

Health, Nutrition & Wellness

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RECIPES

Each issue includes healthy recipes!
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Strawberry Cupcakes

Roasted Brussel Sprouts

Beans & Greens Soup

Beet & Grapefruit Salad

& More

Family & Consumer Sciences

Welcome to the latest edition of the University of Maryland Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Newsletter.

Family & Consumer Science (FCS) is the comprehensive body of skills, research and knowledge that improves the quality of life of families, communities and individuals through education, research and community outreach.

Our mission is to strengthen

families, communities, and individuals. Our goal is to empower Marylanders to make decisions that lead to healthy living, financial success, and long-term and wellness.

Harford County Faculty Extension Family & Consumer Sciences & Nutrition Educator, Jennifer Dixon Cravens, provides research based programs on Health Nutrition, Wellness, Fitness Chronic Disease Prevention, and Management

Healthy Living, Healthy Homes, Family & Community Health, Financial Education, Healthy Cooking, and Health Literacy & Communication and Food Safety

Complied by: Faculty Extension FCS/ Nutrition Educator, Jennifer Dixon Cravens, MS



Seasonal Winter Wellness



Buying seasonal produce during the winter is a sustainable, economical, and flavorful choice. It connects you to the local food community, reduces your environmental impact, and encourages you to explore the culinary possibilities that each season brings.

Food to Eat for Winter Wellness

Apple & Pears-Support heart health by helping lower LDL cholesterol .

Oranges & Citrus -High in Vitamin C to fight colds, good for skin, and rich in fiber for digestion.

Pomegranate- Antioxidant powerhouse that reduce inflammation, support heart health, and improve circulation.

Sweet Potato-Rich in: Vitamin A (beta-carotene), Vitamin C, Manganese, Carotenoids.

Beets-Benefits: Stamina, heart health (lower blood pressure), anti-inflammatory, antioxidant.

Broccoli & Brussel Sprouts-Antioxidants, cancer-fighting potential, detoxification, immune function. Rich in Vitamin C, Vitamin K .

Leeks-Provide Vitamin K, manganese, and beneficial sulfur compounds like allicin.

Physical Wellness

Winter Health & Wellness

Understanding Winter Physiology: How the Body Responds to Cold Weather

Cold weather affects circulation, metabolism, hydration, and even moods. Reduced sunlight impacts Vitamin D levels and serotonin production, contributing to fatigue and cravings. Understanding these changes empowers individuals to adjust lifestyle choices.

Winter Physiology- How the Body Changes in Cold Weather:

Winter brings biochemical and physiological changes in the human body that influence metabolism, mood, and circulation.

Vasoconstriction, a natural narrowing of blood vessels, occurs to preserve heat, resulting in higher blood pressure and colder extremities. Reduced sunlight exposure decreases the skin's natural production of **Vitamin D**, impacting immune function, bone health, and serotonin levels. Hormonal shifts may increase hunger, especially cravings for carbohydrates, due to the body's attempt to maintain warmth through **thermogenesis** (heat production).

Benefits of Understanding These Changes

- Help individuals tailor their nutrition to meet seasonal needs.
- Encourage preventive measures for mood balance and immunity.
- Support more effective hydration, sleep habits, and exercise routines.

Key Points:

- Blood vessels constrict → increased blood pressure
 - Vitamin D decreases → affects immunity & mood
- Appetite may increase due to thermogenesis.

References: <https://youfit.com/blog/the-science-of-staying-warm-how-your-body-regulates-temperature-in-winter/>.



Winter Health & Wellness

Immune Defense Strategies for Cold & Flu Season

Winter illnesses increase due to indoor crowding, dry air, and viral activity. Strengthening the immune system through food, sleep, herbal support, and hydration can reduce the risk of infection.

Winter is the peak season for viral infections due to closer indoor contact, dry air that weakens respiratory defenses, and decreased immune system efficiency. Building winter immunity involves a holistic approach: consuming nutrient-rich foods, maintaining hydration, optimizing sleep, and supporting the body's natural defenses with herbs and supplements.

Fight off the flu with immune-boosting nutrients. Like ;

Vitamin C— include citrus fruits, berries, melons, tomatoes, bell peppers and broccoli.

Vitamin D is found in fatty fish and eggs. Milk and 100% juices fortified with vitamin D also are good sources.

Zinc tends to be better absorbed from food such as beef and seafood, but it's also found in plant-based

sources, including wheat germ, beans, nuts and tofu.

Probiotics are good bacteria that promote health. You'll find them in cultured dairy products, such as yogurt, and in fermented foods, such as kefir and kimchi.

Protein from animal and plant sources, including milk, yogurt, eggs, beef, chicken, seafood, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.

Elderberry, and **ginger** may reduce respiratory symptoms.

Humidifiers reduce nasal dryness that contributes to infection.

Benefits:

Reduced frequency and duration of winter illnesses.

Improved respiratory health.

Better energy and faster recovery.

References: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/fight-off-the-flu-with-nutrients..>



Functional & Super Foods

Using Nutrition to Support Health and Disease



Functional Foods and Superfoods:

Nutrition science continues to demonstrate that what we eat plays a crucial role in supporting immune function, maintaining metabolic health, and preventing chronic diseases.

Beyond providing basic nourishment, certain foods contain bioactive compounds that influence physiological processes in the body.

These foods are commonly referred to as **functional foods** and **superfoods** and are increasingly recognized for their role in evidence-based health promotion.

What Are Functional Foods?

Functional foods are whole or fortified foods with extra health benefits. These come from natural or added bioactive compounds like fiber, antioxidants, polyphenols, probiotics, and healthy fats. Functional foods may reduce inflammation, support the heart, improve gut health, regulate blood sugar, and boost the immune system.

Key characteristics of Functional Foods, is they contain biological active compound, they can support a specific body system like the hear, gut, or immune system. They also help reduce your risk factors for chronic diseases when consume regularly

For Example:

- **Fiber** (supports gut health and blood sugar regulation).
- **Polyphenols** (reduce inflammation and oxidative stress).

Probiotics and prebiotics (support immune and digestive health)

References: Superfoods, Whole Grains, Healthy Fats, www.hsph.harvard.edu ,EatRight.org .



Eat More Superfoods

Their Health & Wellness Benefits



What Are Superfoods? **Superfood** is not a formal scientific term, but it is common. It describes foods very rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals. Many superfoods are also functional foods. These offer concentrated nutrition that supports health. Research points out that superfoods work best in diets, not alone. Superfoods enhance your immune functions and nutrient absorption and may improve your digestive and metabolic health.

Superfoods and Their Health Benefits:

- **Blueberries** *Benefit:* Brain, heart, and cellular health Blueberries are rich in anthocyanin's, powerful antioxidants associated with improved cognitive function, reduced oxidative stress, and enhanced cardiovascular health.
- **Leafy Greens (Kale, Spinach, Collards)** *Benefit:* Cardiovascular, bone, and immune support These vegetables provide vitamins A, C, K, folate, magnesium, and polyphenols, contributing to reduced inflammation, improved vascular function, and bone health.
- **Salmon (and other fatty fish)** *Benefit:* Heart and brain health Salmon is high in omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA), which support cardiovascular health, reduce inflammation, and play a key role in brain and nervous system function.
- **Walnuts** *Benefit:* Anti-inflammatory and metabolic health Walnuts contain plant-based omega-3 fatty acids (ALA), antioxidants, and polyphenols that support lipid balance, reduce inflammation, and improve metabolic markers.
- **Quinoa** *Benefit:* Muscle maintenance and metabolic health Quinoa is a **complete plant protein** containing all nine essential amino acids, along with fiber, magnesium, and antioxidants that support energy metabolism and glycemic control.
- **Greek Yogurt** *Benefit:* Gut and immune health Greek yogurt provides probiotics, protein, calcium, and vitamin B12, supporting digestive health, immune function, and muscle maintenance.

