Cross-contamination Issues with Reusable Shopping Bags

Recent research conducted at the University of Arizona and Loma Linda University suggests that reusable grocery bags are a potential source of cross-contamination if not cleaned regularly.

Most shoppers used the bags once a week, 70% used bags only for groceries (other uses included clothes, books, biking supplies), and only 25% kept separate bags for meat and vegetables. Only 3% cleaned their bags on a regular basis and most consumers were unaware of the need to regularly wash their bags.

General bacteria were found in nearly all bags and coliform bacteria in 51%. Further identification of specific bacteria in the coliform group isolated indicated the presence of a few pathogens. However, the pathogens Listeria and Salmonella were not found in any of the shopping bags.

Salmonella bacteria that were added to dirty bags grew 10-fold in two hours when stored in the trunk of a car at 120°F. Fortunately, machine or hand washing of shopping bags, with or without bleach, reduced heterotrophic and Salmonella bacteria to below detection levels.

The report suggested tips for consumers who use reusable grocery bags including:

- When using reusable bags, consumers should be careful to separate raw foods from other food products
- Consumers should not use reusable food bags for other purposes such as carrying books or gym clothes
- Consumers should wash the bags regularly.

Some stores are introducing an antibacterial polypropylene reusable bag that helps prevent the spread of bacteria; the bag is said to retain its anti-bacterial properties through repeated washings.

Winter Squash is a Great Addition to Fall Menus

Winter squash is a healthy addition to any meal and easy to prepare. During the fall, it is reasonably priced and available at most local grocery stores.

Winter squash is picked when it is fully mature and has a thick, inedible skin. This thick skin provides a protective covering for the squash and allows for a long storage life. Winter squash can be stored for three months or longer in a cool, dry place preferably in a single layer.

The most common winter squash are butternut and acorn squash. Butternut squash is tan in color and has a long, bell-like shape. Acorn squash has its name because it is actually shaped like an acorn. It is dark green in color and has a ridged rind or skin. When purchasing winter squash, look for squash that has a dull sheen (a shiny skin is an indicator the squash is not fully mature), is heavy and free of soft spots.

Winter squash is a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium and fiber. One-half cup of cooked winter squash only has 40 calories.

All winter squash bakes well. Cut the squash in two, scoop out the seeds and brush the cut surface with oil. Place the squash, cut side down, in a baking dish with one-fourth cup of water. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees F until the flesh is soft. The hard shell of the squash can be difficult to cut in two, so be sure to have a heavy-duty sharp knife.

Once the squash is cooked and cooled, it can be peeled away from the skin and cut into cubes and used in soups, stews and casseroles. Winter squash can be used interchangeably in recipes.

Source: Tammy Roberts, MS, RD, LD, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, Barton County, University of Missouri Extension

Americans Not Meeting Fruit & Vegetable Recommendations

Numerous studies have shown that consuming a diet rich in fruit and vegetables can decrease the risk of developing some chronic diseases and help keep weight under control. A September 2010 report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that most Americans are not meeting their fruit and vegetable recommendations.

In 2009, just 32.5% of US adults consumed fruit two or more times per day and 26.3% consumed vegetables three or more times per day. Over the last ten years, fruit consumption decreased by approximately 2% and vegetable consumption stayed virtually the same.

Master Gardener Classes Begin in January

OSU Extension Master Gardener classes will begin in January and run through late March/early April in both Tillamook and Astoria. Master Gardeners receive in-depth gardening training on a variety of topics including botany, soils, plant pathology & propagation, pruning, pest control, coastal gardening issues, and more. In return for the training, volunteers staff the OSU Extension Office and community events during the summer/fall to assist with answering gardening questions. For more information about schedule and costs, or to register contact the OSU Extension Office in your county of residence.

Tillamook Office, 2204 Fourth Street, Tillamook 503-842-3433
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/extension/tillamook/what-master-gardener-program

Clatsop Office, 2001 Marine Dr., Rm 210, Astoria, 503-325-8573
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/clatsop/gardening/master-gardener-classes-events
Walking Keeps Your Brain Young

Researchers have found that older adults who walk regularly perform daily tasks more efficiently, maintain their independence, and are less likely to suffer a disability. A new study from the University of Illinois reveals walking also helps the brain.

