When things go wrong as they sometimes will;
When the road you’re trudging seems all up hill;
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh;
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don’t quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns;
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don’t give up though the pace seems slow.
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out;
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt.
And you never can tell how close you are.
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you’re hardest hit.
It’s when things seem worst that you must not quit.

~ Unknown Source: (reprinted from “Sharing the Spirit” April – June 2012)
**Answer Corner**

Q: Is sun tea safe?

A: Using the natural rays of the sun to make tea is fun and popular in the summer. However, using such a method to make tea is highly discouraged. Sun tea is the perfect medium for bacteria to grow. If the sun tea has a thick or syrupy appearance, it may be due to the presence of a ropy bacteria, commonly found in soil and water.

Several years ago in Ohio and Washington, several people became ill after drinking tainted ice tea. In Washington it was determined that the tea had been made with tap water only heated to 130 degrees Fahrenheit and left to sit at room temperature for more than 24 hours. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and the National Tea Association recommend the following when making tea.

- Brew tea bags at 195 degrees F for three to five minutes.
- Brew only enough tea that can be consumed within a few hours.
- Never maintain brewed tea for more than eight hours at room temperature. Discard any unused tea after eight hours.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize tea-making equipment regularly.
- Instead of making "sun tea," brew tea overnight in the refrigerator as you would in the sun.
- Store tea bags in a dark, cool, and dry place away from strong odors and moisture. Do not store in the refrigerator.

Adapted from "Bacteria-filled iced tea can cause illness," Fort Collins Coloradoan, June 12, 1996, Pat Kendall (updated 8/29/11)

**Summer Tips**

Q: I’ve done a good job keeping my skin protected from the sun, and my kids protected from mosquitoes. But now I have bug spray and sunscreen on my clothes. What do I do?

A: Most commercially available bug sprays and sunscreens do wash out relatively easily. First, pretreat the stains with a prewash stain remover; then launder, using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. Check to make sure the stains are gone before you put the garment in the dryer, as heat could set stains that haven't washed out.

Q: My husband was all set to throw some steaks on the grill, but it was filthy. How do I clean it?

A: Most people love the smell of barbecue. But caked-on grizzle? Not so much. Yet, too many people seem to forget this important aspect of grilling and food safety. If the grates are removable, take them out and soak them in warm water and dish soap. Brush clean with a wire brush, and then reassemble the grill and let it air-dry. If other parts require cleaning, check the manual and follow directions. The key to a clean grill is to be diligent about cleaning it immediately after each use, rather than waiting until you’re ready to start cooking. So, the next time you take the steaks off the grill, let any cooked-food residue burn away before turning it off. This is a simple thing to do while the meat “rests.” Then turn off the grill, but while it’s still warm, use a small wire brush to clean any food particles that remain on the cooking grates.

*Source: Cleaning Matters, May/June 2012*
UPCOMING PROGRAMS

“Food Preservation 101”

Workshops will include basic home canning and freezing tips; and will be scheduled in August. Watch for details in our next issue of “Living”; or check our website; or join our email list (see below).

Want to Know What’s Going on at CCE Herkimer County??

Request to be on our email list. Send an email to herkimer@cornell.edu and ask to be added. You will receive announcements of our programs and available resources.

You can also check our webpage, www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer. Click the link for our calendar on the left of the homepage to search for upcoming events.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CCEHerkimerCounty

Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Training

To be a Master Gardener, you must complete a 55-hour training course. The course will cover: basic plant pathology, soils & fertilizers, garden botany, annuals & perennials, basic entomology, organic gardening & composting, vegetable gardening, fruits, trees & shrubs, pruning, ecological lawn care, nuisance wildlife, herbs, and more.

When/Where: Tuesdays, September 4 through November 6, 2012
9 am - 3:00 p.m.
Cooperstown

Contact: Bernie Armata
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County
866-7920 ext 232

Fee: $150, which will include your manual and all material (you are asked to bring a lunch for yourself and provide your own transportation)

To Register: Call Cornell Cooperative Extension at 866-7920 by August 24. (space is limited)
Liven up your grill menu with vegetables and fruits

Add adventure and nutrition to your grilled meals by using vegetables and fruits. Try these tips:

⇒ Grilling vegetables isn’t an exact science since vegetables don’t all cook for the same length of time. Watch them closely so they don’t overcook or burn. Experiment with settings on your grill, but vegetables and fruits generally cook at a lower temperature than you would use to grill meat. Size matters; smaller pieces will cook more quickly than larger ones.