Reference: Eatingright.org.

10 GOOD SUPERFOODS

- Quinoa
- Greek Yogurt
- Kale
- Chia Seeds
- Oatmeal
- Green Tea
- Yogurt
- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Sesame Seeds



Emotional Social Wellness

Emotional & Social Wellness

Social Wellness in Winter: Reducing Isolation

Engaging in community programs enhances **social connection, emotional health, and chronic disease prevention**. Engaging in community and wellness activities can have significant benefits for both physical and mental health. Volunteering at local food banks or community gardens, participating in group exercise or wellness programs, and attending nutrition education workshops are practical ways to stay active, learn healthy habits, and connect with others.

These activities encourage movement, improve access to nutritious foods, and provide opportunities for ongoing health education.

Beyond physical benefits, participating in community wellness activities supports emotional well-being and chronic disease prevention.

Regular involvement reduces social isolation, fosters a sense of purpose, and strengthens emotional resilience. By combining social engagement with healthy behaviors, individuals can enhance their overall quality of life and lower the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

Reference: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Community Health and Wellness: Strategies to Promote Healthy Living*. <https://>

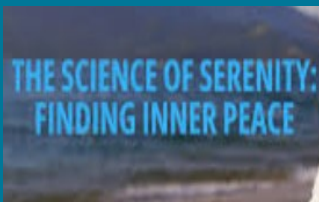
Strengthening Resilience & Inner Peace during Winter Months

Emotional wellness involves understanding, honoring, and managing your emotions in ways that support balance and well-being. Winter can challenge emotional health due to limited sunlight, holiday pressure, family expectations, and the natural slowing of the season. Many individuals experience fluctuating mood, fatigue, irritability, or loneliness during colder months.

Focusing on emotional wellness means intentionally building habits that support joy, calm, and connection. Practices may include journaling, setting healthy boundaries, scheduling rest, seeking support when needed, participating in community activities, prayer, meditation, and mindful breathing. Winter is also an ideal time to reflect, process emotions, release old patterns, and cultivate gratitude.

Benefits

- Reduces stress and emotional overwhelm.
- Enhances mood and increases emotional resilience.
- Supports healthy communication and relationships.
- Creates space for rest, joy, clarity, and healing. Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/healthy-living.htm>.



Holiday Planning for Healthier Family Gatherings & Stress Reduction

Healthy Holiday Planning: Enjoy the Season Without Stress

The holiday season is often filled with joy, family gatherings, and celebration, but it can also bring stress, overscheduling, financial pressures, and emotional strain.

Planning for a healthy, balanced holiday requires intentional strategies that prioritize well-being, connection, and mindfulness over perfection. By simplifying tasks, setting realistic expectations, and incorporating self-care practices, individuals can enjoy the holidays while protecting their physical and emotional health.

Healthy Holiday Planning Tips:

- **Simplify gift lists or use exchange formats** to reduce financial and logistical stress.
- **Use slow-cooker or make-ahead meals** to minimize time in the kitchen.
- **Set realistic expectations** with family and friends to avoid over commitment.
- **Maintain morning routines** such as hydration, prayer, affirmations, or stretching to start the day grounded.

- **Include outdoor walks or movement breaks** to reduce stress hormones and support mood.

- **Delegate tasks** to share responsibilities and reduce overwhelm.

Benefits:

Enhances family bonding and emotional well-being

Reduces holiday burnout and mental fatigue

Helps maintain healthy eating and sleep habits

Supports mindfulness, gratitude, and overall resilience during the season

Conclusion:

A thoughtful, health-focused approach to the holidays allows individuals to embrace celebrations fully without sacrificing physical or emotional wellness.

By prioritizing self-care, simplifying routines, and practicing mindfulness, the holiday season can become a source of joy, connection, and rejuvenation rather than stress.

Reference: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/holiday-stress/art-20047508>.





Holiday Food Safety Tips

Keeping your Holiday Safe

Food Safety Tips for the Season:

The holidays are a time for family, friends, and, of course, delicious meals. But holiday gatherings also increase the risk of foodborne illness due to large meals, longer prep times, and multiple cooks in the kitchen. Practicing safe food handling ensures your celebrations are both joyful and healthy. From the turkey to desserts, every step counts—from shopping to storage, cooking, and serving.

Why Food Safety Matters:

- Reduces the risk of foodborne illness, which can be severe for children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.
- Helps maintain the quality and flavor of holiday dishes.
- Prevents food waste by keeping leftovers safe to eat.
- Encourages confidence and peace of mind when sharing meals with loved ones.

Basic Holiday Food Safety Tips:

- **Clean:** Wash hands, surfaces, and fruits and vegetables thoroughly.

- **Separate:** Keep raw meats away from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to ensure meats reach safe internal temperatures (e.g., 165°F for poultry).
- **Chill:** Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours and store at 40°F or below.

For more information, the USDA and FDA provide excellent resources on safe food handling, including cooking charts, storage guidelines, and holiday-specific advice:

- [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service](#)
- [FDA Food Safety Tips](#)

By following these simple guidelines, you can protect your loved ones while enjoying the flavors and traditions that make the season special. Safe handling, proper cooking, and timely storage turn holiday meals into joyful, worry-free celebrations.

Reference: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. *Holiday Food Safety Tips*. FDA. *Food Safety Tips for the Holidays*.

Pantry Power

How to Cook Healthy Meals from Shelf Staples

A well-organized pantry is one of the most valuable tools for supporting wellness during the winter months. Colder weather often leads to increased home cooking, shorter daylight hours, and less frequent grocery shopping. Having a stocked pantry with nutritious, shelf-stable foods allows individuals and families to prepare balanced meals consistently while reducing reliance on highly processed convenience foods.

Pantry power refers to the ability to create nourishing, satisfying meals using shelf-stable ingredients such as beans, lentils, whole grains, canned vegetables, herbs, spices, and broths. These foods provide essential nutrients—including dietary fiber, plant-based protein, antioxidants, iron, magnesium, and B vitamins—that support immune function, digestive health, blood sugar balance, and sustained energy during winter.

Pantry staples also offer flexibility. With a well-planned pantry, meals such as soups, stews, grain bowls, and one-pot dishes can be prepared quickly, even when fresh produce options are limited or weather conditions make shopping difficult.

Key Pantry Staples:

- Beans and lentils (black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, red lentils)
- Whole grains (brown rice, barley, quinoa, oats)
- Canned tomatoes and tomato paste
- Low-sodium vegetable broth or stock
- Herbs and spices (turmeric, cumin, garlic powder, onion powder, cinna-

mon)

- Canned pumpkin and coconut milk
- Nuts, seeds, and dried fruits

Benefits of a Well-Stocked Pantry:

- Budget-friendly and accessible year-round
- Supports quick, nutritious meal preparation
- Reduces food waste and last-minute food purchases
- Helps maintain consistent, balanced eating habits during winter
- Encourages home cooking and healthier food choices

Two Simple Steps to Build Pantry Power

Step 1: Stock with Intention:

Choose pantry items that can be mixed and matched across multiple meals. Focus on whole foods with minimal added sodium, sugar, and saturated fat. Reading labels and selecting low-sodium or no-added-sugar options supports heart health and overall nutrition.

Step 2: Plan One Pantry-Based Meal Each Week:

Designate at least one meal per week that relies primarily on pantry ingredients, such as a lentil soup, bean chili, or grain and vegetable stew. This practice saves money, reduces food waste, and builds confidence in preparing nutritious meals using shelf-stable foods.

Reference: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.
The Nutrition Source: Beans, whole grains, canned foods, and spices.



Healthy Holiday Recipes



December Holiday Recipes

Baked Cornish Hen

Ingredients:

2 Cornish game hens
 ½ cup melted butter
 ½ onion, chopped
 ½ stalk celery, chopped
 ¼ green bell pepper, chopped
 1 (4.5 ounce) can mushrooms, drained and chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 tablespoon dried basil
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
 ¼ cup melted butter

Directions/Steps:

Step 1:

Gather all ingredients. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C).