This study monitored brain activity of sedentary adults, aged 59 to 80, who joined a walking group for one year. The researchers also measured brain activity in younger (18-to 35-year-old) adults. Brain activity was measured in brain regions that function together as networks. As one ages, the circuits in the brain become less connected.

The results showed that older adults who walked at least 40 minutes three times a week had brain activity networks similar to those of the 20 year-olds. They also had an improvement in memory, attention, planning, prioritizing, strategizing, and multi-tasking. These results did not happen over night; it took one year of walking before these benefits occurred.


Healthy Habits Help You Live Longer

Longevity appears to be more about healthy lifestyle than about genes. A study from the University of Cambridge in England followed middle-aged men and women for 11 years and found non-smokers with the healthiest eating and exercise habits lived longer than people with the worst habits. Another study at the Pacific Health Research Institute in Hawaii followed Japanese American men for 40 years. This study found those who avoided health risk factors in midlife like smoking, being overweight, excessive drinking and high blood pressure were likely to live longer. Here are some tips for healthy lifestyle habits:

- **Stay active and connected.** Centenarians are usually active and interested in what’s going on in the community and world. Staying connected and involved keeps your brain working and increases your sense of purpose. Establish a support system and have a daily connection with close friends or family members.

- **Exercise your brain and challenge your mind.** Stay curious and mentally alert as you age. For instance, solve puzzles, take painting, art, computer or foreign language classes, play bridge, or play an instrument.

- **Be positive — keep laughter and humor.** Positive thinking helps people reduce stress and enjoy life more. People with positive attitudes decrease their risk of poor health and early death by 50% over pessimists.

- **Establish healthy habits.** Get regular physical checkups, blood pressure and cholesterol checks, floss daily, don’t smoke, and drink in moderation. Move around and get regular exercise every day. Slow down your fast life pace — when you take time to relax, life is calmer and more focused.

- **Watch your waist and exercise regularly.** It is hard to find obese centenarians. Keeping a trim waistline is one of the keys to living longer because excess weight contributes more to heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Be smart about what and how much you eat. Eat more fruits and veggies, less red meat and fries.

- **Faith matters.** Older people with an active faith had lower blood pressure and lived longer according to a study at the Duke University Medical Center. Other studies show people who attended religious services regularly or who feel they are spiritual also feel healthier. Churches or religious services provide a social network and a source of comfort and support. Continue to keep your spirituality by joining religious activities. Stay connected with people, family and friends.

- **Be a volunteer.** When volunteering, you are making friends, helping people, having a social connection and experiencing the psychological benefits of feeling needed. People who spend time volunteering in the community are happier and healthier.

Source: Nina Chen, Ph.D. CFLE, human development specialist, Jackson County, University of Missouri Extension
Minimize Stress and Maximize the Gifts of the Season

Parents, be warned that a RED and GREEN alert has been declared this season. No, it has not been issued by the Department of Homeland Security. It has been issued by family support professionals who want you and your children to experience positive relationships.

During the holidays, parents, who are already stressed in their daily lives, are subject to additional stressors that can take away from what is supposed to be a jolly season. Make a decision to take time to slow down. Make time each day for you and your loved ones, and your family may experience the benefits of the holiday season.

The holiday season can be a time of pile up. The main additional pressures include financial, family, and time. Expectations that are unrealistic will contribute to your feeling more stressed. For example, if your family has an unresolved conflict, it is unlikely that perfect peace will occur just because of the holiday.

The following lists are suggestions from family education and other professionals that can help to minimize the stress and maximize the gifts of the season. The RED list includes suggested actions to stop, avoid, or reduce. The GREEN list includes suggestions to consider doing. These are some ways you can turn stress into a plan or action to cope. Don’t forget to use the coping skills or resources that have worked for you in the past.

