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*Family and Consumer
Sciences Department
University of Florida -
Sarasota County Extension*



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Safety Tips for Halloween

Be on guard for tricks in those treats

Trick-or-treat bags full of goodies pose an almost irresistible temptation for kids. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings at The Soap and Detergent Association, cautions parents to make sure kids understand that until those treat bags get home, the rule is "no munching allowed!"

Out and About

- To help kids resist temptation, don't send them out trick-or-treating on an empty stomach. Make sure they have a meal or a light snack before leaving home.
- Instruct children not to accept anything that isn't commercially wrapped. This includes items like apples and homemade baked goods.

Back at Home

- Discard any homemade candy or baked goods and anything that isn't commercially wrapped.
- For young children, check the treat bag and remove any choking hazards, such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys.
- Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. If it looks at all suspicious, throw it away.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association

Get Snap Happy

Florida snap beans are available year round

It's a snap to add color crunch, and lots of healthy vitamins and fiber to main dishes, side dishes, and even snacks. Fresh Florida snap beans – also known as green beans or string beans – are available and affordable all year round. Easy to find and easy to prepare, they are a convenient choice for busy cooks. They even taste great raw.

Snap beans are delicious – and good for you, too. They contain vitamins A and C, which help keep your immune system healthy; folate, a necessity for normal cell growth; and potassium, which helps maintain normal blood pressure. The colorful pods are also a good source of fiber, which helps speed up the digestive system and may help prevent heart disease and even certain cancers. Snap beans are naturally low in fat and sodium, and a cup-sized serving contains just 30 calories.

“The well-loved snap bean is only gaining in popularity as people become more health conscious,” Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson said. “People know how important fruits and vegetables are to good health. The hard part is finding the time to eat right – and quick-cooking snap beans fit easily into our busy lifestyles.”

With its mild winters that allow for virtually year-round production, Florida is the nation's No. 1 producer of fresh-market snap beans. Most commercial acreage is found in the state's balmy, subtropical southeastern region – Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties – but North-Central Florida is another important area of production. In 2004, Florida's cash receipts for snap beans totaled over \$130 million. Fresh Florida snap beans are available at supermarkets around the country and at community farmers' markets across the state.

When shopping, look for firm, crisp, velvety, bright green pods that are free of scars and other blemishes. If the pods are wilted or wrinkled, they've been sitting around too long and won't taste fresh. Avoid lumpy pods with bulging seeds; they spend too much time on the vine and will be tough. For best results, snap beans should be picked when they are young and tender.

You can store unwashed fresh snap beans in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to three days. Keeping beans dry is important: If they're stored wet, they'll decay much more quickly.

Slender, crunchy raw snap beans are great with a creamy dip. The flavor of cooked beans can be enhanced with a wide variety of spices and flavorings, including dill, garlic, and lemon juice. Include snap beans in vegetable soup, in omelets with cheese and bell peppers, or in potato salad to enhance its visual appeal and nutritional content.

Source: FL Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services; www.Florida-Agriculture.com

Gently Improve Your Balance With Tai Chi

Tai chi (pronounced “tie chee”) is an ancient Chinese exercise to continuous slow movement. For people who practice regularly, research shows that tai chi appears to improve balance and strength, as well as burn excess calories that can lead to body fat and higher risk for cancer.

Tai Chi is so gentle that it’s hard to believe it is actually a martial art. The names of some of the exercises are poetic: “waving hand in the cloud” or “pushing the mountain.” Tai chi’s commonality with other Asian martial arts, such as judo and karate, is its calm focus of the mind on breathing correctly while doing the forms, or exercises.

How Tai Chi Works

Deep breathing is an important part of the Chinese art of tai chi. It helps you calm the mind and focus on gentle movements. Good posture and balance are practiced, resulting in stronger muscles.

In one review of seven studies, tai chi reduced the number of falls and blood pressure in 505 elderly people ages 53-96. A study published more recently concluded that moderate practice of tai chi may help reduce frailty and falls by more than 47 percent among 200 participants whose mean age was 76.