Step 2:

Combine 1/2 cup melted butter, onion,

celery, bell pepper, mushrooms, garlic, basil, oregano, and parsley in a bowl.

Step 3: Season hens inside and out with salt and pepper to taste, then stuff with equal amounts of vegetable mixture.

Step 4: Place stuffed hens in a 9x13 inch baking dish, breast-side up. Drizzle with 1/4 cup melted butter.

Step 5: Cover dish and bake in the preheated oven for 1 ½ hours. Remove cover and brown at 500 degrees F (260 degrees C).

Nutrition Information: Calories 476, Total Fat 45g, Saturated fat 25g, Carbohydrate 5g, Dietary fiber 2g, Protein 14g, Cholesterol 167 mg, sodium 421 mg, Total sugar 2g.

Recipes: Allrecipes.com

Roasted Brussel Sprouts

Ingredients:

1 (16 ounce) package Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
 ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 1 pinch red pepper flakes, or to taste

Directions/Steps:

Gather all ingredients.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

Toss Brussels sprouts with olive oil, garlic powder, black pepper, and salt in a large bowl.

Spread evenly in a 9x13-inch baking pan.

Roast in the preheated oven, shaking every 5 minutes, until crispy and fork-tender, about 20 minutes.

Stir balsamic vinegar into sprouts, then sprinkle with Parmesan.

Continue roasting until cheese is melted, about 1 minute.

Sprinkle with red pepper flakes.

Nutrition Information:

Calories 120, Total Fat 6g, Saturated fat 3, Cholesterol 4mg, Carbohydrates 7g, Protein 5 g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Sodium 286 mg.

Reference: Allrecipes.com



December Holiday Recipes

Oven Roasted Red Potatoes

Ingredients:

2 pound of red potatoes/halved
1/3 cup of olive oil
Onion powder or garlic powder
Pinch of black pepper

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C).

Combine red potatoes, olive oil, and soup mix in a large resealable plastic bag; seal bag and shake until potatoes are fully

coated. Pour potatoes into a medium baking dish. Bake in the preheated oven until potatoes are tender, about 40 minutes.

Nutrition Information:

Calories 171, Saturated fat 1g, Carbohydrate 20g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Protein 2g, Sodium 217mg.

Reference: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/13849/oven-roasted-red-potatoes>.



Antioxidant-Rich Beet & Grapefruit Salad

Ingredients:

2 medium beets, scrubbed and trimmed
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
½ teaspoon salt, divided
2 teaspoons lemon juice
2 teaspoons honey
1 teaspoon finely chopped shallot
¼ teaspoon ground pepper
1 medium grapefruit, peeled, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds and seeded
1 medium navel orange, peeled, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds and seeded
1 cup lightly packed baby arugula
½ cup crumbled goat cheese
2 tablespoons chopped pistachios

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat beets with 1 tablespoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt; tightly wrap in foil and place on a large baking sheet. Bake until fork-tender, about 1 hour.

Remove from oven and carefully unwrap the beets; let stand on the pan until cool enough to handle, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board; peel or rub off the skins. Slice the beets into ¼-inch-thick rounds.

Nutrition Information: Calories 190, Fat 12g, Protein 4g, Carbohydrates 21 g, Sugar 4g, Fiber, 4g. Reference: Eatingwell.com



Beans and Greens Soup

Ingredients:

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 red onion, sliced into thin half-moons
1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed
5 cup chicken stock or vegetable stock
2 tablespoon wine vinegar
1 cup cooked beans, chickpeas, or lentils
2 cup cleaned and roughly chopped cooking greens (kale, spinach, chard, bok choy, Napa cabbage, or mix of any)
1 dried Chile, optional
Salt and pepper
2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Directions:

in a large heavy-bottomed pan, heat olive

oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and gently brown. When lightly colored, add stock and vinegar. Bring to a light simmer and add cooked legumes. Bring back to a simmer and add greens and Chile, if using. Depending on what greens you use, you will cook the soup a little more or less. You want to simmer long enough to wilt and cook the greens but not to over-cook them.

Nutrition Information :

Calories 220, Total Fat 5 g, Carbohydrate 24, Protein 14g, Fiber 5g, Sodium 380 mg. Reference: <https://food52.com/recipes/66632-beans-and-greens-soup>.





*New Year Eve
Recipes*

December Desserts Recipes

Old Fashion Caramel Cake

Ingredients:

⅓ cup neutral oil (or avocado oil)
 1 cup sugar (instead of 1½ cups)
 2 large eggs
 1/2 cup of unsalted butter, softened
 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
 2½ cups cake flour (or all-purpose)
 1½ teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 cup plain Greek yogurt or low-fat sour cream
 ½ cup milk (or plant-based milk)

Directions: Preheat oven to 325°F. Grease and flour two or three 8-inch round pans.

Beat butter, oil, and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, then vanilla.

In a separate bowl, mix flour, baking pow-

der, baking soda, and salt. Add dry ingredients to the batter, alternating with yogurt and milk. Mix just until combined.

Divide batter evenly into pans. Bake 20–25 minutes until a toothpick comes out mostly clean. Cool completely. For the caramel icing, add butter, evaporated milk, and sugar to a saucepan over low heat. Stir constantly and cook until thick and golden, about 45–60 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Let cool slightly before icing. Spread caramel between cake layers and over the top and sides. Let set before serving.

Nutrition Information: Calories: 550
 Fat: 28 g, Carbohydrates: 70 g
 Sugar: 50 g, Protein: 8 g.

Reference: <https://grandbaby-cakes.com/caramel-cake/>.

Simply Lemon Trifle Cake

Ingredients:

1 pound cake or angel food cake, cut into 1-inch cubes
 1 cup lemon curd (store-bought or homemade)
 2 cups low-fat Greek yogurt or whipped topping
 1 cup fresh berries (blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries)
 2 tablespoons sliced almonds or crushed graham crackers (optional garnish)
 Lemon zest for garnish

Instructions

Layer cake: Place half of the cake cubes in the bottom of a trifle bowl or individual glasses.

Add lemon curd: Spread half of the lemon curd over the cake layer.

Add yogurt: Spoon half of the Greek yogurt or whipped topping over the lemon curd.

Repeat layers: Add remaining cake cubes, lemon curd, and yogurt.

Top with berries: Scatter fresh berries over the top.

Garnish: Sprinkle almonds or graham cracker crumbs and a little lemon zest.

Chill: Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.

Nutrition Information (per serving, serves 8):

Calories: 220, Carbohydrates 28g, Fat 8g,
 Sugar 9, Protein: 7 g, Carbohydrates: 32 g
 Sugars: 18 g, Fat: 8 g, Fiber: 2 g
 Calcium: 120 mg.

Reference: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-desserts>

December Desserts Recipes

Champagne Sugar Vanilla Cookies

Ingredients:

1½ cups sparkling cider or champagne (optional)

1 cup unsalted butter, softened

¾ cup granulated sugar

1 egg yolk

1 tsp vanilla extract

¼ tsp salt

2¼ cups all-purpose flour

Icing:

3 cups powdered sugar

2 tbsp. melted butter

2–3 tbsp. reduced champagne

Sprinkles or colored sugar (optional)

Instructions:

Make the cookie dough: Cream butter

and sugar until smooth. Add egg yolk, vanilla, and salt. Gradually mix in flour until just combined; do not overmix.

Chill dough: Form into a disk, wrap, and chill for 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 350° F. **Shape and bake:** Roll dough to ¼-inch thickness on a lightly floured surface. Cut into shapes, place on parchment-lined baking sheets, and bake 10–12 minutes until edges are lightly golden. Cool completely.

Prepare icing: Whisk powdered sugar, melted butter, and 2–3 tbsp. reduced champagne until smooth and pourable. Adjust consistency with more champagne if needed.

