. Be sure the date on food you buy allows enough time to eat it before then.

... "Best if Used By" or "Use By" tells you by when you should eat (or freeze) the product for best quality. Neither date has anything to do with a food's safety. It still might be perfectly safe to eat after the dates have passed - as long as

it hasn't been opened or mishandled. Usually it's the quality of the food that suffers once the date has passed.

As soon as a package is opened, though, "all bets are off" - expiration dates don't apply. Typically, you should eat a refrigerated food within 3-7 days of opening it, though foods like hard cheeses and condiments last a lot longer.

- Rotate your stock -- "first in, first out." Organize foods with the oldest in front. When you buy foods, place them behind the ones you already have.
- Keep spices away from heat, light and moisture. So don't store them near the stove or cooktop.
- Store dry foods (like pastas, rice, etc.) in containers with lids to keep out insects. Whole grains and whole-grain flours last longer in sealed plastic bags in the refrigerator or freezer. (They can go rancid faster at room temperature.)
- Keep olive oil and nut oils away from light and heat to preserve freshness and quality. (Oils can be stored in the refrigerator, but they will thicken and get cloudy.)

Information source: *Environmental Nutrition*, April 2009

Regular, Smart Snacking

Snacking - *smart* snacking - has an important place in a healthful diet. In fact, research has found that making healthful snacks a regular part of your routine can help maintain a healthy weight and prevent unhealthy highs and lows in blood sugar.

Smart snacking means:

- Avoid mindless noshing. Don't eat while you watch TV or talk on the phone. Those unconscious calories really add up!
- Snack on whole grain foods, fruits, vegetables, beans, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, low-fat meats and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds.
- Smart snacks don't just happen. Buy handy and portable options - cheese sticks, grapes, bananas, 100% juice, peanut butter, whole grain crackers. Keep some on hand for snacks to go.
- Pre-portion snacks so you're not tempted to snack indefinitely.

Spend Smart. Eat Smart.

I like getting the "Smart Tips" from the *Spend Smart. Eat Smart.* web site. Have you signed up? Go to www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings and sign up under "Smart Tips." That's all you need to do, and a message appears each week in your e-mail.

Here's a recent tip from Jan Temple that I found helpful.

Substitute Cream Cheese for Goat Cheese?

"I saw a recipe recently that called for goat cheese. WOW! I know cheese can be expensive, but I thought this was really high. A 4-ounce portion cost almost \$5.00! I went ahead and bought it, tried the recipe and found it to be quite tasty. As I was straightening the kitchen, I read the Nutrition Facts label and realized there really wasn't much in the goat cheese. So I pulled a package of reduced fat cream cheese out of the fridge to compare labels. Know what? No real difference! And the cream cheese was only \$.99 for 8 ounces. I made the recipe again substituting cream cheese for goat cheese. Was there a significant flavor change? No ... some people preferred the cream cheese version. So, will I spend \$5.00 for goat cheese or \$.50 for cream cheese next time I make the recipe? Not too hard to figure the answer to that one."

I've seen recipes that look and sound so good, but one - maybe two - ingredients make me pass them by. Next time I'll think about a substitution that will save money while providing the same taste and consistency.

Reduce Kitchen Waste/Save \$\$\$

One of the biggest sources of kitchen waste is spoiled and uneaten food. Although much of this may be compostable (an excellent way to recycle), reduce waste and save money by only buying the food that you can consume before it goes bad. The **three best tips** for buying what you need are:

Plan meals and snacks before you go shopping. Make a **shopping list** and stick to it. **Never** go shopping when you are hungry.

Source: www.eatrightmontana.org

Get Fit with Gardening

Warmer weather has arrived! With it comes raking, mowing, weeding, planting, etc. Getting dirty in the yard and garden has a variety of pay-offs, including helping you grow a healthier body. Add the stress-reducing benefits of fresh air and sunshine and you've got "win-win" for your body and your brain.

Warm up with a walk. Warm muscles are more flexible and less likely to get injured. A brisk 5 to 10 minute walk will warm up your body and give you time to mentally plan your yard and garden projects for the day.

After a proper warm-up, **stretching** is the most important activity for gardeners who want to prevent injuries, aches and pains, while improving flexibility. Safe stretching involves slow, controlled movements and holding the position for 30 seconds (no bouncing). Garden stretches use trees, fences, tools, and the ground for support.

Flex your muscles. Once your muscles are well warmed and gently stretched, you can get down to the heavy lifting of garden work. Start slowly and build up gradually as your muscles get stronger throughout the season. Muscle building in the garden can include everything from squats for legs and wall pushups for arms to lifting tools, pots and bags. Proper positioning prevents injuries.

Balance the load. Balance the time you work in different positions: sitting, standing, kneeling. For balanced strength on both sides of your body, alternate right and left arms for raking, hoeing, shoveling - and carry equal loads in both hands.

Reduce your stress. "Take time to smell the roses." You may even find your yard and gardens the perfect place for personal reflection.

...Visit www.gardenfitness.com for more.

Source: www.eatrightmontana.org