Many different schools and styles of tai chi exist, and most pattern their movements on agility observed in animals. Legend has it that a 15th century monk, Chang San-Feng, watched a fight between a bird and a snake. He observed how the yielding movements of the snake could overcome the stiff attack movements of the bird. The bird was allowed to use up its energy in attacking, which the snake dodged. When the bird was exhausted, the snake fought back and won.

We humans may not be as nimble as animals, but we can still practice tai chi to offset arthritis, and improve circulation and muscle strength.

Here is a simple tai chi exercise:

Leg strengthener: Stand with your feet hip-width apart and knees slightly bent, with arm rounded in front of you as though you were hugging a tree. Keep your back straight and limbs soft while holding this position as long as you can. At first, you may stand with your back lightly against a wall to keep your balance. Your leg, arm and back muscles are strengthened by performing this exercise for a few minutes each day.

Source: The American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter

To Wash or Not to Wash: A Tale of Two Products: Raw meats *Versus* Raw Produce

Introduction

We are in an era of excessive information. When so much information is available, consumers can find it hard to choose which guidelines to follow. When the information is also conflicting, it is even more difficult.

For example, take a case of washing of meat and poultry. According to the current food safety guidelines (Chapter 10) of the new [2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), consumers **should not** wash raw meats and poultry before cooking, because it will increase chances of cross-contamination.

However, according to the leading food sanitation text book, the recommendation for food service operations is **to wash** poultry, fish, and variety meats before cooking. Washing poultry will reduce contamination of some microbes. What would the consumer, who might also work in food service, do when facing this situation? The objective of this article is to provide research-based information regarding these two very different recommendations, so that consumers can make informed decisions about how to reduce their risk for foodborne illnesses.

In theory, the internal tissues of healthy animals should be free of bacteria. In practice this is not the case, because during the slaughtering and processing steps the meat came into contact with many sources of contamination leading to varying numbers and types of microorganisms found on raw meat products. Because of this, raw or improperly cooked meats are often implicated in foodborne illness outbreaks.

Fresh produce is an essential part of a healthy diet. Produce is a source of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants; it can play an important role in weight management as well. In recent years, foodborne illness traced back to fresh produce items, traditionally regarded as low risk foods, has been recognized as an emerging problem in the United States.

Consumers often consume fresh produce raw without cooking or minimally processed, without a major kill step to reduce microbes. In order to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses due to fresh produce, the FDA believes that each person in the food chain, including consumers, must take responsibility to minimize the risk of foodborne illness.

Do you need to wash raw meats before cooking at home?

No, when consumers purchase raw meats or poultry from the grocery store, they do not need to wash the raw meats before cooking. Cooking is the most effective way to kill

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microbes that cause illness. Although research studies showed that washing raw meats may reduce numbers of bacteria in a home setting, the washing process increases chances of cross-contamination of disease causing bacteria from raw meats/raw poultry to other ready-to-eat products and food contact surface in the home kitchens. Many studies have revealed that most consumers frequently use unsafe food-handling practices at home. When handling raw meats and poultry at home, consumers must use special care not to cross-contaminate other products.

In the food service setting, however, the recommendations may be different from the home setting regarding washing raw meats or raw poultry. If the standard procedures indicate that raw meats and poultry must be washed before the cooking process, it is perfectly acceptable. This is because:

1. The food service establishment must follow the [FDA Food Code](#) and other regulations to prevent cross-contamination of the disease causing microorganisms within their establishments and to provide safe foods to customers, and
2. In the food service setting, the workers should receive training to handle the procedures.

Consumers need to recognize these differences between the two recommendations.

Do you need to wash raw produce before eating or cooking at home?

Yes, you definitely need to always wash your fresh produce before consumption or cooking at home. Produce needs to be washed, scrubbed, and peeled before being consumed or cooked. Because produce constitutes a variety of plant parts, specific handling techniques of each of the produce are different. Consumers can find information for safe handling of produce in [Fresh Produce: Safe Handling Practices for Consumers](#).