⇒ When grilling vegetables, avoid cross contamination with raw meat. Use separate tongs and plates; and temper the grill surface to medium to medium-high heat before adding raw produce.

⇒ You may wish to lightly spray low-water content vegetables like baby or whole carrots, mushrooms, asparagus and summer squash with vegetable oil so they don’t stick before laying them directly on the grill. If you’re cooking smaller chunks, use a grilling tray or thread a colorful combo on skewers.

⇒ Try grilling vegetables you normally don’t like. Grilling may change their taste enough that you enjoy them. Drizzle fresh grilled vegetables with balsamic vinegar. It tastes great with the smoky flavor from the grill.

⇒ Marinades can offer a nice flavor change to vegetables; but remember that marinades with added sugar will cause the vegetables to blacken.

⇒ Combine corn on the cob cut into 2-inch chunks, sweet potato slices and onion wedges lightly sprayed with vegetable oil on a perforated grilling pan and grill until the vegetables are tender.

⇒ Or use the grill to steam white or sweet potatoes in thick slices sprinkled with olive oil and your favorite herbs in foil packets. Flip the packets half way through cooking. The grill temperature and thickness of the potatoes will determine how long to cook them, but a good rule of thumb is to check them after 30 minutes.

⇒ Use leftover grilled vegetables (which keep well for up to 3 days when wrapped and refrigerated) in sandwiches, over cooked rice or couscous, or mixed into a salad or pasta salad.

⇒ Desserts are easy on the grill since grilling caramelizes sugar in fruit and releases juices. Firm fruits like apples, pineapple and pears require less monitoring than softer fruits such as nectarines, peaches and bananas, which cook quickly. Cut pit and seeded fruits in half and then remove the pit or core and lightly spray them with vegetable oil so they won’t stick to the grill. Grill them until they are heated through and a golden color. After grilling fruits, sprinkle them with cinnamon or add a touch of whipped cream or low fat ice cream or yogurt. You can also use grilled fruit to make fruit salsas or as a side dish to meats.

Source: Colorado State University Extension, May 9, 2012
“EAT³” - EAT WELL, EAT LOCAL, EAT TOGETHER

“EAT³” is a campaign to encourage families to Eat Well, Eat Local, and Eat Together. This project is designed to help you choose, prepare, and enjoy healthy family meals using locally-grown produce. One meal is featured every month to give you ideas to help you “EAT³”. Be sure to check out the campaign website at www.eat3.org

AS PART OF “EAT LOCAL”, CHECK OUT THE 2012 FARMERS’ MARKETS IN HERKIMER COUNTY

(for updates, see http://blogs.cce.cornell.edu/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dolgeville</td>
<td>Municipal lot, between Kinney Drugs and M&amp;T Bank</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>8:00 am - 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herkimer</td>
<td>VFW, 131 Mohawk St (accepting Food Stamps)</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>12 noon - 4:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Bird</td>
<td>Aubuchon Hardware lot</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9:00 am - 1:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilion</td>
<td>Parker’s Clapsaddle Farm</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>12 noon - 6:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>437 Otsego St (Route 51)</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10:00 am - 5:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Falls</td>
<td>M&amp;T Bank lot, Albany St</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>8:00 am - 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohawk</td>
<td>Weller Park, West Main St</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>2:00 pm - 5:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Forge</td>
<td>Park Ave, Between Crosby and Lamberton Streets</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>2:00 pm - 6:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richfield Springs</td>
<td>Spring Park, Main St (opening June 21)</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2:00 pm - 6:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(opening June 16) Saturday</td>
<td></td>
<td>8:00 am - 1:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Winfield</td>
<td>The Federated Church</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>4:00 pm - 7:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>452 E Main St</td>
<td>(opening June 6)</td>
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</table>
HOME FOOD PRESERVATION RESOURCES

A pressure canner is needed to ensure safe low-acid canned foods. There are no safe boiling water canning options for vegetables, meats and seafood, soups and some other mixtures of foods.