Decorate: Dip cooled cookie in icing, add sprinkles if desired, and let icing set 1–3 hours.

Store: Keep in an airtight container at room temperature up to 1 week.

Nutrition Information: (per cookie, approx.) Calories 100g, Carbohydrates 15g, Sugar 5g, Fiber: 1 g, Protein 5g, Reference: <https://sugarspunrun.com/.champagne-star-cookies/#recipe>.



Strawberry Cupcakes

Ingredients: 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour (150 g)

1 ½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

¾ cup granulated sugar (150 g)

¼ cup oil (canola or vegetable)

2 large eggs

½ cup natural strawberry preserves (low-sugar jam)

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 drop red food coloring (optional)

2/3 cup of milk or soy milk

2 tsp vinegar/lemons juice, let sit 5 min)

Directions/Steps :

Preheat oven to 350°F (or 375°F for high altitude). Line a 12-cup muffin tin with liners. In a bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. In a separate large bowl, whisk together sugar and oil. Add eggs one at a time,

mixing well. Then stir in strawberry preserves, vanilla, and red food coloring.

Add half of the dry ingredients and mix gently. Stir in buttermilk, then the remaining dry ingredients until just combined. Do **not overmix**.

Then Divide batter evenly into muffin cups, filling 2/3 full. Bake 15–18 minutes, or until tops spring back when touched or a toothpick inserted comes out with a few moist crumbs.

Cool completely on a wire rack, then frost with your choice of frosting (e.g., strawberry cream cheese or strawberry buttercream).

Nutrition Information: (per cupcake)- Calories: 154 , Carbohydrates: 25 g , Protein: 2 g, Fat: 5 g, Cholesterol 17mg, Sodium 170mg.



Reference :<https://www.lifeloveandsugar.com/fresh-strawberry->



Reference: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/winter->

Safe Winter Exercise: Indoor & Outdoor Strate-

Cold winter weather can make staying active more challenging, yet regular physical activity is crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health, immunity, metabolism, and mental well-being. Adapting exercise routines to the season—both indoors and outdoors—ensures safety while reaping the physical and psychological benefits of movement.

Cold weather can reduce motivation for physical activity, yet maintaining movement is essential for cardiovascular health, immunity, metabolism, and mental well-being. Safe winter exercise focuses on choosing activities appropriate for weather conditions and personal fitness levels. Both indoor and outdoor routines can be effective when done safely.

Indoor Options:

- Rebounding for lymphatic health
- Chair-based cardio or strength exercises
- Yoga, Pilates, stretching
- Resistance band training
- Indoor walking circuits
- Dance-based activities (e.g., Just Dance)

Outdoor Options:

- Brisk walking on safe sidewalks
- Hiking on maintained trails
- Low-impact jogging
- Winter sports (snowshoeing, ice skating) with proper training

Safety Tips:

- Warm up longer in cold weather
- Wear moisture-wicking layers
- Stay visible during early sunsets
- Hydrate even when not thirsty

Benefits:

- Supports mental clarity and reduces seasonal depression
- Enhances circulation and body temperature regulation

Rest, Recovery & Circadian Rhythm in Winter

Winter Sleep Optimization

During winter, the body naturally seeks more rest due to earlier sunsets and the need for energy conservation. Sleep is not only restorative—it is foundational to immunity, metabolism, memory, and emotional well-being. Winter sleep optimization involves aligning habits with natural rhythms and reducing behaviors that disrupt circadian cycles.

Strategies for Better Winter Sleep

- Reduce screen use at night to protect melatonin production.
- Enjoy calming herbal teas like chamomile, lavender, or lemon balm.
- Add magnesium-rich foods

(pumpkin seeds, spinach, beans).

- Keep bedroom temperature cool and air humidified.
- Create a bedtime wind-down ritual (stretching, journaling, reading).

Benefits:

- Strengthens immunity and reduces illness duration.
 - Improves mood and emotional stability.
 - Enhances focus, memory, and metabolism.
- Reduces inflammation and supports cardiovascular health.

Longer nights encourage deeper

Light Therapy & Combating Seasonal Affective Disorder

Reduced sunlight exposure during winter months can affect mood, sleep, and energy by disrupting circadian rhythms and key neurotransmitters.

Seasonal Affective Disorder affects millions, triggered by reduced sunlight exposure. Light therapy, nature walks, Vitamin D supplementation, and mindfulness help regulate circadian rhythms.

Less sunlight disrupts **melatonin** (sleep hormone) and **serotonin** (mood-stabilizing neurotransmitter). Light therapy, nature exposure, mindfulness, and nutritional support are effective strategies for managing symptoms.

Supportive Practices:

- A 10,000-lux light therapy box used each morning.
- Vitamin D-rich foods or supplements.
- Outdoor walks within the first hour after sunrise.
- Mind-body practices: meditation, stretching, slow breathing.

Benefits:

- Better mood regulation and reduced fatigue.
- Improved sleep patterns and emotional well-being.
- Higher energy levels throughout the day.

WINTER SLEEP TIPS



<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/>

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Reference: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/seasonal-affective-disorder>

New Year Eve Recipes



January Simple Holiday Appetizers

Potato Latkes (Cakes)

Ingredients:

4 Large potatoes
1 large onion
½ cup of all-purpose flour
½-teaspoon salt, or more to taste
¼-teaspoon ground black pepper
½ cup vegetable oil, or as needed
2 Eggs or egg replacement
¼ cup of nutritional yeast (optional)
1 teaspoon of baking powder
1 teaspoon of garlic powder
1teaspoon of onion powder
3 tablespoon of chopped parsley or savory herbs
Egg replacer directions : 1 tablespoon of ground flax seed, with 3 tablespoon of water,
1 teaspoon of baking soda with 1 tablespoon of vinegar

Directions/Steps:

Combine potato, flour, spices, onion, crushed crackers, eggs, salt, and pepper together in a large bowl.

Heat 1/4 inch oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Drop spoonful's of potato mixture, first pressing mixture against side of the bowl to

remove excess liquid, into hot oil; slightly flatten latkes with the back of a spoon to make an even thickness.

Cook in batches until browned and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes per side.

Drain latkes on a paper

towel-lined plate. Garnish- 1 cup of unsweetened applesauce, 1 cup of vegan sour cream, green onion, parsley

Nutrition Information: Calories 371, Total fat 15g, Saturated fat 5g, Cholesterol 63,

Sodium, 238mg, Carbohydrates 22g.

Reference: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/16073/potato-latkes-i/>

Mushroom Tartlets

Ingredients:

12 ounces cremini or Bella mushrooms
1/2 red onion, sliced vertically
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 garlic cloves, minced
salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/2 (17.3 ounce) package frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 1/2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
1 large egg, beaten or egg placer
1 teaspoon dried thyme, or as needed for garnish (optional)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Cut mushrooms into 1/4-inch-thick slices (don't cut too thinly).

Heat olive oil and butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms are golden and onions are soft, 6-8 minutes.

Stir in soy sauce, thyme, and garlic and cook until fragrant, 30 to 60 seconds. Season with salt and pepper; set aside.

Unfold puff pastry sheet onto a lightly-floured work surface.

Gently pat down or roll out dough with a rolling pin into a 10x10-inch square. Using a sharp knife, score a line about 1/2 inch from all edges to create a border, being careful not to cut all the way through.

Use a fork to generously prick pastry sheet all over inside the border.

6. Transfer puff pastry to the baking sheet, and brush the borders with beaten egg. Evenly spread cheese inside the border, and top with mushroom mixture.

7. Bake until tart is puffed and lightly browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Garnish with additional thyme, and serve warm.

Nutrition Information:

Calories 344, Total Fat, 15g, Saturated Fat 9g, Sodium 245mg, Carbohydrates 23g, Fiber 2g,

Sugar 1g, High in potassium, and calcium.

