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



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Heart-Healthy Tip: Put Down That Salt Shaker

Research shows that excessive sodium intake is linked with high blood pressure or hypertension in some people.

- Dietary recommendations suggest avoiding too much sodium. The suggested range is 1,100 to 3,300 mg per day.
- Limit prepackaged, canned and frozen foods which often contain high amounts of sodium.
- High-sodium foods include those that are pickled, in cocktail sauce, smoked, in broth or au jus, in a tomato base or in soy or teriyaki sauce. When preparing your food, consider replacing salt with these flavorful herbs and spices:

HERB/SPICE

Basil
Bay leaf
Chives
Cinnamon
Cloves
Cumin
Curry
Dill
Ginger
Marjoram
Mustard
Paprika
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage
Savory

ENHANCES

Tomato-based sauces and dishes
Braised and stewed dishes
Salads, stews and soups
Desserts and beverages
Meats and vegetables
Marinades, chili and tomato sauce
Meats, fish, poultry and vegetables
Seafood, salads, sauces, and dips
Stir-fried poultry, lamb or meat
Meats, fish and vegetables
Marinades and fish stews
Potatoes, chicken and fish
Stocks and soups
Roasted or grilled lamb, chicken
Fish, lamb, pork or poultry
Beans, stews and lamb dishes

Source: University of Florida Institute on Aging

A Gift That Keeps Giving

As you carefully wrap each gift this holiday season, do you think about which ones the children will break, become tired of or outgrow in a few weeks?

Well, a lasting gift for a child, one that could grow in value, might be a good choice. In fact, there is an easy way for you to help a child get a head start in the future and at the same time help you save taxes.

If this appeals to you, explore the “gifts to minors” laws. People often don’t know about them. But they are one type of tax shelter you may be able to afford. And the procedure is not complicated.

You can invest for children in several ways. Basically, the choices include government bonds, mutual funds with all types of investment objectives, stocks, corporate bonds, savings certificates or accounts. The investment is registered in the child’s name and when he/she comes of age 18, in Florida, he will get the funds you have invested over the years. The child can use the money in any way he wants to. This money can be spent on higher education, a down payment on a house, or even to start a business. It is the child’s nest egg.

If you take advantage of these laws, your gifts can help you save on your taxes. Since the child owns the investment, that is you have given up all control of the investment, any income it earns, such as dividends, interest or capital gains, is really income to the child. But the child’s tax rate is probably much lower than yours, perhaps even zero. This will lower your taxes, especially if you have been putting money away for the child in your own name, collecting interest on it and paying taxes on that income.

You can give up to \$11,000 yearly to anyone without paying a gift tax. A husband and wife together can give up to \$22,000 every year to any one person and to as many different people as you like without paying gift taxes. So you can make these gifts to as many people as you like.

Of course this sounds pretty expensive. But you can invest for a child with much smaller amounts. In fact, with some investments such as a U.S. Savings bond or savings accounts you can invest as little as \$50.

For a deposit of \$500 or less you can give the child a Certificate of Deposit, shares of mutual funds, or stocks. And you can add as little as \$25 or \$50 to these investments on special occasions such as birthdays. Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, in fact, any adult can invest for children under these gifts to minor’s laws. Or you can prepay college tuition. If you are interested or have questions, talk to a financial advisor. He or she can tell you how to set up this type of a gift and inform you of any other requirements. They can also tell you about the benefits of the different investments.

Source: Dr. Josephine Turner, CFP, University of Florida

Why is Obesity a Health Problem?

Why should we care about managing our family's weight? There's been a lot of talk lately about how much heavier Americans have been getting since the 1970s. Today, approximately 65 percent of adults are overweight or obese. Sixty-one million adult Americans are considered obese. What's more, children are getting heavier as well. The percentage of children and teens who are overweight has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Today, about 17 percent of American children ages 2-19 are overweight.

Extra pounds can add up to health problems, often for life. In adults, overweight and obesity are linked to increased risk of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers, and other chronic conditions.

For children, overweight also increases their health risks. Type 2 diabetes was once rare in American children — now it accounts for 8 to 45 percent of newly diagnosed diabetes cases in children and adolescents. And overweight children are more likely to become overweight or obese as adults.

The American environment

A person's weight is the result of many things working together — genes, metabolism (the way your body converts food and oxygen into energy), behavior and environment.

Changes in our environment that make it harder to engage in healthy behavior have a lot to do with our overall increase in weight over the past few decades.