It is tempting to want to preserve your canned specialties in fancy jars and bottles. But the two-piece lid system and canning jars that take them are what is recommended for the home. When applied correctly, they are a good system for venting trapped air out of your jars during the canning process and can visually show that you have a vacuum seal when the jar cools.

For more information on basics of canning and freezing this season’s produce, watch for “Food Preservation 101” classes coming up this summer.

“Food Preservation Resources” lists all food preservation publications available from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County including some commercial sources and web sites. Topics include home canning, freezing, pickling, dehydrating, and making jams and jellies. Note that several resources were updated this year.

For a free copy, stop at our office at 5657 State Route 5 in East Herkimer, or download a copy at our website: www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer/2009/04/02/food-preservation-resources/

(Note that many resources listed can also be downloaded from our website.)

NEW “HERKIMER COUNTY PRODUCE CYCLE”

Twelve new brochures highlighting a vegetable that grows well in Herkimer County will be available on the CCE website at http://blogs.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer/2012/05/21/herkimer-county-produce-cycle-brochures/

Featured vegetables include asparagus, beets, carrots, cucumber, garlic, green beans, peppers, potatoes, summer squash & zucchini, sweet corn, tomatoes, and winter squash. Each brochure provides information on growing; purchasing; preparing (including healthy recipes); preserving, and composting.

The brochures were developed as part of a new project promoting increased vegetable consumption in Herkimer County; funded by the "Creating Healthy Places to Live Work and Play" grant through Herkimer County HealthNet working with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County. The goal of this effort is to enhance the variety and visibility of vegetables offered to help families choose, prepare, and enjoy healthier meals.

Melrose Supermarket in Frankfort, Country Store in Salisbury Center, Haver’s Nice-n-Easy in Poland, and Dolgeville Big M are participating in this pilot project. Promotional displays have been placed in the produce section of each store, featuring a "vegetable of the month", "recipe of the month", and the new "Herkimer County Produce Cycle" brochures. The brochures will also be shared at local Farmers Markets as part of CCE exhibits at markets this summer.
Staying Clean During Summer Activities

As the weather warms up, everyone wants to spend more time outside enjoying all the offerings of the season, including trips to the beach, park, local fairs and festivals. While nothing is better than relaxing outdoors with friends and family, don't be tempted by all the leisure to skip proper handwashing.

Public beaches and parks may not have well-stocked or clean bathrooms, and if they do, they always seem to be located far away from where you've set up your blanket and umbrella. Remember to pack the right stuff by following these simple tips to keep clean:

- Stock your bag with a "clean kit" containing a hand sanitizer, gel or a package of hand wipes, and if you're going to the beach, a small container of baby powder to help get the sand off fingers and toes.
- Keep one kit in the car, and another in your carry-on bag if traveling by plane or train. (Just remember: If you are traveling by plane, you can only carry on containers of 3 ounces or less.)
- Use the sanitizer and/or wipes before eating or drinking, even if you've just taken a dip in the lake or ocean.
- If kids are going to have a snack after spending time in the car, hand them a wipe first.
- Always remember to clean your hands first with the sanitizer or wipes before taking food out of the cooler.
- There are a variety of wipes on the market, so be sure to read the label and use products as directed.

Not only is it important to use these products frequently, but it's also key to use them correctly. The best way to use a hand sanitizer is to use one or two squirts of the product, and then rub your hands together briskly, including the front and back, between fingers, and around and under your nails until your hands are dry. Do this for yourself, as well as for children not old enough to clean their own hands.

If using wipes, wipe all areas of your hands until they are visibly clean, using as many wipes as necessary. Do this before eating, even if hands do not appear dirty. Dispose of used wipes in an appropriate trash container, and let your hands air-dry.

If you're lucky enough that your beach, park or favorite summer retreat has restrooms with running water and soap, be sure to wash hands frequently throughout the day – again, taking special care before eating. To ensure a thorough handwashing, follow these simple steps:

- Wet hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub well. Don't forget the backs, between the fingers, and under nails. Again, help kids here – most seem to think that only the palms matter!
- Rub for at least 20 seconds – if you hum "Happy Birthday" twice, that should do it.
- Rinse under running water and dry using a clean towel, or air-dry.