References: Allrecipes.com

January Simple Holiday Appetizers

Mini Holiday Pizzas

Ingredients:

1 (16.3 ounce) pizza dough, pita bread or biscuit dough
 1-cup pizza sauce
 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese or vegan cheese
 1 cup of cooked spinach
 1 cup of mushroom
 ½ cup of onions
 ½ cup of bell peppers

Directions:

1. Press each biscuit into 3 or 6-inch round. Place on 2 large or 3 small greased cookie sheets. Top each round with pizza sauce, cheese and pepperoni.
 2. Bake at 375 degrees F 10 to 15 minutes or until bottoms are deep golden brown and cheese is bubbly.

Nutrition Information: Calories 337, Total Fat 19g, Saturated Fat 7g, Sodium 89mg, Carbohydrates, 27g, Fiber 1 g, Sugars 2g, High in Calcium.

References: FCS Educator



MOCK Champagne

Ingredients :

Mix 2 cups unsweetened apple juice or apple cider,
 1 1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice,
 2 cups lemon sparkling water.

Directions:

Pour into chilled glasses.

Serves 4.

Nutrition Information:

Each serving contains 57 calories and 12 grams of sugar.

Reference: <https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/nutrition-fitness/how-to-eat-healthy-during-the-holidays/>.



Financial Wellness Corner



Carrie Sorenson,
FCS Educator



Holiday Activities that Won't Break the Bank

Carrie Sorenson, Financial Wellness Educator | cjrsoren@umd.edu | 410-386-2760

With the holiday season now getting into full swing, many people are planning fun activities for family and friends! While this is fun, there can also be extra pressure around the holidays for these gatherings to be lavishly decorated and meticulously planned. But decorations, game supplies, food, and more can add up and might be too much of a stretch for an already tight holiday budget. If you are looking for fun, inexpensive ways to engage with family and friends this season, we have some ideas! Before we get into the ideas, I want to mention that these are just suggestions. Every family is different and celebrates the holidays differently! However you choose to celebrate (or not), that is up to you. Also, there are both virtual and in person suggestions here, for gatherings with friends and family both near and far! Let's start with some ideas for those who can get together in person!

1. Have a chopped style cooking challenge. To do this, you need to split up into teams or compete individually. You need to assign each team (or person) a strange item they must use, although they can add whatever they want to it! It's a great way to use up leftovers or random pantry items that end up leftover at the end of the year. Remember, you'll need to select a few folks to judge the dishes as well!

2. Play the Dictionary Game. This is a favorite of my family and it only requires some pens or pencils and scraps of paper! To play, you gather a list of odd words (bonus points if they are holiday themed!). The person who puts together the list of words will be the one managing the game, since they will already know the definitions. Read each word one at a time. After you read the word, everyone guesses (or makes up) the definition for the word, which they write on a piece of paper. The person running the game should also write the correct definition on a piece of

paper and include it as well. Then collect the papers and be sure to include the correct definition. Read through them before reading them out loud and if anyone guesses the correct definition then put theirs to the side (they get a point for being correct). Read all the definitions and have people vote on which one they think is correct. Anyone who votes for the correct definition gets a point; the person who fools the most people also gets a point.

For those meeting virtually, there are still fun options! Keep in mind that many online meeting platforms (like GoogleMeets, Zoom, WebEx, and others) have free accounts you can use for your virtual get together if you don't already have an account.

1. Kahoot has fun games themed around the holidays and winter season! If you haven't played before, you may need to practice with it to get the hang of how it works. Basically, you can set up a game (usually a trivia game of some kind) and people can participate from wherever they are using their phone.
2. Have an online competition or showcase. . But, you can still show off ugly sweaters, holiday jokes, talents, crafts, or anything else you could showcase online or via phone! If you make it a competition, you can select a judge (or panel of judges), or have everyone vote on whose was best! Regardless of how you choose to celebrate, we hope you have a fun holiday season and a happy and healthy new year! And remember that it isn't how much you spend that makes a holiday gathering special. You can have a wonderful, festive get together with just some paper, some pens or pencils, a little creativity, and some holiday spirit!

Winter Financial Tips

Winter Financial Tips: As the weather gets cooler and the days get shorter, we start to look forward to all the fun that fall brings! But, it is also a great time to review your financial situation and make sure that you are prepared for the months and year to come. Check out these tips for getting your finances set for the fall and winter seasons:

1. Take advantage of open enrollment!

Did you know that you only have a few months out of the year when you can make changes to your health insurance? We call this time of year open enrollment, and it is the only time you can switch health insurance plans or providers without a qualifying event (like a change in your employment). This is a great time to review your current health insurance and make sure it is a good fit for your health needs and financial situation. You may want to ask yourself a few questions like:

Am I satisfied with my current health insurance plan? If not, what about my current plan is causing me to feel dissatisfied?

Has anything about my health status changed? Or has the health status of my family members covered by my plan changed?

Am I anticipating any changes in my health needs for this upcoming year?

These questions can help you understand what you want out of your health insurance and whether selecting a different plan might help your health or finances. For help comparing the health insurance plans available to you, check out our comparison workbook! You can find it at <https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2024-09/Workbook%20My%20Smart%20Choice%208th%20edition%204-30-24.pdf>

2. Consider planning ahead for the holiday season.

September seems way too early to be thinking about the holiday season, but planning ahead can help save some big bucks! As the holiday season approaches and more people start shopping for gifts and other holiday items, companies start to raise prices for those items. They might cut those prices for holiday season sales, but typically those sales are still more expensive than buying the item in a less busy shopping season that is significantly ahead of the holidays. Shopping ahead can also help spread out the expenses so that you aren't having to find the extra funds all at once. Just make sure you keep track of your purchases so that you know what you already have on hand as the holidays approach!

Enjoy all the fun and festivities this fall, while achieving your savings and budgeting goals at the same time! If you have questions about budgeting, saving, credit, health insurance, or other financial topics, reach out to Carrie Sorenson, Financial Educator with our Carroll County Office! She is happy to provide information about upcoming classes or answer questions. You can reach her at 410-386-2760 or cjrsoren@umd.edu.



Physical Wellness

February is American Heart Month



Heart Healthy Month Tips

February is **American Heart Health Month**, a time to bring awareness to heart disease—the leading cause of death in the United States—and to empower ourselves with practical, nourishing lifestyle choices. What we eat daily has a profound impact on heart health, influencing blood pressure, cholesterol levels, inflammation, blood sugar balance, and overall cardiovascular function. The good news is that heart-healthy eating does not require deprivation; it is about intentional nourishment, balance, and consistency.

A heart-healthy eating pattern emphasizes **whole, minimally processed foods**, especially fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. These foods are rich in fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals that help reduce inflammation and improve cholesterol levels.

Build Your Plate With Heart-Smart Foods

- Emphasize fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, or lightly cooked)
- Choose whole grains such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat
- Include legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas) for fiber and plant protein
- Add nuts and seeds for healthy fats, minerals, and antioxidants

Choose Healthy Fats for Heart Protection

- Use unsaturated fats like olive oil and avocado
- Include omega-3-rich foods (walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds, fatty fish or algae-based supplements)
- Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats when possible

Reduce Foods That Strain the Heart

- Limit excess sodium to help manage blood pressure
- Reduce added sugars that contribute to inflammation and insulin resistance
- Minimize highly processed and packaged foods
- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, citrus, garlic, and vinegar instead of salt

Heart-healthy eating does not require perfection—small, consistent changes make a lasting impact.

Adding more vegetables to meals, choosing whole grains, reducing processed foods, and using herbs and spices instead of salt can significantly support heart health.

Healthy fats are essential for heart health when chosen wisely.

Remember to incorporate unsaturated fats from olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds, and omega-3-rich foods help reduce inflammation and support healthy cholesterol levels.

At the same time, limiting saturated fats, trans fats, added sugars, and excess sodium helps reduce strain on the heart and blood vessels.

