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To: Caswell ECA Club Members

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## Some Food for Thought Newsletter September 2014

### Greetings!



Fall is just about ready to make its grand entrance! Before we know it, we'll be amongst friends and family celebrating the various holidays that greet us during this part of the year. I hope you all have had an enjoyable summer. If you have any questions, please give me a call at (336) 694-4158.

### ECA County Council

The next ECA County Council meeting will be held on October 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am in the kitchen of the Agriculture Building. This will be the last council meeting of 2014, as well as the last meeting prior to Achievement Night and the annual holiday program. Please reserve the date and plan to attend.

### ECA State Council Meeting

The 2014 State Council meeting will be held in Asheville on October 26-29 at the Double Tree hotel. The registration information will be mailed out from the state office to all ECA members. If you do not receive the registration information and are interested in attending, please give me a call at the Extension Office.

### ECA Achievement Night



The 2014 Achievement Night program will be held on November 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at the Senior Center. Please reserve the date and plan to attend. Please remember that all club reports are due in the Extension Office by October 31<sup>st</sup>.



### Wasted food equals throwing money in the trash

You finished your dinner but did not eat everything on your plate. As you scrape the leftovers in the trash, think about the value of the food you are throwing away. The same holds true for that moldy bread your family did not get around to eating, or even the leftovers you meant to heat up the next day, but they simply did not sound good.

Consumers may view this as simply throwing out food, but in reality, wasted food is wasted money.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently reported that the amount of uneaten food in American homes and restaurants is about \$390 in wasted food per each U.S. consumer. This is more than the average American spends on food each month.

Not only is wasted food hard on our wallets, but also it impacts the environment. Each type of food or food ingredient requires soil, nutrients, water and/or energy to grow, along with processing and/or transporting. In addition, this waste is filling up the dwindling number of landfills. Food waste is the largest type of municipal solid waste put into landfills, outpacing paper, plastic, aluminum cans and glass.

There are ways to reduce food waste by reducing, reusing and recycling.

One thing that helps reduce food waste is to plan your meals for the week. Shop from your pantry first before heading out to the grocery store. You may be surprised at how many ingredients you actually have on hand.

As you plan your menus, cook extra so you will have leftovers. These leftovers can make a quick and easy lunch the next day. This also helps cut down on the amount of money that may be spent eating out for lunch. If you take leftovers to work, or away from home, be sure to store them properly to ensure food safety.

While shopping in your pantry and you discover items that are still good, but you know you will not use them before they expire, consider donating them to a local food pantry.

Another tip is to purchase only what you need. Buying items in bulk can reduce packaging, which helps the environment, but make sure you have space to store everything and will be able to use it up before the item expires.

To avoid wasting food at a restaurant, consider sharing an entrée or even order from the kids menu to get a small portion size.

To keep food out of the landfill it is wise to compost food scraps. Many foods, including fruits, vegetables, eggshells, tea bags and coffee grounds can easily be composted. Avoid dairy products, meats, oils and grease as they can attract rodents and produce odors as they decompose.

Remember, the less food you waste means more money in your pocket.

Source: Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University, Cooperative Extension Food Specialist



## Add a Little Green to Your Golden Years



The recent economic recession has many people nervous about whether they have planned or are planning well enough for retirement. If you're worried about

not having enough money to last through your golden years, you are not alone. With life expectancies longer than ever, six out of every 10 baby boomers fear outliving their retirement funds more than they fear dying.

While Social Security is one source of retirement income, it shouldn't be your only one. Currently, Social Security replaces about 40 percent of the average wage earner's income, with higher income earners receiving less of a percentage of their income. Despite your income level, you should plan to replace 70 to 90 percent of your pre-retirement income to live comfortably during retirement.

This may seem like a monumental task, but you can do several things to help build your retirement savings.

Track your current expenses, and determine whether they are fixed or flexible. Fixed expenses are usually monthly, non-negotiable expenses and include items such as rent, mortgage payments, utility costs and car payments. Flexible expenses are those over which you have more control and can include groceries, travel, eating out and entertainment expenses. Plan to track them for at least a month. Identifying where your money goes will help you

develop a realistic budget that can help you either save for or stretch your retirement dollars.

Whether you're planning for retirement or are already retired, you should consider ways to maximize your money. Depending on the amount of your assets, personal risk tolerance, retirement goals and anticipated length of retirement, you may consider a balanced financial portfolio that includes certificates of deposits, money market accounts, stocks, bonds and mutual funds. Before you invest, be sure that you are comfortable with the risk and terms of the investment. Many of the options that have the potential for the biggest returns can also result in some of the largest losses in principal. Remember if you are close to retirement or retired, it will be harder to recover from a significant loss of principal.