Source: “Cleaning Matters” newsletter, May/June 2012
**Alleviate Stress: Help Coping with Life's**

It’s easy to let the little stresses of life pile up and overwhelm you all at once. With so many ongoing activities and events at work and at home, it’s easy to feel anxiety build up — usually at the worst moment. USA.gov can help put things in perspective with these helpful resources:

Constantly being on the go can be an added stress to an already busy day. The National Center for Telehealth and Technology has a free app, Breathe2Relax, available on androids and iPhones. The app includes instructions and practice exercises to help you conquer stress management. Breathing exercises have proven to help improve moods and lessen anxiety. Download app at http://apps.usa.gov/breathe2relax.shtml

Stress can come in all different forms, and can affect you on many levels. Physically, you may notice a faster heart beat, rapid breathing, trembling and more. While certain life events like starting a new job or moving are typical stressful events, learn when it is time to contact a medical professional. Panic attacks and thoughts of fears you cannot control are critical moments to reach out to a medical professional. See http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003211.htm

Having some everyday stress is normal, and even healthy. But too much stress can lead to other unhealthy behaviors and lifestyles. Take the quick "Stress-o-meter" quiz to get your personal stress profile and make sure you aren't letting life's little tensions build up to an unhealthy level. The quiz can be found at http://www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife/yourlife_stressometer.html

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide or severe emotional distress, call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), or if it is a medical emergency, call 9-1-1. USA.gov offers many resources on specific mental health conditions as well as substance abuse effects on mental health. For more information see http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Health.shtml

**Source: USA.gov bulletin 4/11/12**

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**Info on Passes to Federal Parks**

Consider buying an Annual Pass if you enjoy visiting America’s beautiful national parks and recreation areas.

The $80 pass entitles the pass owner and accompanying passengers (or up to four adults at sites where per-person fees are charged) admittance to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas where Entrance or Standard Amenity Fee(s) are charged. This includes the following agencies:

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) http://www.blm.gov
- Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) http://www.usbr.gov
- Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) http://www.fws.gov
- USDA Forest Service (USDA FS) http://www.fs.fed.us

- National Park Service (NPS) http://www.nps.gov

Other kinds of passes include:

- **Senior Pass** -- $10 lifetime pass for U.S. citizens who are 62 years and older
- **Access Pass** -- Free lifetime pass for permanently disabled U.S. citizens
- **Volunteer Pass** -- Annual Pass awarded to volunteers who contribute 500 or more hours

For more information see: http://store.usgs.gov/pass/index.html

**Source: USA.gov 5/8/12**
WASH GROCERY TOTES TO REDUCE RISK FOR FOOD POISONING

Reusable grocery totes are a popular, eco-friendly choice to transport groceries, but only 15 percent of Americans regularly wash their bags, creating a breeding zone for harmful bacteria, according to a survey by the Home Food Safety program, a collaboration between the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) and ConAgra Foods.

Cross-contamination occurs when juices from raw meats or germs from unclean objects come in contact with cooked or ready-to-eat foods like breads or produce. Unwashed grocery bags are lingering with bacteria which can easily contaminate your foods.

Each year, 48 million Americans are affected by food poisoning caused by foodborne pathogens such as salmonella, listeria and E. coli.

Food poisoning can easily be prevented with practical steps, such as cleaning grocery totes and separating raw meats from ready-to-eat foods when shopping, cooking, serving and storing foods.

Bacteria can be eliminated by:
- Frequently washing your grocery tote, either in the washing machine or by hand with hot, soapy water;
- Cleaning all areas where you place your totes, such as the kitchen counter;
- Storing totes in a clean, dry location; and
- Avoiding leaving empty totes in the trunk of a vehicle.

When grocery shopping, wrap meat, poultry and fish in plastic bags before placing in the tote, and use two different easy to identify totes; one for raw meats and one for ready-to-eat foods.

Visit www.homefoodsafety.org for additional safety tips on how to avoid cross-contamination and food poisoning.

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics press release 4/3/12

SUMMER TRAVEL TIPS

Whether you're driving locally or taking a road trip, find helpful resources on USA.gov's “Road and Train Travel” http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel/Road.shtml page, including:

Gas Mileage Tips -- Find out how driving efficiently, keeping your car in good condition, and combining trips can help you save money.

Traffic and Road Closures -- Get resources to keep you informed about road and traffic conditions.

Scenic Byways -- Find scenic drives that you might enjoy while traveling on the road.