RED

- Don’t overspend. Shop at secondhand or consignment shops if needed.
- Don’t expect to resolve past or current family issues.
- Don’t try to add items to your schedule without letting go of other things you do.
- Don’t skip meals to eat holiday food and drink.
- Don’t drink alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant. Sparkling juices can be festive.
- Don’t expect others to make you happy. It is your choice.
- Don’t think you have to be crazy or stressed just because many people around you make that choice.

GREEN

- Have realistic expectations about spending and managing your time.
- Learn to say no or delay demands on your finances, on your schedule, and from the people in your life.
- Give gifts that you can afford, which may be “coupons” for a service such as doing dishes for someone for a week, cleaning a bedroom, giving a massage, etc.
- Expect that you and other people will experience a range of emotions throughout the holiday season, from sad or mad to happy and joyful.
- Spend time with people who nurture and support you and minimize time with those that are not this way.
- Take breaks. Snuggle up and read a good book, take a walk, listen and move to some music, breathe the scents of the season, enjoy a healthy snack, and get your sleep.
- Delegate, delay, or decide not to do certain things. It is OK to let go of past traditions to embrace new ones.
- Eat regular, balanced meals and enjoy the goodies in moderation.
- Get physical, including exercise.
- Make time just to relax and be with people you care about and people who care about you.
- If ever there is a time, now is it to go with the flow.
- Give yourself permission if things are piling up, to stay home and spend relaxing time alone.
- Children want presence more than presents. Slow down for yourself. Slow down for your children. Spend quality time together. You and your family will be making positive memories.

Source: Julie Gardner, former ParentLink associate, University of Missouri Extension
Holiday Entertaining Without Breaking Your Budget

As the holiday season approaches, many of us have holiday parties and gatherings to plan. In these tough economic times, we face the daunting task of keeping our family traditions without breaking our budget. The good news is that by being creative and planning carefully, you can still make this season fun and memorable. Saving money does not mean missing out on all the fun.

Most of your budget may be spent on purchasing food for Thanksgiving, Christmas or other holidays. The following budget-friendly tips can help you save money and have fun at the same time.

1. Establish your budget and how much you can afford to spend. Design a menu around your budget and what is seasonal or on sale at the grocery store. Next, write a list of who will be invited. Your budget will guide you on the number of guests you can comfortably invite.

2. Keep a grocery list so you’re less likely to make an impulse purchase. A list should also prevent you from making extra trips to the store. Stick to your list for added savings, but stay flexible if you encounter a sale.

3. Plan ahead for how to use leftovers. We lose money when we toss food because it spoiled. If leftovers go bad because they’re left out too long, we’re putting money into the garbage can.

4. Use coupons! In most cases, grocery stores have great sales on holiday staples like turkeys and hams. Their goal is to get you into the store with the hope that you will purchase lots of other products that are not on sale. Use this to your advantage, but only buy items you need. Check for online coupons as well. Start with the Web site of the store where you shop or of products you use. Shopping on double or triple coupon days can save you a lot of money.

5. Buy in bulk. If the price is right and the larger size fits your criteria, go for it! Prices can be deceiving, so pay attention to unit prices to ensure you are getting the best deal. Bigger is not always cheaper. Make sure you will use the food while it is still good.

6. Save on store brands. Buy generic and you could save up to 40% a year on your grocery bill. In taste tests, most consumers cannot identify the difference between generic and store brands.

7. Shop high and low. Bargains are usually on the top or bottom shelves. The worst deals are at eye level.

8. Pay attention at the checkout. Don’t lose out on a great deal because an item scans incorrectly.

9. If you are hosting a holiday gathering, ask for help with meal preparation. This will help relieve some of the financial burden. Contact everyone on your holiday guest list and see who can bring a dish to share. Guests traveling from out of town may not be able to bring perishable items, but they can grab some nonperishables on their way in. Make sure you coordinate who’s bringing what to avoid overlap.

10. Include a variety of meatless dishes — these are often cheaper and, as a bonus, generally healthier, too.

11. Help others. How about serving some homemade food or giving a grocery store gift certificate to a family in need? This is the greatest investment you can make for your money during the holiday season.