Source: University of Kentucky Extension

## Are you "Smart" about Food Safety?

A recipe for food safety success is to "Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill." Since September is National Food Safety Education Month, this is a perfect time to check your food safety know-how! Choose an answer to each question, then read on for more information.

**How long should you wash your hands before or after handling food?**

- a. 1 minute
- b. 20 seconds
- c. 10 seconds
- d. 5 seconds

Did you know to wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds? This is about how long it takes to hum or sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.

**Are you “Smart”  
about Food Safety?**

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**Ground beef should be cooked to a minimum of how many degrees?**

- a. 180 degrees F
- b. 160 degrees F
- c. 150 degrees F
- d. 140 degrees F

Do you have a meat thermometer? If not, get an inexpensive one. They are easy to use. Insert it into the thickest part of the meat, but don't let it touch any bones. For thin meats, insert the thermometer sideways. Cook ground beef and ground pork to 160 degrees, and casseroles, leftover and poultry to 165 degrees.

**How long is it safe to leave perishable foods at room temperature?**

- a. 4 hours
- b. 3 hours
- c. 2 hours
- d. 1 hour

Did you know that perishable foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, dairy products, cooked pasta, rice and vegetables; fresh, peeled and cut fruits and vegetables) should be at room temperature for a total time of only two hours or less? Reduce your risk of getting food borne illness. Refrigerate these foods promptly. At room temperature, in just 7 hours one bacteria can grow into 2,097,152!

**Will freezing a food kill the bacteria in it?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

Did you know that freezing a food stops bacteria from growing in it, but freezing does not kill existing bacteria? And the bacteria become active again when a food is thawed. To decrease the risk of foodborne illness, never thaw food at

room temperature. Instead, thaw it in a refrigerator, in cold running water, or cook it promptly after thawing in a microwave oven.

Source: University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension



**Hot, Hot, Hot!**

What's hot all year long and bites you back when you eat it? Chili peppers, of course! Chilies are a great way to heat up your fall dishes when the weather turns cooler. Choose from several varieties, including cayenne, habanero, serrano and jalapeños, to name a few. Each differs in flavor and heat intensity. Typically, larger chilies taste milder because they contain fewer seeds and white membrane compared to their size.

**Handling**

Capsaicins are the fiery substances in chili peppers that pack the heat and can burn your eyes and skin. Handle chilies carefully. Wear thin rubber gloves, if possible. Wash your hands well with plenty of soap and water when done handling chilies. Avoid touching anyone's nose, eyes or mouth after handling hot peppers.

**Availability, Selection and Storage**

Hot chilies may be fresh, can or dried. Fresh chili peppers are available year round. Look for firm glossy chilies with taut smooth skin and green stems. Dried hot peppers should be glossy and

## **Hot, Hot, Hot!**

cont'd.

unbroken. Store fresh chilies for up to three weeks: Wrap them, unwashed, in paper towels and refrigerate. Store dried chilies in an airtight container at room temperature for a maximum of four months. If you will be keeping dried chilies for more than four months, store them in the refrigerator.

### **Preparation**

To prepare chili peppers, rinse and cut them in half. If you want to decrease the heat intensity of chilies, remove the seeds and veins. Soak chopped chilies in salt water for 1 to 2 hours to help "cool them off" as well.

### **Enjoy**

If the bite is too strong when you eat a chili, chew on bread or another starchy food. Water only spreads the heat. Peppers are packed with Vitamin C and good-for-you antioxidants, yet are low in calories.

Source: Chili peppers, <http://foodchef.net>



## **Recipe Corner**

### **Slow Cooker Taco Soup**

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 (16 ounce) can chili beans, with liquid
- 1 (15 ounce) can kidney beans with liquid
- 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn, with liquid
- 1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups water
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans peeled and diced tomatoes
- 1 (4 ounce) can diced green chili peppers
- 1 (1.25 ounce) package taco seasoning mix

#### **Directions**

1. In a medium skillet, cook the ground beef until browned over medium heat. Drain, and set aside.
2. Place the ground beef, onion, chili beans, kidney beans, corn, tomato sauce, water, diced tomatoes, green chili peppers and taco seasoning mix in a slow cooker. Mix to blend, and cook on low setting for 8 hours.

SGP/tjw