New research evaluating the efficacy of home washing methods for controlling microbial contamination on fresh produce suggests that consumers should wash produce under cold running tap water with rubbing and brushing where applicable. This method can reduce bacteria on the surface of produce.

Do you need to wash ready-to-eat fresh cut produce before eating or cooking?

The answer can be “Yes” or “No” depending on the situation.

No, ready-to-eat, pre-washed, bagged, produce can be used without further washing, if kept refrigerated and does not exceed the “use-by” date.

Consumers can reduce their risk of illness from fresh-cut produce by following safe handling practices such as:

1. Refrigerating the product after purchase;
2. Using only clean hands, utensils or dishes in preparing the product; and
3. Discarding the product when the "use-by" date has expired.

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Yes, if consumers desire to wash the ready-to-eat fresh cut produce again. If consumers decide to wash the produce again, they should always wash the produce under running water.

Yes, if the pre-cut or pre-washed produce is sold in open bags or containers.

When washing produce, consumers should **always** wash the produce under running water. Washing produce under running water is recommended over soaking the produce because soaking fresh produce in water increases the potential of cross-contamination.

What about commercial produce washes? Are these products effective?

Commercial produce cleaning solutions may help remove additional dirt on some produce, but the effectiveness of these washes is not standardized. Further, do not use antibacterial soap or detergent to wash produce because the FDA does not have safety data regarding possible residue left on the produce from the products.

Take home message

1. Do not wash raw meats and poultry purchased from the store, but cook them to a proper temperature.
2. Prevent cross-contamination by following safe food handling guidelines and practices.
3. Wash your produce before consumption or cooking to reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

Source: Amy Simonne, PhD, Assistant Professor, Food Safety and Quality, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Safe Holiday Food Tips

After all the gifts have been opened, friends and family have gone home, what do you do with all the leftovers? Here are some safe storage tips.

- Hot foods should be kept at 140°F or above. Cold foods should be kept at 40°F or below.
- Discard all perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles, left at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in air temperatures above 90°F.
- Cut cooked turkey off the bone, and refrigerate it and other food items in separate, shallow containers.
- Cooked turkey slices will keep 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator or up to 4 months in the freezer.
- Stuffing and gravy will keep 1 to 2 days in the refrigerator or up to 1 month in the freezer.
- Most other dishes will keep 3 to 4 days.

Caregiver Health

The challenges caregivers face every day often go unnoticed by many of the world. These challenges include everything from getting a loved one to doctor's appointments, to giving a bath or providing a meal. In fact, caring for a loved one can even cause caregivers to overlook their own health – including going to their own medical appointments.

A 2005 study by a Commonwealth fund, a private foundation that works to improve access to health care, found that more than half of adults caring for a sick or disabled family member have health problems of their own.

When it comes to their health, caregivers are less likely than their peers to take steps to prevent or control chronic disease. By taking care of their own health, caregivers can be better prepared to care for their loved ones longer. Here are a few tips to help caregivers ensure that they take care of themselves:

- Get an influenza (flu) vaccine. The Center for Disease Control recommends that caregivers of elders get one each year. Additionally, one pneumococcal vaccination, for most caregivers, will last a lifetime, and a tetanus booster is recommended every ten years.
- Don't neglect your health. Get a yearly check-up and the recommended cancer screenings (mammogram, cervical screening, etc.). Tell your doctor that you are a caregiver and let him or her know if you feel depressed or nervous.
- Take time each day to do something for you. Read; listen to music; telephone friends or exercise.
- Eat healthy foods and do not skip meals.
- Find caregiver resources in your area early. You may not need their information or services now, but will have them when you need them. Don't be afraid to ask for help. And don't do it all yourself. Use your family, friends or neighbors for support. Family may help share Caregiving tasks. Friends and neighbors may help with other chores.