Source: Damaris Karanja, MA, nutrition and health education specialist, St. Louis County, University of Missouri Extension
Be a Thoughtful Giver with Food Items

Gifts from the kitchen provide a way to give from the heart. Being fancy or elaborate isn’t important — being thoughtful is. Just as in selecting nonfood gifts, it’s important to consider the needs, interests and abilities of the receiver when planning and preparing holiday gifts of food. Points to consider:

- Avoid adding nuts or coconut for young children or the elderly. These ingredients could create a choking hazard. Also, some people may be allergic to nuts.

- Consider chewing abilities. Sometimes elderly people have tender gums or missing teeth, so softer food items are in order.

- If you know the recipient has diabetes or is working to maintain a healthy weight, don’t tempt with high-calorie treats. Opt for soup mixes or low-fat, whole-grain fruit breads.

- Consider household size. A single person or couple may enjoy a small fruit basket, but find a case of fruit overwhelming. Give items in proportion to the household size.

- There is often an abundance of foods during the holidays, so think about a gift for the weeks ahead. Coordinate a festive basket complete with the recipe and ingredients needed to prepare a special meal.

- For your friends or family members with limited cooking skills, give a Meal of the Month certificate. Pledge to prepare them a meal once a month. This would be a special gift for those who live alone or finds cooking a challenge. Plan to share the gift of your time and enjoy the meal with them.

Source: Lynda Johnson, R.D., Nutrition and Health Education specialist with University of Missouri Extension

Recycling During the Holiday Season

Many people have questions this time of year about recycling wrapping paper and other holiday-related items. Recycling centers vary in what they have the capacity to accept and process. Call your local provider to ask what you can do to recycle.

According to http://earth911.com/, as much as half of the 85 million tons of paper products Americans consume every year goes toward packaging, wrapping and decorating goods. Also, wrapping paper and shopping bags alone account for about 4 million tons of trash annually in the U.S.

During this busy entertaining season, consider what other items are used that we can or cannot recycle. The paper plates from holiday parties should not be recycled if they have food bits or grease on them. Similar to recycling pizza boxes, if you can cut out and throw away the soiled parts then do that and only recycle the clean parts of the plate or box.

Plastic and glass bottles are both great items to recycle. Check with your local provider to see what plastics and glass bottles are accepted for recycling. Remember to remove the lids from all bottles as they can cause recycling process problems such as:

- If lids are on tight, the bottles are not compressed on the truck and take up more space. This means the collection trucks have to make more trips to empty themselves.

- Some lids are made of plastics that are not recyclable.

- At some recycling centers the equipment cannot process the smaller lids and they end up jamming the system.

Christmas trees may be recyclable. Watch your local newspaper for announcements of groups that will recycle your tree.

The Web site http://earth911.com/ has a lot of information about what is recyclable in your area. In their search feature, you can enter what you would like to recycle and your zip code to get the information you need.

Source: Barbara Buffaloe, LEED A.P., M.S., extension associate & resident instructor, Architectural Studies, University of Missouri Extension
Implementing an Exercise Routine is Important for a Healthy Lifestyle

We all know exercise is good for us, but getting motivated can be a challenge. Although finding the time and inspiration can sometimes be difficult, it’s important to include an exercise routine as part of your lifestyle. There are many different activities you can try to get started, and finding what works for you will help you enjoy exercise.

Commit to change: Be willing to move in a new direction with your lifestyle and find ways to be more active. Identify a successful role model who has made changes to improve his or her health by increasing physical activity and eating sensibly. Accept that change is all about making choices — like choosing to take a walk instead of watching TV. That doesn’t mean you have to stop watching TV, it just means you should find a balance between watching TV and being more active. Another way to be active is to take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. Put these simple steps into action to add more activity to your day.

Believe in change: Believe in yourself and your ability to change. It’s easier to achieve a goal when you have a positive attitude. Make a list of successful changes you’ve made in the past and believe that you can make these new changes. Try not to get upset if you miss a couple of days of exercise — occasional lapses will not ruin your efforts.

It’s important to give yourself some slack, not get discouraged and realize that missing a few days of exercise doesn’t constitute failure.

