**Family & Consumer Science News**

Hoke County Center October - December 2016

**Autumn is Upon Us**

Autumn is here in all its beauty. It’s amazing how the leaves change from green to brown, and from red to gold. Just like each of us, every season is unique in it’s own way. Take this time to reflect on your special qualities. Don’t let discouragement prevent you from experiencing a joyous, confident, successful life. This is the season of Thanks-Giving and let’s not forget the true meaning.

Families are the people whom we trust the most, the individuals who we feel safe with our inner most secrets. In return, these loved ones are the ones who provide us with guidance and sound advice which shape our lives and establish our foundation as young adults. These are the people who provide us with that sense of responsibility and understanding of what is right and wrong, and surrounds us with comfort, and love. Therefore, we would do anything within our power to assure their safety.

Holidays include the traditional foods we prepare for gift-giving, and family drop-ins. During this hectic time of the year it’s easy to overlook food safety. Mishandling food can ruin more than just a holiday meal – it can cause serious illness and even death. As you rush around the kitchen preparing all your favorite holiday foods, remember these food safety tips:

**Safe food handling** – Use warm soapy water, wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds and wash work area often to prevent cross-contamination. Have adequate refrigerator and freezer space for storage of foods. Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean.

**Cook thoroughly** – Cook food thoroughly to safe temperatures. Cook roast beef, veal and lamb, and seafood, steaks, and chops to at least 145°F, whole poultry, poultry breasts, and ground poultry to 165°F. Ground red meats should be cooked to 155°F.

**Holding food** – Keep cold foods at 40°F or colder by nestling dishes in bowls of ice. Maintain the correct temperature of cooked foods served – hold at 140°F or warmer by using chafing dishes, crock-pots, or warming trays.

**Leftovers** – Discard all perishable foods that have been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours. Remember the general rule-of-thumb, “when in doubt, throw it out!” Store leftovers in the refrigerator and use within two to three days.

**Eggnog** – Homemade eggnog prepared with raw eggs can be contaminated.

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Sincerely,

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Family & Consumer Sciences

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Be safe by using pasteurized egg products or buying pasteurized ready-made eggnog.

**Raw dough/batter** – Avoid eating dough and batter containing raw eggs. Remember to wash hands and work area with warm soapy water before and after handling raw eggs.

**Halloween Food Safety Tips for Parents**

Take these simple steps to help your children have a fun and safe Halloween.

Going trick-or-treating?

**S** – Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be short, soft, and

flexible.

**A** – Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.

**F** – Fasten reflective tape to costumes and bags to help drivers see you.

**E** – Examine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating them. Limit the amount of treats you eat.

**H** – Hold a flashlight while trick-or-treating to help you see and others see you.

**A** – Always test make-up in a small area first. Remove it before bedtime to prevent skin and eye irritation.

**L** – Look both ways before crossing the street. Use established crosswalks wherever possible.

**L** – Lower your risk for serious eye injury by not wearing decorative contact lenses.

**O** – Only walk on sidewalks or on the far edge of the road facing traffic to stay safe.

**W** – Wear well-fitting masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips and falls.

**E** – Eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid eating homemade treats unless you know the cook well. Children shouldn’t snack while they’re out trick-or-treating. Urge your children to wait until they get home and you have had a chance to inspect the contents of their goody bags.

**E** – Enter homes only if you’re with a trusted adult. Otherwise, stay outside.

**N** – Never walk near lit candles or luminaries. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes.

*Source: CDC*

**PUMPKINS FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

Pumpkininspired foods are a part of many holiday menus. A pumpkin’s orange pulp is a great source of vitamin A, fiber, and potassium. Including pumpkin in your holiday dishes can be added fun and nutrition for the whole family.

Roasted, baked, or steamed pumpkin can be used in holiday soups, dips, pies or other baked goods. Pumpkin seeds also make a great snack so save them after carving your jack-o-lanterns. They are high in iron and unsaturated fats. These unsaturated fats may help to lower cholesterol levels when they replace saturated fats and trans fat in the diet.