Caregiving can take a toll on you! Research suggests that the physical and emotional demands on caregivers put them at greater risk for health problems.

- Caregivers are more at risk for infectious diseases, such as colds and flu, and chronic diseases, such as heart problems, diabetes, and cancer.
- Depression is twice as common among caregivers compared to non-caregivers.

Source: Elder Update May/June 2006. Administration on Aging within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources.

Time Management for Busy People

How often do you say, "I'd like to do that, but I don't have the time?" Learning to manage time is a problem for many people. Employers, employees, students, and home managers alike complain that there are never enough hours in the day to get things done.

The essence of time management is to put some things first, others second, and still others third. Set goals and order them from most to least important. Then develop a time plan for meeting them. Control your actions in order to make the most of your time. Learning to manage time means learning to manage yourself.

Time management is not a device to make you work harder and longer. Rather, it is a means to help you "work smarter" to accomplish your work more easily and rapidly. Management of your time can allow for work, rest, leisure, and social activities. It isn't necessary to become a "workaholic" just because you manage all of your time.

How's Your Time Sense?

Individuals vary widely in their awareness and utilization of time. What we accomplish during a 24-hour period depends on our own motivation, our energy, our skills and abilities, and our other resources. The first step in improving your time management is to take a look at your own time patterns.

Prime Time. Your prime time is the time during which you are most energetic and efficient. We all function on different "biological clocks." Some people feel most energetic and do their best work early in the morning. Others wake up and get moving very slowly, with top efficiency in the late afternoon. Still others are "night owls" who accomplish their work most easily in the middle of the night. Identify your prime time and plan to spend it on your creative thinking and most demanding jobs, whenever possible.

Available Time. During some periods of the day and week, you have to be available to be with others. For example, busy executives must schedule time to meet with office personnel, managers, production workers, and others under their supervision.

Think of yourself as a management executive! Set aside some of your available time for other members of your family or people with whom you work. Also try to reduce interruptions during your best working hours. You can accomplish twice as much in one quiet hour as in two regular hours of frequent interruptions.

Analyze Your Time Problems.

Do you need to learn to balance the use of your time? Time is usually divided among work, rest, and leisure activities. Balance means there must be time for work outside the home, for developing and maintaining happy family relationships, for rest and sleep, and for individual activities, such as playing tennis.

Is your primary need to accept the limitation of time? During some periods in our lives, there is clearly not enough time to do everything we would like to do. This is particularly important for parents of small children and for individuals trying to combine home management with holding an outside job, volunteer activities, or going to school. In this case, we must recognize limited time and learn to omit less important activities in order to free up time for those which are essential.

Is minimizing work time your basic objective? It may be necessary to simplify your jobs. The family may plan simpler meals, modify standards, or use easier maintenance materials. It may be necessary to hire help, or use commercial services.

Is your primary need to find some time for yourself? A high priority sometimes must be assigned to spending some time on yourself, to clarify your own values and feelings, to start or develop a hobby or work interest, even to preserve your sanity! Improving your ability to say “No” and developing clear communication with others may be a crucial part of time management. Saying “No” takes practice. Remember that saying “No” to one activity means saying “Yes” to another, more important one.

Set Your Goals

In order to manage your time efficiently, you must first decide on your goals. Personal, professional, social, family, and financial goals are all important and all require time in which to achieve them. Most of us want to work toward more than one goal. The essential requirement is that you think it through and decide what you want to accomplish. Decide which people, organizations, and causes are more important to you than others. After deciding what your goals are, write them down. Otherwise your goals may remain unclear and you’ll never know whether you’ve achieved them.

Select activities that will help you accomplish your goals. Realizing that you can’t do everything all at one time, you may want to divide large, long-term projects into a series of short-term projects that can be completed one by one in more manageable periods of time. Many smaller steps, or short-term objectives, must be accomplished in order to reach the long-range final goal. Give high priority to meeting deadlines for this series of short-run tasks. Otherwise, time is frittered away and no progress is made.