When paired with regular movement, stress management, and quality sleep, nourishing the body becomes a powerful act of care for the heart.

Reference: <https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/washington-dc>.



National Cancer Prevention Month

National Cancer Prevention Month is an opportunity to shift the conversation from fear to **empowerment**. While not all cancers are preventable, research shows that a significant number of cancer cases are linked to lifestyle, environmental, and behavioral factors that we can influence. Building awareness begins with education—understanding how daily choices related to nutrition, movement, stress, sleep, and environmental exposures play a role in long-term cancer risk reduction.

Prevention starts with **informed decision-making**. Awareness campaigns, community conversations, routine screenings, and access to accurate information help individuals recognize risk factors early and take proactive steps toward health. When prevention becomes a shared responsibility—at home, in workplaces, schools, and faith or community spaces—it creates a culture that supports healthier behaviors and earlier intervention.

One of the most effective ways to reduce cancer risk is through **nutrition and lifestyle habits that lower chronic inflammation and support immune health**. Diets rich in whole plant foods, adequate hydration, regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight are consistently associated with reduced risk for several cancers, including breast, colorectal, and prostate cancers. Equally important are minimizing exposure to known carcinogens such as tobacco, excessive alcohol, and environmental toxins.

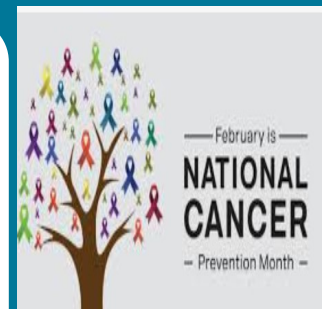
CANCER PREVENTION TIPS:

- **Eat a plant-forward diet** rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds
- **Limit processed and red meats**, refined sugars, and ultra-processed foods
- **Engage in regular physical activity** (at least 150 minutes of moderate movement weekly)
- **Avoid tobacco** and limit alcohol consumption
- **Maintain a healthy weight** to reduce hormone-related cancer risks
- **Protect skin from UV exposure** using sunscreen and protective clothing
- **Reduce environmental toxin exposure** (plastics, pesticides, household chemicals when possible)
- **Manage stress and prioritize sleep**, both of which support immune regulation
- **Stay up to date on cancer screenings** and routine health checkups

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Cancer Prevention and Control, American Cancer Society. *Cancer*

prevention & Early Detection Facts & Figures..



February Recipes

Lobster Mac N Cheese



Ingredients:

2 Cornish game hens
 ½ cup melted butter
 ½ onion, chopped
 ½ stalk celery, chopped
 ¼ green bell pepper, chopped
 1 (4.5 ounce) can mushrooms, drained and chopped
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 tablespoon dried basil
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
 ¼ cup melted butter

Directions/Steps:

Step 1:

Gather all ingredients. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C).

Step 2: Combine 1/2 cup melted butter, onion, celery, bell pepper, mushrooms,

garlic, basil, oregano, and parsley in a bowl.

Step 3: Season hens inside and out with salt and pepper to taste, then stuff with equal amounts of vegetable mixture.

Step 4: Place stuffed hens in a 9x13 inch baking dish, breast-side up. Drizzle with 1/4 cup melted butter.

Step 5: Cover dish and bake in the pre-heated oven for 1 ½ hours. Remove cover and brown at 500 degrees F (260 degrees C).

Nutrition Information: Calories 476, Total Fat 45g, Saturated fat 25g, Carbohydrate 5g, Dietary fiber 2g, Protein 14g, Cholesterol 167 mg, sodium 421 mg, Total sugar 2g.

Reference: <https://www.spendwithpennies.com/extra-creamy-lobster-mac-and-cheese/>.



Black-Eyed Pea & Collard Green Salad

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon neutral oil
 1 small shallot, chopped
 1 clove garlic, sliced
 ½ cup bell pepper, chopped
 1 cup collard greens, chopped
 ½ teaspoon harissa paste
 ¼–½ teaspoon peri-peri sauce
 2 cups cooked black-eyed peas (or 1 can, rinsed)
 ½ teaspoon sugar
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ cup parsley, chopped
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 1 tablespoon preserved lemon, chopped
 1 medium tomato, chopped

Directions:

Heat neutral oil in a skillet over medium

heat. Cook shallot and garlic until fragrant. Add bell pepper and cook until slightly soft. Add collard greens and cook until wilted. Stir in harissa, peri-peri sauce, and black-eyed peas. Season with sugar, salt, and pepper. Cook a few minutes, then transfer to a bowl. Stir in parsley, olive oil, lemon juice, and preserved lemon. Fold in tomato, adjust seasoning, and serve.

Nutrition Information: Calories: 190
 Fat: 12 g, Carbohydrates: 17 g
 Protein: 5 g, Fiber: 5 g, Sugar: 4 g

Reference: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/8077227/spicy-black-eyed-pea-collard-green-salad/>.



February Recipes

Steamed Collard Greens

Ingredients:

½ cup olive oil

2 medium onions, diced

½ cup garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2 tsp red pepper flakes

2 Tbsp. smoked paprika

2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

2 cups water (plus more as needed)

5 lbs. collard greens, cleaned and sliced

Black pepper and pinch of cumin

Directions/Steps:

Make the Pot Liker

Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat.

Sauté onions until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and red pepper flakes; cook 2

minutes. Season lightly with salt.

Build Flavor Stir in smoked paprika and cook 1–2 minutes until fragrant. Add apple cider vinegar and water. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes.

Prep & Cook Greens Stack, roll, and thinly slice collard greens. Wash thoroughly. Add greens to the pot, stirring to coat with pot liker.

Simmer Until Tender Cover and simmer **45 minutes**, stirring occasionally. Add more water if needed. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot with pot liker spooned over greens.

Nutrition Information: Calories 210 , Protein 5g, Fat 12g, Saturated fat 2g, Carbohydrates 15g, Fiber 7 g, Sodium 220mg.

References: <https://carlahall.com/vegan-southern-collard-greens/>.



Sheet Pan Omelet Salmon Cakes Easy Southern Salmon

ingredients: ½ teaspoon Creole seasoning or Old Bay , 18 ounces pink salmon

½ cup mayonnaise

Juice of ½ lemon

1 large egg, beaten

½ cup green onions, chopped

½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

¼ teaspoon black pepper

About 10 saltine crackers, crushed and divided or bread crumbs

Directions:

Heat about 1 inch of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. The oil is ready when a drop of water sizzles. In a bowl, mix salmon,

on, mayonnaise, lemon juice, egg, and Worcestershire sauce. Stir in green onions, seasoning, salt, and pepper. Crush about half of the crackers and mix them into the salmon mixture. Place the remaining crushed crackers on a plate. Form the mixture into small patties. Coat each patty lightly in the crushed crackers. Fry in hot oil for 2 to 3 minutes per side until golden brown. Remove and drain on paper towels. Serve warm.

Nutrition Information per croquette, approx.) Calo, ies: 195, Protein: 16 fat: 14 g, Carbohydrates: 1 g, Sodium 315 mg, g.



Reference:

FC Educator



February Recipes

Beef & Broccoli

Ingredients:

1 lb. flank steak or sirloin, thinly sliced

4 cups broccoli florets

2 Tbsp. olive oil (or avocado oil)

3 cloves garlic, minced

¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce or tamari

2 Tbsp. water

1 tsp cornstarch (optional, for light sauce thickening)

Black pepper (to taste)

Directions:

Heat 1 Tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medi-

um-high heat. Add beef and cook 3–4

minutes until browned. Remove and set aside. Add remaining oil and broccoli to the pan. Cook 3–4 minutes until bright green and slightly tender.

Add garlic, soy sauce, water, and cornstarch (if using). Stir and Return beef to pan and cook 2–3 minutes until sauce lightly thickens and everything is coated.