Remain confident and keep a record of your activity on the calendar to help you stay on track. If you have friends who stay in shape with regular exercise, ask them for tips and suggestions that you could incorporate into your routine.

Focus on small changes: When it comes to exercise, it’s important to create a long-term plan that works for you. The goal is to make a lifetime commitment to staying active. Experiment and try various kinds of activities to discover ones you really enjoy. Fun activities you could try include line dancing, bowling, lifting weights, water aerobics, exercise classes or yoga. By choosing a variety of activities, you also have a backup plan if you need one. For example, if you can’t walk outside because of bad weather, use an exercise DVD instead. Try to make physical activity a part of your daily habits. Keep a pair of sneakers by your desk or the door as a reminder to walk, or place hand weights next to the TV to exercise while watching your favorite program. It’s important to do activities that are fun and make you feel good about exercising. Keep your focus on your accomplishments and feeling healthy.

Find a cheerleader: It’s easier to make changes when you have someone to cheer you on. Seek out a friend, co-worker or family member who will encourage you and keep you motivated. Regular phone calls, e-mails or visits could provide the boost to keep you on target. Your cheerleader could even become your exercise buddy, which can make exercise more fun. Reward yourself as you make simple changes that support your overall goal — celebration is part of successful change.

Too often people think they simply lack the willpower to change. Instead of being negative, try basing your plan on small, incremental changes that will improve your health over time. Ease into exercise by making the most of daily activities such as walking, cleaning, gardening and stair climbing as daily activities that keep you moving.

Keep a journal when you don’t have time to exercise. By recording what you do every half hour for a day, you’ll find 30 minutes you could have spent exercising.

Source: Lynda Johnson, R.D., specialist for Nutrition and Health Education with University of Missouri Extension
A Healthy Diet Can Help Fight Winter Sniffles

People try many different methods to avoid catching a cold or flu during the winter months. One thing to remember is that simple diet choices can boost our immune system. The following list includes simple things that can boost the immune system to work at peak performance.

- Get plenty of liquids to help prevent viruses and bacteria from taking up residence in your body. The mucus in your nose is actually one of the key physical barriers that keep germs out of your body. When you’re not well hydrated, it dries up and doesn’t provide that barrier.

- Protein is a building block for a healthy immune system. Choose lean meats, poultry and fish, dried beans, and soy. You can also choose protein-rich plant sources with heart healthy fat, like peanut butter or nuts.

- Choose foods rich in vitamins C and E. These two antioxidant-rich vitamins may protect cells — including those of your immune system — from damage by toxins in the environment. Choose citrus fruits, melons, mangoes, kiwi, peppers, tomatoes, berries, broccoli, cabbage, sweet/white potatoes, winter squash, leafy greens, almonds, hazelnuts, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, safflower oil, whole grains and fortified cereals several times a day.

- Eat probiotic foods to help build up good bacteria in the intestines. These bacteria play a role in helping fend off illnesses. Any fermented food is rich in this type of good bacteria, so choose yogurt, sauerkraut, tofu, brined pickles and aged cheese at least daily.

- Add a zinc-rich food to your daily diet to increase the production of white blood cells in your body. Research shows that this may reduce the number of days you suffer from a cold. Some foods rich in zinc are yogurt, lean red meat, poultry and fish, almonds, pumpkin seeds and fortified cereals.

Source: Susan Mills-Gray, Nutrition and Health Education specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

Altering Recipes Can Be Easy and Healthy

People often wonder about recipes that are appropriate for health conditions like heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes. Although there are cookbooks that are marketed to people with these conditions, sometimes a little alteration of a recipe you already have is enough to make it suitable for someone with a special diet. The bonus is that it makes it a healthier choice for everyone eating.

To make a recipe healthier, you can lower the fat, increase the fiber, decrease the sodium or cholesterol, or lower the sugar. To alter a recipe, you can do one of three things: omit an ingredient, decrease or increase the amount of an ingredient, or substitute a more nutritious ingredient.