Where Does Your Time Go Now?

Now that you’ve decided what is important to you and in which order you want to accomplish your goals, take a hard look at where your time is going now. Keep a log for several days to find out exactly where your time goes. This time log will provide a record of both job and leisure activities that should be considered in planning how to use your time more efficiently. Most people are surprised to learn how much time they actually spend doing trivial things.

You will probably find that you are very busy at certain times of the day and certain days of the week. These busy periods, or “peak loads” can be managed by temporarily reducing time on other activities and by advance planning.

You will also find that you have a number of routine tasks that must be done at times dictated by conditions beyond your control. You must meet certain “deadlines,” such as the time school or work begins and ends, meal times, time for meetings or recreational activities, and times when you must coordinate your activities with those of others.

In addition, you may find unexpectedly large amounts of time to schedule as you wish. These flexible time periods are those which you must utilize efficiently in order to make time work for you.

Typical Time Wasters

Some common time wasters will also show up in your time log. In both home and the business world, common time wasters are the telephone, unexpected visitors, meetings, junk mail, putting things off, not knowing what to do next, and clutter.

Other reasons that time goes by with nothing to show for it are personal disorganization, lack of priorities, procrastination, excessive television watching, and over-involvement in routine details.

Design Your Own Time Plan

A time plan can be a general outline of things you want to do in the near future or it can be a highly detailed schedule. Few people can keep complete track of all goals, all plans, and all activities, so get some paper and make some lists.

The easiest time plan is simply a “List of Projects,” large and small, to be done as time is available and as the spirit moves you to accomplish them. When you have a lot of time, this list of reminders may be enough.

Another time plan is a list of “Series of Projects,” which includes time sequences. You have to decide which activities must be done first, which second, and so forth.

A third plan, a “Time Schedule,” is detailed. It includes both a sequence of projects and estimates of time necessary for doing them. Making out the schedule forces you to take a look at your entire day or week and make some true decisions as to the importance of various activities. Recognize that while planning takes time at the beginning, it saves much more time in the end.

Making Your Plan Work

No time plan works miracles. There will always be interruptions and problems. However, advanced planning can usually assist you in carrying out the task instead of becoming too distracted.

- If you are going to have unusually heavy demands on your time and energy, plan in advance those ways to meet the peak load periods.
- Start working early enough to avoid a last minute rush.
- Complete other regular jobs in advance so more time will be available for special needs.

Time Management Strategies

Regardless of the time plan you select, strategies of managing time can be helpful. Try the following:

- Make and use a “Things To Do” list everyday. List and do them in order of importance.
- Keep a notebook and calendar with you all the time. Use them for listing tasks to be completed, appointments, and shopping needs.
- Use your waiting time. Accomplish small chores while you wait, such as reading, writing letters, or making a shopping list. Look at waiting time as a gift of time rather than a waste of time.
- Guard yourself against agreeing to do things that you don’t have time to do well. Learn how to say “No” or “I really don’t have time to do a good job, it wouldn’t be fair of me to take this on.” Be firm!
- Don’t let unplanned activities drain away your own plan for using the day. Refuse calls you don’t want to take; don’t let others drop in, especially when you are taking advantage of your best work period; and if you want friends to call, schedule a given hour of the day when your door is “open.” Reasonable people will understand and respect you if you ask them to make an appointment.
- Organize an office in your home. Collect and file records and supplies needed frequently in order to reduce frustration and lost time.
- Concentrate on one thing at a time. Put all your energy into the task at hand. Tune out interruptions. Don’t waste time thinking of all the things that have to be done.

Remember that 80 percent of the value of work or of life comes from about 20 percent of your activities. Use time management as a tool to set your goals in order of importance, to identify the activities that help to achieve them, and to permit you to “work smarter, not harder.”