Season with black pepper and serve warm.

Nutrition Information: Calories 320, Protein 24g, Total Fat 15, Carbohydrates 8g, Fiber 3 g, Sodium 320mg.

Reference :<https://laurenfitfoodie.com/steak-and-broccoli/>.

Lentils & Vegetable Soup

Ingredients:

1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 medium onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

6 cups vegetable broth

1 cup dried brown lentils, rinsed

1 can (14.5 oz.) diced tomatoes

1 tsp Italian seasoning (*or basil only*)

Salt & black pepper, to taste

2 cups chopped kale or spinach

1 Tbsp. lemon juice (*optional, for brightness*).

Directions/Steps:

Sauté Heat olive oil in a large pot.

Add onion and garlic; cook 3–4 minutes until soft.

Simmer Add broth, lentils, tomatoes, seasoning, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and **simmer 30 minutes**.

Finish Stir in zucchini and greens. Simmer 5–10 minutes until tender. Add lemon juice if using. Serve warm.

Nutrition Information: Calories: 190, Protein 11g, Fiber 9g, Total Fat 4g, Carbohydrate 28g, Sodium 259 mg.

Reference: <https://www.cookingclassy.com/italian-vegetable-lentil-soup/>

February Recipes

Pan Seared Salmon

Ingredients:

4 (6-oz) salmon fillets, skin on or off

1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

½ lemon, for serving

Fresh herbs (parsley, dill, or tarragon), optional

Directions:

Pat salmon fillets dry. Toss with olive oil, salt, and pepper.

Heat a nonstick or cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat until hot.

Place salmon in pan, skin-side up. Cook 3–4 minutes until browned

and easily released from the pan.

Flip and cook 4–5 minutes until just cooked through.

Remove from pan, rest 2–3 minutes.

Squeeze lemon over salmon and sprinkle with herbs if desired.

Nutrition Information (per serving):

Calories 280, Protein 24g, Total Fat 15g, Saturated fat 3g, Carbohydrates 0g, Sodium 150, Rich in omega 3 fatty acids.

References: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1024838-pan-seared-salmon>.



Chinese New Year
2026

Chinese Style Green Beans

Ingredients:

1 lb. green beans, trimmed

2–3 Tbsp. olive oil

2–3 cloves garlic, minced

¼ tsp salt (optional)

Optional: red pepper flakes or toasted sesame seeds for garnish

Directions:

Heat oil in a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat.

Add green beans and stir-fry 3–4 minutes until they start to wrinkle and are tender-crisp. Add garlic and salt; cook 30–60 seconds until fragrant.

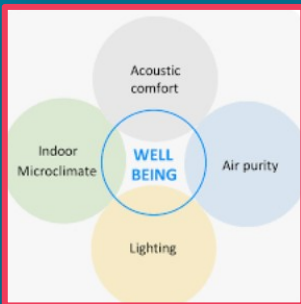
Transfer to a plate and garnish with red pepper flakes or sesame seeds if desired.

Nutrition Information: Calories 120, Protein 3g, Total Fat 3g, Saturated Fat 1g, Carbohydrates 10g, Fiber 4 g, Sodium 200mg
Reference:



Environmental

Mental Wellness



Creating a Healthy Winter Home: Air Quality, Aromatherapy, and Indoor Wellness

Aromatherapy for Winter Wellness & Mood Balance

Aromatherapy uses plant-derived essential oils to support emotional and physical well-being. During the winter months, specific oils can help reduce congestion, enhance mood, increase relaxation, and purify indoor air. In holistic health, aromatherapy is often combined with warm baths, diffusers, massage oils, and mindful breathing to create a **calming environmental safe winter home environment**.

Key Winter Essential Oils:

- **Eucalyptus:** can assist with opening up sinuses and supports respiratory health.
- **Peppermint:** Boosts energy and mental clarity.
- **Frankincense:** Calms the mind, supports meditation, and reduces stress.

- **Cinnamon & clove:** Provide warmth and combat winter fatigue.
- **Lavender:** Supports sleep, relaxation, and emotional balance.

Benefits:

- Reduces seasonal depression and anxiety.
- Improves sleep quality.
- Supports immunity by purifying air and reducing pathogens.
- Creates a soothing sensory environment for winter months.

Use essential oils to support mood, immunity, and relaxation:

- Eucalyptus
- Peppermint
- Frankincense
- Cinnamon
- Clove

Creating a Healthy Home for the Winter Season

Environmental wellness refers to the intentional practice of creating living spaces that support physical, mental, and emotional health. During the winter months, people spend significantly more time indoors, increasing exposure to dry air, allergens, dust, and environmental stressors such as clutter, noise, and artificial lighting. A winter-focused environmental wellness plan includes improving air quality, managing household toxins, maximizing natural light, and creating spaces that promote peace and productivity. Simple adjustments—such as using humidifiers to counteract dry heat, introducing indoor plants to filter toxins, and opening blinds to allow natural

sunlight—can significantly improve well-being. Maintaining a clean, organized environment also reduces stress and supports focus, especially during the busy holiday season.

Benefits

- Improves indoor air quality and respiratory health.
- Reduces allergen exposure and winter dryness.
- Supports mental clarity, calmness, and mood stability.
- Encourages healthier routines and reduced stress. References: (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876382017300951> , <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32308715> , above)

Decluttering for Emotional & Mental Well-Being

Winter is an ideal time to simplify the home environment and create mental calm before the new year. Decluttering is more than a cleaning task—it is a **mental and emotional wellness practice**. According to environmental psychology, physical clutter increases cortisol (stress hormone), reduces focus, and contributes to emotional overwhelm. Decluttering before the holiday season helps prepare space for gatherings, gifts, and rest. Creating a clean, organized environment promotes motivation, clarity, and a sense of control.

Steps for Effective Decluttering:

- Begin with small spaces (drawers, shelves).
- Sort items into: keep, donate, recycle, and discard.
- Release items that no longer serve your lifestyle.
- Introduce calming elements like warm lighting, aromatherapy, and soft textures.
- Maintain organization with labeled storage and seasonal cleaning routines.

Benefits:

- Reduces anxiety and mental overload.
- Improves sleep and concentration.
- Supports emotional healing and a sense of renewal.
- Creates a peaceful environment for winter reflection.

References –

How Decluttering Can Reduce Stress and Improve Focus, (WebMD. 2025, <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-declutter-and-why>).

Winter
Decluttering
Checklist



Physical Wellness



Thermogenic & Anti-Inflammatory Winter Nutrition

When temperatures drop and daylight hours shorten, our bodies require additional support to maintain energy, warmth, and overall wellness. Winter nutrition focuses not only on immune support but also on foods that help the body generate internal heat, maintain metabolic efficiency, and promote healthy digestion. Thermogenic foods—those that naturally produce heat during digestion—can be powerful allies in supporting circulation, metabolism, and overall comfort during colder months.

Thermogenic foods generate internal heat during digestion, helping the body stay warm and maintain metabolic efficiency in cold temperatures. Many warming foods are naturally anti-inflammatory and support circulation. They also improve circulation, aid digestion, and help with metabolism.

Examples & Benefits:

Ginger: Improves circulation and digestion

Turmeric: Anti-inflammatory and immune-supportive

Cinnamon and cloves: Balance blood sugar and warm the body

Chili peppers: Increase metabolism through capsaicin

Legumes, oats, and root vegetables: Provide slow-burning fuel

Why This Matters in Winter:

- Prevents sluggish digestion
- Supports metabolism during decreased activity
- Enhances overall warmth and comfort

Winter nutrition emphasizes foods that warm the body from the inside, supporting energy, immunity, and overall well-being during colder months.

Reference: EatRight.org ,

Winter Health & Wellness

Preparing for a Healthy 2026

Winter Wellness: Preparing for a Healthy 2026

As we move into the new year, winter offers the perfect opportunity to pause, reflect, and set intentions for 2026. This season is ideal for nurturing both body and mind, creating a strong foundation for emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness. Instead of chasing fleeting trends or online aesthetics, focus on **personal growth and realistic self-improvement goals** that align with your values and lifestyle.