Wherever you're driving, make safety a top priority and keep in mind that most states have banned texting while driving. Learn more about distracted driving at http://www.distraction.gov/

Source: USA.gov 5/10/12
WRITING A WILL

It’s unfortunate how many people believe that estate planning is only for wealthy people. People at all economic levels benefit from an estate plan. Upon death, an estate plan legally protects and distributes property based on your wishes and the needs of your family and/or survivors with as little tax as possible.

Advance Medical Directives

Everyone faces the possibility that sometime during our lifetime, we may become incapacitated. This often happens when nearing death, but it can also be the result of a temporary condition. Many people assume their spouses or children will automatically be allowed to make financial and/or medical decisions for them, but this is not necessarily true. Advance directives are written documents that tell your doctors what kind of treatment you'll want if you become unable to make medical decisions (for example, if you're in a coma). Forms and laws vary from state to state, so it's a good idea to understand the laws of the state where you live as you write advance directives. It's also a good idea to make them before you are very ill. Federal law requires hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions that receive Medicare or Medicaid funds to provide written information regarding advanced care directives to all patients upon admission.

A living will is one type of advance directive that comes into effect when a person is terminally ill. A living will does not give you the opportunity to select someone to make decisions for you, but allows you to specify the kind of treatment you want in specific situations. For example, you might choose to specify that you do not want to be treated with antibiotics if death is imminent. You can, if you choose, include an advance directive that you do not wish to be resuscitated if your heart stops or if you stop breathing. In this case, a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order would be entered on your medical chart.

Wills

A will is the most practical first step in estate planning. It makes clear how you want your property to be distributed after you die.

Writing a will can be as simple as typing out how you want your assets to be transferred to loved ones or charitable organizations after your death. If you don't have a will when you die, your estate will be handled in probate; and your property could be distributed differently than what you would like.

It may help to get legal advice when writing a will, particularly when it comes to understanding all the rules of the estate disposition process in your state. Some states, for instance, have community-property laws that entitle your surviving spouse to keep half of your wealth after you die no matter what percentage you leave him or her. Fees for the execution of a will vary according to its complexity.

Rules To Remember When Writing A Will

- In most states, you must be 18 years of age or older.
- A will must be written in sound judgment and mental capacity to be valid.
- The document must clearly state that it is your will.
- An executor of your will, who ensures your estate is distributed according to your wishes, must be named.
- It is not necessary to notarize or record your will but these can safeguard against any claims that your will is invalid. To be valid, you must sign a will in the presence of at least two witnesses.

continued on page 11
WRITING A WILL…continued from page 10

Choose an Executor

An executor is the person who is responsible for settling the estate after death. Duties of an executor include:
- Taking inventory of property and belongings
- Appraising and distributing assets
- Paying taxes
- Settling debts owed by the deceased

Most important, the executor is legally obligated to act in the interests of the deceased, following the wishes provided by the will. Here again, it could be helpful to consult an attorney to help with the probate process or offer legal guidance. Any person over the age of 18, who hasn't been convicted of a felony, can be named executor of a will. Some people choose a lawyer, accountant or financial consultant based on their experience. Others choose a spouse, adult child, relative or friend. Since the role of executor can be demanding, it's often a good idea to ask the person being named in a will if he or she is willing to serve.

If you've been named executor in someone's will but are not able or do not want to serve, you need to file a declination, which is a legal document that declines your designation as an executor. The contingent executor named in the will then assumes responsibility. If no contingent executor is named, the court will appoint one.

Write a Social Media Will

Social media is a part of daily life, so what happens to the online content that you created once you die? If you are active online you should consider creating a statement of how you would like your online identity to be handled, like a social media will. You should appoint someone you trust as an online executor. This person will be responsible for the closure of your email addresses, social media profiles, and blogs after you are deceased. Take these steps to help you write a social media will:
- Review the privacy policies and the terms and conditions of each website where you have a presence.
- State how you would like your profiles to be handled. You may want to completely cancel your profile or keep it up for friends and family to visit. Some sites allow users to create a memorial profile where other users can still see your profile but can’t post anything new.
- Give the social media executor a document that lists all the websites where you have a profile, along with your usernames and passwords.
- Stipulate in your will that the online executor should have a copy of your death certificate. The online executor may need this as proof in order for websites to take any actions on your behalf.