For example, in many baked goods:

- Salt can be reduced or eliminated. Other seasonings, like basil, cardamom, thyme or cayenne pepper can replace salt as a flavoring (depending on the recipe). Another option is to use fruit, its juice or the rind (e.g., a lemon or lime) to bring out the flavor of fish without using salt.

- You can also reduce the amount of sugar or fat by using the next lowest common measurement. So if the recipe calls for 1 cup of sugar, use 3/4 cups instead. If it calls for 1/3 cup honey, try 1/4 cup.

- Applesauce or yogurt can often be used to replace up to an equal amount of fat in a recipe.

No matter what kind of alteration you’ve made, it’s wise to try a small batch of the new recipe before you serve it to others. It’s also important to make small adjustments until you go too far — then back up one small step to a product that still tastes good but is healthier than the original. Keep in mind that altering recipes is all about experimentation and you can try it for anything you cook. When you create healthier alternatives for everyday favorites, the health benefits add up over time.

Source: Janet Hackert, regional nutrition & health education specialist, Harrison County, University of Missouri Extension.
Ways to Stay Healthy During the Holiday

With so many other good things to do during the holiday season, who wants to spend precious time being sick? Here are some tips for staying healthy during the holidays:

Get the clean hands habit. Frequent handwashing is the number-one way to prevent the spread of germs that cause colds and flu. In the latest observational study 85% of adults washed their hands in public restrooms, compared with 77% in 2007. It shows that we’re getting better, but there’s still a long way to go.

Be handshake savvy. The holiday meet-and-greets offer lots of opportunities for hugs and handshakes. The downside is the opportunity to transmit germs from person to person. Be very aware of keeping your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth.

Control your social calendar. Answering every invitation may leave you overscheduled, overtired and vulnerable to the germs that cause colds and flu. Be judicious in your acceptances so that you have time to do the things you really enjoy.

Get plenty of rest. According to the National Sleep Foundation, adults need seven to nine hours of sleep per night to stay healthy. If you find yourself running around like one of Santa’s overworked elves, even 15-20 minutes of shut-eye will recharge your batteries. But don’t overdo it. Sleeping more than 30 minutes can lead to sleep inertia, which makes you feel sluggish and more tired than ever.

Reduce the possibility of food-borne illness. If you’re hosting, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. If you’re the guest and think the buffet food may have been out too long, give the food a pass.

Join the weight control patrol. Here are a few helpful strategies:

• Eat a small, healthy meal before party time. It will be easier to resist the high calorie foods.

• At a party, don’t stand next to the buffet table. It leads to the temptation to overeat. Instead, mingle with the guests.

• Carry an apple or baby carrots with you, so you always have a healthy snack available. Tuck some hand wipes or a hand sanitizer in with your snack so it’s easy to have clean hands no matter where you eat.

• Drink plenty of water.

Don’t give exercise a holiday. If there’s no time to follow your usual routine, be creative. While watching television, ride an exercise bike, treadmill or do some other type of exercise. If you don’t have any exercise equipment, try crunches, pushups or jog in place during commercials. Park your car a little farther from the door when shopping than so you can add a bit of walking to your routine. Forego the elevator or the escalator for the stairs.

Enjoying Your Fireplace

In the midst of a cold, damp winter, nothing says “cozy” better than a cheerful fire in the fireplace. But along with the lovely ambiance of a wood-burning fireplace comes soot.

Soot Stains on the Carpet

When soot gets on the carpet, our first instinct is to brush it away. But doing that will simply embed the stain deeper into the fibers. Instead, vacuum the spot, using a canister vacuum and a crevice tool. Avoid the upright type of vacuum with a rotating brush as the brush will spread the stain. Gently work from the outer edge of the stain to the center. If this doesn’t remove most of the stain, stop the do-it-yourself process and call a carpet cleaning professional.

However, if vacuuming removes most of the stain, the next step (assuming it is safe according to the carpet manufacturer) is to apply rubbing alcohol to a clean white cloth and blot gently until the spot is removed. Do not saturate the carpet as the alcohol can harm the backing if it has a latex bond. If the spot still remains, mix ¼ tsp of liquid dishwashing detergent with 1 quart water. Blot gently with a clean white paper towel. Continue until spot is removed. To rinse, mist, using tap water in a spray bottle; blot to remove the moisture. Spray lightly; apply a pad (about ½” thick) of paper towels weighted down with a brick. Let the carpet dry.