**Picking & Storing your Pumpkin** – If you would like to try “fresh” pumpkin in your holidays recipes this year, here are some tips. The best pumpkin for cooking is a “sugar pie pumpkin” or “sweet pumpkin.” Their flesh is sweeter and less watery than the flesh of larger pumpkins used for making jack-o-lanterns. Pick a pumpkin with 1 to 2 inches of stem left. If the stem is cut down too low, the pumpkin will decay quickly. Each pound of raw, untrimmed pumpkin will result in about a cup of pumpkin puree.

Pumpkins store well once you bring them home. They should not be refrigerated unless cut. Store them in a garage or basement, preferably a cool, dark, and dry spot where the temperature range is about 50-55 degrees. When stored this way, your pumpkins will easily last 1 or 2 months.

An important safety tip: Never eat pumpkins that have been carved and used for decoration. When a pumpkin has not been refrigerated and is exposed to candle heat, it can become ideal for bacteria and mold growth and is a risk for food-borne illness.

**Preparing & cooking pumpkins**

1. Cut your pumpkin in half, remove the stem, scoop out the seeds and scrape away all of the stringy mass.
2. Cut the pumpkin into large chunks and rinse the chunks in cold water. Place the chunks in a large pot with about a cup of water (the water does not need to cover the pumpkin pieces).
3. Cover the pot and boil for 20-30 minutes until the pumpkin is tender. Check for doneness by poking with a fork. The pumpkin should slide right off the fork prongs with little or no resistance (similar to testing boiling potatoes to see if they are cooked).
4. Drain the cooked pumpkin in a colander.
5. When the pumpkin is cool enough to handle, remove the peel using a small, sharp knife.
6. Put the pumpkin pulp in a food processor and puree or use a potato masher to form a pumpkin puree.

If the directions above seem like too much work, you can always use canned pumpkin instead. There is also a difference between canned pumpkin and canned pumpkin pie filling. Check labels carefully in the store to be sure you get what you need.

Remember that pumpkin is a starchy vegetable. This means it has carbohydrates and will raise blood sugar. But pumpkin is also rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. To give you an idea of portions, 1 cup of pumpkin has about 15 grams of carbohydrate.

**BREAST CANCER AWARENESS**

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” ~Mae West

Cancer prevention is action taken to lower the risk. Some risk factors for getting cancer can be avoided, but many cannot. For example, both smoking and inheriting certain genes are risk factors for some types of cancer, but only smoking can be avoided. Regular exercise and healthy diet may be protective factors for some types of cancer. Avoiding risk factors and increasing protective factors may lower your risk but it does not mean that you will not get cancer.

Scientists are studying many different ways to help prevent cancer, including the following:

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* Ways to avoid or control things known to cause cancer.
* Change in diet and lifestyle.
* Finding precancerous conditions. Precancerous conditions are conditions that may become cancer.
* Chemoprevention (medicines to treat a precancerous condition or to keep cancer from starting)

In addition to the physical problems and emotional distress caused by cancer, the high costs are also a burden to patients and their families. Hopefully, by preventing cancer, we can reduce the burden of cancer and lower the number of deaths caused by cancer. Cancer is not a single disease but a group of related diseases. Many things in our genes, lifestyle, and the environment around us may increase or decrease our risk of getting cancer.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension is proud to participate in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the second most common kind of cancer in women. About 1 in 8 women born today, in the United States, will get breast cancer at some point.

The good news is that many women can survive breast cancer if it’s found and treated early. If you are a woman, age 40 to 49, talk with your doctor about when to start getting mammograms and how often you should get them. If you are a woman, age 50 to 74, be sure to get a mammogram every 2 years. You may also choose to get them more often. Talk to a doctor about your risk for breast cancer, especially if a close family member of yours has had breast or ovarian cancer. Your doctor can help you decide when and how often to get a mammogram. For more information regarding cancer, visit: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

**Christmas Tree Safety**

As you deck the halls this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.