Review Your Estate Plan

Once you've completed a will, it's a good idea to review it from time to time, and consider changes if:
- The value of your assets change
- You marry, divorce or remarry
- You have a child
- You move to a different state
- The executor of your will dies or becomes incapacitated or your relationship changes
- One of your heirs dies
- The laws affecting your estate change

Source: USA.gov media blog 5/2/12
DOES YOUR KITCHEN NEED A MAKOVER?

The quiz below will help you determine whether your kitchen needs a makeover. Simply read through each question and answer either “true” or “false.” Keep track of your responses as you go.

1. I have enough food in the kitchen right now to make meals for the next 2 days.
2. My knives are sharp enough to cut a tomato and big enough to cut a melon.
3. I have a big, clean cutting board that doesn’t slip.
4. I have enough room on the counter right now to make dinner without shuffling things.
5. My freezer is full of foods that can play a role in healthful meals.

If you answer “false” to more than one item above, then you need a kitchen makeover. Check tips below to make it easier for you to prepare healthful, quick, and delicious meals at home.

1. **Food.** It is vital to have the right kinds of food on hand. That way, you can cook/eat on the go instead of having to drag yourself through the grocery store first. Stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables, and keep some frozen or canned options on hand too. That way you can have fruits and vegetables in your meals without worrying about short shelf lives. If you do stock up on canned or frozen options, make sure they have little to no added sugar or sodium. It’s also vital to keep healthful whole grains (like brown rice and 100% whole wheat bread) available too.

2. **Tools.** A nonstick skillet, a microwave, and a toaster oven are three things can really make a difference to the speed and ease of home-cooked meals. A nonstick skillet is a great tool that you can use to prepare most of the meals you make. A microwave is essential for vegetables that are cooked quickly in little water. Cooking vegetables in a bit of water in the microwave is a great way to preserve your patience, as well as the color and flavor of the food. Microwaves offer a simple way to reheat food as well. The toaster oven is great for browning, broiling, and baking quickly.

3. **Work.** How are you going to get anything done if you don’t have room to work? Clear off the counters and make sure that you have room for the three key areas of your kitchen: preparing, cooking, and cleaning. These areas can overlap a little, but it is easier to cook and clean up quickly if they are totally separate.

4. **Slice.** How can you cut anything if you don’t have a good cutting board and knife? For a straightforward kitchen that facilitates healthful cooking, you need a few sharp knives and a good, non-stick cutting board. Serrated knives are cheap and they never go dull. Better still are the plastic ones you can put in the dishwasher. Cutting boards are now available with nonstick corners and they also come in plastic versions that are dishwasher-safe.

5. **Fun** — If you have plates, cups and serving pieces that look good and are fun to use, you just might be tempted to cook more often.

**Heart-Healthy and Inexpensive Ingredients**

Now that you’ve made over your kitchen, it’s time to stock it with healthful ingredients. Here are some fantastic ingredients that you should keep on hand at all times. These items are often inexpensive, yet nutrient-rich.

1. **Great grains.** You’d be surprised at how filling and healthful a plateful of grains and vegetables can be. Use a small amount of protein to add flavor, rather than a large amount as the central focus of the dish. Grains offer a lot of B vitamins, minerals, and fiber, all for a relatively low price. Try store brand, whole grain pasta, store brand brown rice, oatmeal, and low-fat popcorn.

2. **Bountiful beans.** Beans are an inexpensive way to add protein, iron and fiber to any dish. Try canned beans, dried lentils, dried beans, and frozen beans.

(continued on page 13)
3. **Lean Poultry.** Choose white meat poultry without any skin. This can make a great addition to stir-frys and grilled poultry can also top a large garden salad. Try chicken tenders, chicken breasts, extra lean ground turkey, or a whole chicken.

4. **Frozen or canned fish.** Fish is a nutritious, flavorful addition to pasta or rice dishes. It’s also great on its own, in sandwiches, or atop salads. You can buy fish fresh from a fish market or grocer, but there are also alternatives that keep for a longer period of time. Small cans of fish are a great option — they even provide portion control. Just be sure to choose fish that is canned in water, not oil or salt. You can also find fish in the freezer section of your grocery store. Select options that aren’t breaded and add your own seasonings (instead of sauce packets etc) to keep fat and sodium content low.