Source: Nayda I. Torres and Katey Walker, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Sleep Tips for Your Children

Here are some important things you can do to ensure that your child gets enough sleep:

- Set a regular time for bed each night and stick to it.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, such as giving your child a warm bath or reading a story.
- Make after-dinner playtime a relaxing time. Too much activity close to bedtime can keep children awake.
- Avoid feeding children big meals close to bedtime.
- Avoid giving children anything with caffeine less than six hours before bedtime.
- Set the bedroom temperature so that it's comfortable – not too warm and not too cold.
- Make sure the bedroom is dark. If necessary, use a small nightlight.
- Keep the noise level low.

Source: National Institutes of Health

A Juicy Story – And A Nutritious One

When you're thirsty, a refreshing, fruity beverage often hits the spot. Drink 100 percent juice for the greatest nutritional benefit.

Good examples include pink grapefruit juice and orange juice. Choosing juice for nutrition means reading the label. Check to be sure that the product is 100 percent juice. Read the ingredient list carefully to make sure that juice is one of the first ingredients.

As with most fruits and vegetables, the more colorful the juice, the more nutrients it contains that may help protect against some cancers, heart disease and other chronic health conditions.

As more and more juices are fortified with calcium, you can double your benefit. But, since juices lack fiber, try to keep your intake to one serving daily.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Florida Food Fare

By Mary King

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Sweet Potato

Description: Sweet potatoes are the edible root of a vine in the morning glory family and native to the tropical areas of the Americas. There are many varieties of sweet potato but the two that are widely grown commercially are a pale sweet potato and the darker-skinned variety, sometimes erroneously called a "yam". The true yam is not related to the sweet potato. The pale sweet potato has a thin, light yellow skin and pale yellow flesh. When cooked it has a dry, crumbly texture, similar to that of a white baking potato. The flavor is not as sweet as the darker variety. The darker variety has a thicker, dark orange skin with a vivid orange flesh that's very sweet. It has a very moist texture when cooked. These yellow or orange tubers are elongated with ends that taper to a point.

Availability: Fresh sweet potatoes are available sporadically throughout the year. In this area, the months of May through September are the peak of the growing season. They are also available in the supermarket year round, frozen or canned. Fresh sweet potatoes may also be home canned or frozen for longer storage.

Nutritional Value: Sweet potatoes are relatively low in calories and have no fat or cholesterol. They are rich in beta-carotene, having five times the recommended daily allowance of vitamin A in one sweet potato, as well as loaded with potassium. One medium sweet potato, baked in the skin, weighing approximately 114 g, yields: 117 calories, 3.4g fiber, 31mg calcium, 396mg potassium, 28mg vitamin C, 25.7mcg folate, 62.7mg phosphorus and 24877 IU vitamin A.

Selection and Care: When buying fresh sweet potatoes choose those that are small to medium with tight, unwrinkled skins, with no blemishes or bruises. Sweet potatoes generally do not store well except under ideal conditions, and bruised ones deteriorate rapidly. In a dry, dark, cool place, 55 degrees F., they can last up to 3 or 4 weeks. Otherwise, store in a cool dark place and use within a week. Do not refrigerate.

Preparation and Use: Sweet potatoes, particularly the pale variety, can be substituted for regular potatoes in most recipes. They can be prepared in a variety of ways including baking, boiling and sautéing. Sweet potatoes also make a delicious and nutritious ingredient in soups, breads and desserts.

Orange Glazed Sweet Potatoes

2 teaspoons grated orange rind	2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon melted butter	Pinch of salt
1/4 cup granulated sugar	6 medium sized sweet potatoes
1 cup orange juice	peeled, boiled, cut in 1-inch cubes
1 tablespoon cornstarch	

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. In a medium sized saucepan, over medium heat, combine all the ingredients except the potatoes. Heat for 6 to 8 minutes until hot and slightly thickened. Place the potatoes in a greased 8-inch square glass baking dish and pour the orange juice mixture over them. Cover and bake 30 minutes, basting occasionally. Serves 6-8.