Source: Cleaning Matters Newsletter: November/December 2010
A Checklist to Get Your Home Ready for the Holidays

Work through this list a few items a day. Before you know it, your home will be clean and ready for the holidays!

1. Put mats and throw rugs at entryways. This will help prevent dirt from being tracked in.

2. Keep a boot tray near the door for rain or snow soaked footwear.

3. Vacuum carpets, floors and baseboards so you won’t have to count dust bunnies among your holiday guests!

4. Sort and discard old magazines and newspapers. Save a few and leave them on a table in the guest room for your company’s nighttime reading.

5. Aim high! Add a telescoping dust wand to your cleaning supplies so it’s easy to banish cobwebs in corners and around ceiling fixtures.

6. Before the holiday rush takes over, give all the bed linens a thorough cleaning.

7. Develop a sorting system for handling the mail so it doesn’t accumulate in piles.

8. Analyze your scarf, hat and glove storage and develop some jumble-free solutions.

9. If your pets prefer the furniture to the floor, cover their favorite upholstered pieces with attractive, washable throws that can be whisked out of sight when guests arrive.

10. Keep a complete set of your most-used cleaning supplies on each floor of the house. They’ll always be within easy reach for touch-up cleaning.

11. Put a container of pop-up disposable wipes next to every bathroom and powder room sink. Encourage family members to use them every time they turn the tap water off.

12. Stock up on electrostatic dust cloths for on-the-spot cleaning of your flat screen TV and other dust magnets.

13. If you plan on doing a lot of holiday cooking and entertaining, check your stockpile of aprons, potholders, dish clothes and dish towels. Make sure they’re clean and in usable condition.

14. Invest in a few small, hand-held vacuums designed for your TV, computer keyboard or gaming station and install them in strategic places around your home. They are perfect for removing dust and crumbs from your electronics.

15. Flushable bathroom wipes are good for touching up surfaces between deeper cleanings.

16. Stock up on disposable hand towels for the powder room and guest bath.

17. Make room for guest’s gear by purging the coat closet of out-of-season items and stocking it with hangers sturdy enough for winter coats.

18. To avoid beverage rings on your wood or glass top furniture, keep coasters out in plain sight.

19. Clean out the refrigerator to make room for holiday goodies. Remove the contents, checking expiration dates, and discarding anything whose time is up. Clean the shelves and wipe down bottles and jars before returning items to the refrigerator.

20. Get into the soaking habit. Once the meal is over, clear the table and pretend any stains with a prewash stain remover. Fill the washing machine with laundry detergent, warm water and bleach that’s safe for the fabric, toss the linens in, and let them soak overnight.

21. Place tissues and hand sanitizer near doors for a quick pit-stop.

22. If the counter tops gleam, the kitchen looks cleaner. Find the best spray cleaner for your particular countertop and use it regularly.

23. To cut down on clutter and crumbs, confine snacks to certain areas of the house.

24. Inventory your laundry supplies so you don’t run out of anything at this busy time of the year.

25. Give yourself a holiday present: a professional cleaning service pre- or post-holiday is just what Santa ordered!

Source: Cleaning Matters Newsletter: November/December 2010
The winter session of the “Strong Women” exercise program for middle-aged and older women will begin on Monday, January 3. The program will be offered on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 7:45 a.m.-8:45 a.m. and repeated from noon-1 p.m. The 1:30-2:30 p.m. class is held on Mondays and Fridays with a different strength program on Wednesdays. New participants must attend the orientation, Monday, January 3, 9 a.m. or 11 a.m. before beginning the program. Classes are held at the OSU Extension Service office.

Hand and ankle weights are provided. Participants should wear comfortable clothing and athletic shoes.