5. **Seasonal fresh vegetables and fruit.** These foods are both economical and better tasting. Plan your meals around what is ripe, flavorful, and colorful. Remember, MyPlate advises people to fill half their plates with fruits and veggies at each meal. Heads of lettuce, carrots, cabbage, bags of apples, zucchini, corn, and melons all make excellent choices (when they are in season, of course).

6. **Frozen vegetables.** Frozen vegetables are a shelf-stable product that needs little preparation. You can even find special deals on store brands. Once again, be sure to skip sauce packets and choose options that are low in fat and sodium.

7. **Low-calorie, high-calcium dairy choices.** MyPlate recommends that people choose low-fat and fat-free dairy products when possible. Skim milk, light low-fat yogurt, and nonfat ricotta are all some of the best low-fat, low-sodium sources of calcium.

8. **Brewed tea.** Brew your own tea to cash in on a beverage that is low in cost and chock-full of nature’s healthful antioxidants. Brewed tea is an excellent and low-priced alternative to soda and other sugar-laden beverages. Choose store brands and stock up on special offers.

9. **Potatoes.** Baking potatoes, especially when purchased in bulk (choose the smaller ones) make great meals and snacks. Potatoes are among the highest satiety foods, which means that they make you feel full for a longer period of time than most other foods.

**Quick Meal Preparation Tips**

Here are changes that will make it even easier to make meals at home with no fuss, no muss.

1. **Clean and organize your freezer.** This sounds like something your mother would say, but many freezers are full of things you will never eat. If you want to start cooking ahead, you need to make room for what you create. Try to check the inventory in your freezer once a month to be sure to use foods within a reasonable period of time.

2. **Purchase clear, freezable, microwave-safe containers and bags.** Keep them on hand for storing your food.

3. **Make large batches of your favorite recipes whenever you cook.** Freeze leftovers in small portions that fit your family’s needs. It is a good idea to label and date things too. Freeze cooked beans, cooked rice, lasagna, spaghetti, pasta, soups, rice, healthy macaroni & cheese and stir-fry dishes. Not all foods will freeze successfully, so you may want to experiment.

4. **Cool quickly and efficiently.** Soups, beans and other large dishes should be cooled in a shallow container in the refrigerator or in ice water right away. This will help you avoid increasing the risk of food-borne illness.

5. **Reheat items quickly in the microwave.** Usually you just need to add a little water and cover items with a lid or plastic wrap. Items in plastic bags should be transferred to a microwaveable container before reheating.

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Source: “Communicating Food For Health” 4/30/12
30 MyPlate Steps to a Healthier You

Alice Henneman, MS, RD, UNL Extension Educator

USDA’s MyPlate symbolizes a personalized approach to healthy eating and physical activity. It reminds us to make healthy food choices and to be active every day.

Here are some tips from http://choosemyplate.gov to help you take steps to a healthier you.

This is a peer reviewed publication

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**On the Internet,**
go to http://choosemyplate.gov to calculate your personalized “Daily Food Plan.”

**2. Order a veggie pizza with toppings like mushrooms, green peppers, and onions, and ask for extra veggies.**

**3. Eat foods and beverages low in ‘added sugars.’ Naturally occurring sugars such as those which are in milk and fruits do not count as added sugars.**

**4. Broil, grill, roast, poach, or boil meat, poultry, or fish instead of frying. Skip or limit the breading. Breading adds calories.**

**5. Make most of your fruit choices whole or cut-up fruit rather than juice, for the benefits dietary fiber provides.**

**6. Select vegetables with more potassium often, such as sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (peaste, sauce, and juice), beef greens, soybeans, lima beans, spinach, lentils, and kidney beans.**

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**7. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Vary your fruit and vegetable choices, as they differ in nutrient content.**

**8. Dried fruits make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, 1/4 cup is equivalent to 1/2 cup of other fruits.**

**9. Sauces or seasonings can add calories, saturated fat, and sodium to vegetables. Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare the calories and % Daily Value for saturated fat and sodium in plain and seasoned vegetables.**

**10. Walk up and down the soccer or softball field sidelines while watching the kids play.**

**11. Try a main dish salad for lunch. Go light on the salad dressing.**

**12. Make at least half of your grains whole grains. For a change, try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta.**

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**13. Trim away all of the visible fat from meats and poultry before cooking.**