Mindset Matters:

- Approach wellness with curiosity and self-compassion. Progress is more important than perfection.
- Reflect on the past year—celebrate accomplishments and identify areas for growth.
- Use this season to reset your mindset, letting go of stress, comparison, and unrealistic expectations.

Set Realistic Goals:

- Create a personal “level-up” plan for self-improvement in areas that matter to you, such as nutrition, fitness, mental clarity, or creativity.
- Break goals into small, achievable steps—consistency over intensity ensures long-term success.
- Track progress and celebrate milestones, reinforcing motivation and self-confidence.

Embrace Winter:

- Find joy in seasonal activities:

walks in the crisp air, indoor workouts, cozy reading, journaling, or creative hobbies.

- Prioritize practices that promote **emotional and spiritual wellness**, such as meditation, prayer, breathwork, or time in nature.
- Connect with loved ones, maintain community ties, and create moments of gratitude and reflection.

Winter is a time to nurture yourself intentionally—body, mind, and spirit. By focusing on realistic goals, positive mindset shifts, and seasonal joy, you can step into 2026 with clarity, energy, and purpose. Let this season be your launchpad for a vibrant, balanced, and fulfilling year.

Spiritual Wellness: The Power of Gratitude

Religious and spiritual wellness nurtures the inner self, offering a sense of purpose, peace, and connection beyond the physical world. Practices such as prayer, meditation, journaling, or mindfulness help cultivate resilience, reduce stress, and foster emotional balance.

Gratitude is a cornerstone of spiritual wellness—it shifts focus from scarcity to abundance, strengthens relationships, and enhances overall well-being. Taking time each day to reflect on blessings, express thankfulness, or engage in acts of kindness can deepen spiritual growth and create a sense of harmony and fulfillment in daily life.

References: American Psychological Association (APA, 2025). *The Role of Gratitude in Positive Psychology*, National Institutes of Health (NIH, 2025). *Winter Wellness: Setting Goals and Staying Healthy During the Cold Season*.



Winter Self-Care Ideas



March Recipes

Smoky Avocado Chicken Salad



Ingredients:

1 chipotle chili in adobo, finely chopped

4 Tbsp. adobo sauce

1 tsp honey

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil (plus more as needed)

1½ tsp ground cumin

1½ tsp kosher salt

3 small limes, divided

4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

1 large red onion, sliced into thick wedges
¼ cup raw pumpkin seeds (pepitas)

1 bunch kale, ribs removed, thinly sliced

2 ripe avocados

Directions: Marinate the Chicken Preheat oven to 425°F. In a large bowl, mix chipotle chile, adobo sauce, honey, olive oil, cumin, salt, and juice of 1 lime. Add chicken and coat well. Let marinate 10 minutes.

Roast Chicken & Onion Spread onion on a rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with oil, and lightly salt. Nestle chicken among onions.

Roast **22–25 minutes**, until chicken is cooked through and onions are tender. Remove chicken and slice. Add and mix kale, and avocado, olive oil,, and lime juice.

Nutrition Information: Serves 4-Calories 420, Protein 28g, Fat 32g, Saturated Fat 5g, Carbohydrates 22g, Fiber 9g, Sodium 350mg.

Reference: <https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/smoky-chicken-avocado-kale-salad>.

Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients :

2 beets (1 red, 1 golden), peeled and chopped into 1-inch chunks

1 large carrot, cut into 1-inch chunks

3 parsnips, chopped into 1-inch chunks

1 medium sweet potato, chopped into 1-inch chunks

1 turnip, chopped into 1-inch chunks

Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

1 tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary

1 tbsp. chopped fresh sage leaves

1 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Directions: Preheat oven to 425°F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Place beets and carrots on one sheet; parsnips, sweet potato, and turnip on the other.

Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with herbs, salt, and pepper; toss to coat.

Roast vegetables until tender and browned, approximately 25–50 minutes, checking the faster-cooking vegetables (parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips) earlier.

Nutrition Information: Calories 150, Fat 7 g fat, Saturated fat , Carbohydrate 22 g 5 , Fiber 5 g protein 3g. Sodium 160 .

Reference: <https://www.loveandlemons.com/roasted-root-vegetables> .



March Recipes

Turmeric Chicken Soup

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
 1 bay leaf
 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
 ½ teaspoon ground coriander
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
 4 (6-ounce) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, trimmed
 5 cups unsalted chicken broth
 2 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed and sliced into ½-inch-thick half-moons (about 4 cups)
 5 ounces packed baby kale (5 ounces)
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus more to taste

Directions/Steps:

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large saucepan or medium Dutch oven over medium heat. Add chopped onion, minced garlic and cut ginger; cook, stirring often, until the onion softens and starts to brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Add 1 bay leaf, 1 teaspoon turmeric, ½ teaspoon each coriander and salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring con-

stantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add trimmed chicken, 5 cups broth and sliced sweet potatoes; bring to a vigorous simmer over high heat.

Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sweet potatoes are tender but not falling apart, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest portion of chicken reads at least 165°F, 15 to 18 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a plate to cool slightly, about 5 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Meanwhile, add 5 cups kale to the soup; cook, stirring constantly, until just wilted, about 1 minute. Remove from heat.

Remove and discard skin and bones from the chicken; shred the chicken. Stir 2 tablespoons lemon juice and the shredded chicken into the soup. Season with additional lemon juice to taste.

Nutrition Information: Serving Size 2 cups-
 Calories 469 , Fat 22g, Saturated fat 5g,
 Cholesterol 135mg, Carbohydrates 26g,
 Sugar 9g, Protein 24g, Fiber 6g, Sodium,
 356 mg,

Reference:

References: EatingWell.com



Sheet Pan Omelet

Ingredients:

8 large eggs
 ¾ tsp salt
 1/2 tsp garlic powder
 1 cups various shredded cheeses (mozzarella, Cheddar, Monterey Jack)
 2 cups frozen vegetables (chopped broccoli, chopped spinach, and/or peppers), thawed and patted very dry
 3 links Italian-style sausage, diced turkey

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a 9x13-inch sheet pan with parchment. Coat parchment and sides of pan with the cooking spray.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, pepper, garlic powder, and ¾ cup of cheese until will combined.

Season with pepper, place sheet pan on oven rack and carefully pour eggs into pan.

Sprinkle top with vegetables, turkey sausage, and then add the remaining cheese. Bake for 22 minutes , and until eggs are set in center

Nutrition Information: Calories 361 , Carbohydrate, 34g, Fat 13g, Saturated fat 3 g, sodium 359,Protein 18g, Sugar 2g, Fiber9g, Cholesterol 195 mg.

Reference: Allrecipes.com



Save The Dates! Upcoming Online Classes

New Classes and Newsletter Coming in Spring 2026



Date	Online Class Description	Time	Cost
Jan. 22	Health Literacy and Communication: How To Talk To Your Doctor	11:30 am	Free
Feb. 12	Nutrition Plus– Heart Health & Chronic Disease—How to properly Prevent & Manage	11:30 am	Free
Feb. 26	Nutrition Plus– Food as Medicine for Disease Prevention	11:30 am	Free
Mar. 12	Food Safety– Capture the Flavor , Healthy Cooking with Herbs and Spices	11:30 am	Free
Mar. 26	Nutrition Plus-Nutrition and Stress	11:30am	Free
In person	<p>Note: Interested in our Chronic Disease Prevention Series Session : Dinning with Diabetes, Fresh Conversation, Dash Plus, Wellness Plus Sessions -which are ongoing and taught @ our community partnerships location, send email for more information</p> <p>Also Inquire about classes at your location—Check website for more details. email Jennifer @jdixoncr@umd.edu</p>		

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