The Strong Women Program is based upon years of research on how strength training and proper nutrition improve the health of women of all ages. Research shows that strength training improves bone density, reduces falls, improves arthritis symptoms, and increases flexibility and strength.

Registration is required prior to attending the program and will be limited to 20 participants on a first-come, first-serve basis. To register, new participants must complete the required screening and enrollment forms and pay the $25 registration fee by December 30. Women over age 70 or those with other chronic health conditions must obtain a release from their medical provider before beginning the program. Registration packets are available at the OSU Extension Service office, 2204 Fourth Street, Tillamook, by calling 503-842-3433 or on the web at http://extension.oregonstate.edu/tillamook/classes.

Free Financial Education Classes

Could your family use more money at the end of the month? Then plan to attend the series of four free financial education classes co-sponsored by Food Roots and the OSU Extension Service in Tillamook. Classes will be taught by Chris Wagner and held on Thursday evenings, February 3-24, 6-8:30 pm at the OSU Extension Office in Tillamook. Learn how to:

- Create sound financial goals
- Problem solve your way out of debt
- Understand the realities of credit
- Use a Bank Account
- Become resourceful and empowered during a financial crisis
- Sharpen decision-making skills
- And much more!

Class space is limited so please register ahead with Food Roots at (503) 842-3154x5 or email microbiz@foodrootsnw.org.

Workshop on Brining, Smoking & Pickling Seafood

Learn how to brine, smoke and pickle seafood at a two night workshop, March 23rd & 24th, 6-10 pm at the Seaside High School Culinary Arts Kitchen. The workshop is sponsored by Oregon Sea Grant, Clatsop County OSU Extension, and Clatsop Community College. Seafood product development specialist Mark Whitham will be teaching this hands-on workshop covering safe and easy methods for preserving seafood at home. Cost is $50 for the two night workshop. To enroll, call 503-338-2408 or register online at www.clatsopcollege.com.
Extension Study Groups Invite Participation

Would you like to be part of a group that is interested in continual learning? Then the OSU Extension Study Groups are for you. Groups meet monthly to learn about topics related to home and family. These groups are open to all interested people and meet in both Tillamook and Clatsop Counties. Lessons are developed by OSU Extension faculty and taught by a study group volunteer. The March lesson will be taught by Nancy Kershaw, OSU Extension FCH faculty member.

December

Holiday Activities

January

Oodles of Noodles - Are you stuck on macaroni? How about trying other shapes of noodles or whole grain pasta in your dishes?

February

Pantry Pests – There are many creatures that like the same foods we do and we often find them in our food! Identify, prevent and beat back these little intruders through healthy & safe management techniques.

March

End of Life Care: Diversity & Decisions – This lesson will address end-of-life support and will include information about hospice, organ donation, advance directives and “do not resuscitate” orders.

April

Seafood at its Best – Learn about types of seafood and potential health benefits & risks of eating seafood. Includes tips on selecting, handling & cooking.

May

End of Year Activities

For more information about where and when each study group meets contact the person listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Study Group</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Wed</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Clatsop County (Astoria)</td>
<td>Terry Pellissier</td>
<td>503-717-0751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Mon.</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Nehalem Bay</td>
<td>Mary Beth Backlund</td>
<td>503-368-7943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Tues.</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>South Tillamook Co.</td>
<td>Onnie Beyer</td>
<td>503-965-6587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Wed.</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Kilchis</td>
<td>Evelyn VonFeldt</td>
<td>503-377-2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calendar

December

24, 27 & 31 OSU Extension Office Closed for Christmas & New Year’s Holiday

January

3 MASTER GARDENER PROGRAMS BEGIN IN EARLY JANUARY

Strong Women Orientation (9-10 am & 11 am-noon) & Classes begin and run on Mon., Wed., and Fri. through March 31 (7:45 am; noon, 1:30 pm), OSU Extension Office, Tillamook,

February

3, 10, 17, 24 Paths to Prosperity Financial Literacy Class, OSU Extension Office, Tillamook, 6-8:30 pm

March

23 & 24 Brining, Smoking & Pickling Seafood, Seaside High School Culinary Arts Kitchen, 6-10 pm