**14. Popcorn, a whole grain, can be a healthy snack if made with little or no added salt and butter.**

**15. Do stretches, exercises, or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.**

**16. Many vegetables taste great with a dip or dressing. Try a low-fat salad dressing with raw broccoli, red and green peppers, celery sticks or cauliflower.**

**17. Physical activity may include short bouts of moderate-intensity activity. The accumulated total is what is important and can be accumulated through three to six 10-minute bouts over the course of a day.**

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**18. Color is not an indication of a whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients. Read the ingredient list to see if it is a whole grain.**

**19. Frozen juice bars (100% juice) make healthy alternatives to high-fat snacks.**

**20. Park further from your destination (work, shopping, etc.) and walk the rest of the way.**

**21. Choose seafood at least twice a week as the main protein food. Look for seafood rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, and herring.**

**22. Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.**

**23. Experiment by substituting whole wheat or oat flour for up to half of the flour in pancake, waffle, muffin, or other flour-based recipes. They may need a bit more leavening.**

**24. If you drink cappuccinos or lattes—ask for them with fat-free (skim) milk.**

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**25. Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food, or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer (one hour when the temperature is above 90°F).**

**26. Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional, but consider red or green pepper strips, broccoli florets, or cucumber slices.**

**27. Select fruits with more potassium often, such as bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, and orange juice.**

**28. For dessert, make chocolate or butterscotch pudding with fat-free or low-fat milk.**

**29. Replace a coffee break with a brisk 10-minute walk. Ask a friend to go with you.**

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**30. For fresh fruit salads, mix apples, bananas, or pears with acidic fruits like oranges, pineapple, or lemon juice to keep them from turning brown.**

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GET YOUR FAMILY MOVING

Spend some time this summer enjoying the warmer weather while sneaking in extra physical activity. Use these tips from USA.gov to make fitness more fun:

- Exercise doesn’t have to be boring. You can play games with your family like wiffle ball, tag and capture the flag. Go to a local park or use your backyard to run around with your kids. Before you know it, you’ll have met the daily guidelines of 60 minutes of movement for kids and 30 minutes for adults.

- Take the President’s Fitness Challenge (http://www.fitness.gov/presidents-challenge/about/)
  Start with the physical fitness test (https://www.presidentschallenge.org/challenge/physical/index.shtml) to see how you stack up against other people your age. Based on your scores you can earn awards in different categories.

- Look to your state tourism office (http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel-Tourism/State-Tourism.shtml) or your local department of parks and recreation (http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Local-Government/Cities.shtml) to learn about active events going on in your area. You may be able to find sports teams for your children to play on or adult recreational leagues for yourself.

You can find more ideas to get you and your family moving at www.LetsMove.gov.

KEEP HYDRATED, AND KEEP THOSE WATER BOTTLES CLEAN!

As the weather heats up, so does our need to stay hydrated. Experts suggest drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day, and more if you’re exercising. One of the least expensive, easiest and most environmentally responsible ways to get all that water is by using a refillable water bottle.

Reusable water bottles now come in both metal and safe plastic, not to mention a variety of shapes, sizes and designs. There are removable tops, sippy tops, straws, spritzers and all sorts of other gizmos and gadgets, but the one thing all water bottles have in common is that you need to keep them clean. Bacteria can build up in water bottles if they are left full, especially if you are using them for beverages other than water. For best results, use bottles for water only, especially if you will be traveling. Some beverages such as milk can spoil, and the high sugar content in juice and soda can draw bugs and other pesky critters to congregate on, in or around your drink.

Check the bottle label for cleaning recommendations. Some are dishwasher safe (but maybe only in the top rack). If your bottle needs to be washed by hand, follow these simple steps to ensure that you have on-the-go safe drinking water all summer long:

- Hand-wash all parts of the water bottle in warm water and dish detergent before using for the first time. Some factory residue could be left on a new bottle, even though it looks clean. Bottles may have also been sitting in warehouses, factories or stores for months, where they could have gotten dirty or been touched by dozens of people before you purchase them.

- After each use, completely dismantle the water bottle and clean all parts thoroughly using warm water and dish detergent. If the bottle has a straw or spritzer, be sure to wash all those components, and then rinse thoroughly with clean water. Air-dry or use a clean towel.

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“LIVING”
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