**Picking the tree** – Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

**Placing the tree**

* Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2” from the base of the trunk.
* Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
* Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
* Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

**Lighting the tree**

* Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
* Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read the manufacturer’s instructions for the number of light strands to connect.
* Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
* Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

**After Christmas** – Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.

**Facts:**

* **One of every three home** **Christmas tree fires** are caused by electrical problems.
* Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they are more likely to be serious.
* A heat source too close to the tree causes roughly **one in every four** of the fires.

*Source:* ***NFPA*** *Public Education Division*

**Plan Holiday Spending – Avoid Season Stress**

Every season has its special beauty and Autumn is no exception. Autumn is associated with the transition from warm to cold weather, and also the season of the Harvest. However, whether it’s jumping into a pile of raked leaves, making homemade pumpkin bread or getting out the cable-knit sweaters, fall brings a different significance for everyone.

When I think of fall, “I think,” the holidays are just around the corner. It’s that time of year when stores use every tactic in the book to lure holiday shoppers. Take a careful look at how much money you have available for holiday spending before you get caught in the holiday buying frenzy.

Ideally, you would have planned and budgeted for the holidays all year. If you started last January by developing a holiday budge, determining how much you wanted to save by the end of the year and sitting it aside monthly, you’ll be ready to head to the mall.

However, most of us don’t start thinking about how much we are going to spend or where the money will come from until the holiday decorations begin to go up. In these tough economic times, use money wisely and if you didn’t make a spending plan or budget, be careful not to allow seasonal expenses strain your personal finances.

It can be especially hard for some people not to overspend during the holidays because of an emotional need to express love, appreciation and friendship. You can avoid stress and strain on your budget by following a few simple tips on holiday money management.

* Create a written plan for holiday spending and gift giving. Include possible gifts, dollar amounts and alternative choices.
* Establish spending limits on gifts for each person on your list, and start looking for bargains early.
* If it has been a challenging year financially, you need to shrink your holiday gift list. Talk with those you exchange gifts with, perhaps suggesting not exchanging gifts or at least mutually observing much lower dollar limits on gifts.
* Look for and ask about upcoming sales. Take full advantage of discount and sale items.
* Spend cash and avoid using credit cards. Charge cards tend to promote impulsive spending.

Taking control of your holiday spending can help avoid holiday stress. Holidays are meant for enjoying family and friends. Explain to family and friends if you’re not able to give as you have in the past, always keep your budget in mind and spend carefully to get the best selection and price. Don’t add any unnecessary stress.

As you gather together this holiday season, remember the less fortunate. There are those who don’t have a warm place to lay their heads and those who won’t have a traditional Thanksgiving or Christmas meal. Have a safe and joyous holiday season!

RECIPE BLOCK

1 ½ cups chopped pecans

½ cup butter, melted

2 cups sugar

2 large eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

2 ½ pounds Granny Smith apples (about 4 large), peeled and cut into ¼-inch thick wedges

Preheat oven to 350°. Bake pecans in a single layer in a shallow pan 5 to 7 minutes or until lightly toasted and fragrant, stirring halfway through. Stir together butter and next 3 ingredients in a large bowl until blended. Combine flour and next 3 ingredients; add to butter mixture, stirring until blended. Stir in apples and 1 cup pecans. (Batter will be very thick, similar to a cookie dough.) Spread batter into a lightly greased 13x9 inch pan.

Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely in pan on a wire rack (about 45 minutes). Spread your choice of frosting over the top of the cake; sprinkle with remaining ½ cup pecans.

Cream Cheese Frosting

1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

3 tablespoons butter, softened

1 ½ cups powdered sugar

1/8 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Beat cream chees and butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add sugar and salt, beating until blended. Stir in vanilla.

*Source: Southern Living*

CO-OP QUILT CLUB CORNER

The Co-Op Quilt Club has done it again. Pictured below are two quilts they made to raffle on December 6, 2016 at 4:00pm.

The money raised from the ticket sales will go towards sending youth to 4-H camp in the summer of 2017. You may see any member for tickets. Tickets purchased will give you the opportunity of winning one or both of the quilts. Both quilts are on display at the Extension Office.

The club is in need of 100 % cotton quilt fabric to continue their community efforts. If you have fabric to donate, please bring it by the Hoke County Cooperative Extension office located at 116 West Prospect Ave.