- We're an in-the-car and sit-behind-a-desk society. For many of us — parents and children alike — daily life doesn't involve a lot of physical activity. If we want to be active, we have to make an effort.
- Food is everywhere, along with messages telling us to eat and drink. We can get something to eat in places where it was never available before — like the gas station. Going out to eat or buying carryout is easy.
- Food **portions** at restaurants and at home are bigger than they used to be.

Becoming overweight doesn't happen overnight. It happens over time when the energy we take in by eating is not in balance with the energy we burn from physical activity. However, there are things we can do to prevent overweight and obesity. Check out this web site:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/whats-we-can/>

Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and National Cancer Institute.

Portion Distortion and Serving Size

What is a portion?

A "portion" is the amount of food that you choose to eat for a meal or snack. It can be big or small — you decide.

What is a serving?

A "serving" is a measured amount of food or drink, such as one slice of bread or 1 cup of milk. Some foods that most people consume as a single serving actually contain multiple serving sizes (e.g., 20-ounce soda or a 3-ounce bag of chips). Nutrition recommendations use serving sizes to help people know how much of different types of foods they should eat to get the nutrients they need. The Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods also lists a serving size. The serving sizes on packaged foods are not always the same as those included in nutrition recommendations. However, serving sizes are standardized to make it easier to compare similar foods. To get an idea of how big recommended serving sizes really are, check out the [NHLBI Serving Size Card](#). And, for help on using the Nutrition Facts label, visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Web site at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html>

Portion distortion

Balancing your family's energy is challenging today because average portion sizes have grown over the past 20 years. It's challenging to find a small portion in a restaurant these days. The plate arrives and there's often enough food on it for two or even three people.

These ever-larger portions are changing what Americans think of as a "normal" portion, and that affects how much we eat at home as well. Cutting back on portion size is a great way to help keep calories in check. It doesn't take lots of calories to disturb energy balance.

Still aren't sure how much portion sizes have changed? Check out these examples:

20 Years Ago			Today		
	Portion	Calories		Portion	Calories
Bagel	3" diameter	140	Bagel	6" diameter	350
Cheeseburger	1	333	Cheeseburger	1	590
Spaghetti w/meatballs	1 cup sauce 3 sm meatballs	500	Spaghetti w/meatballs	2 cups sauce 3 lg meatballs	1,020
Soda	6.5 ounces	85	Soda	20 ounces	250
Blueberry muffin	1.5 ounces	210	Blueberry muffin	5 ounces	500

Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and National Cancer Institute.

South Florida Tropicals: Boniato

Background: The boniato or tropical sweet potato, (*Ipomoea batatas*), also known as batatas or camote, is a member of the morning glory family. It is extremely popular in South Florida, especially among Hispanics. Although all forms of the sweet potato originated in Central America, the boniato was cultivated as early as 1000 B.C. in Columbia and Peru. A substantial acreage is now planted in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The boniato is often considered a cross between a baking potato and a sweet potato in flavor and color. It is easily distinguished from other sweet potatoes by its pink to burgundy-colored skin and its white or cream-colored flesh. It is also much fluffier, drier and less sweet than the yellow or orange-fleshed sweet potato.

Availability: Available year-round in South Florida.

Selection: The boniato should be rock-hard, with no soft or moldy spots. The skin may be pinkish, purplish, cream, reddish, and patchier-looking than the orange or yellow-fleshed sweet potato.

Storage: Store at room temperature in a ventilated area for no more than a few days. Boniato is sensitive to cold and should not be stored below 55°F. Since home refrigerators generally have lower temperatures (40-45°F), refrigerator storage is not recommended. Because freshly harvested boniato is available throughout the year, the crop is not cured for long-term storage as the common sweet potato is. It is, therefore, prone to bruising and rapid spoilage. Cooked boniato does not usually keep well, it will become dry.

Uses: Boniato can be used in the same manner as the orange or yellow-fleshed sweet potato, although it will not be as sweet. Bake, boil, roast, fry, steam, sauté, mash, puree, cream, or combine in custards and flans, puddings, pies and muffins. Boniato has a subtle flavor, and is easily overwhelmed by heavy seasonings. Peeled boniato must be dropped into cold water immediately, as the flesh discolors quickly. When cooking, keep the boniato completely covered with water, or grey and blue blotches may appear.

Nutritive Value: One-half cup of boniato contains: 20 grams carbohydrate; 90 calories; 1 gram protein; 12 milligrams of vitamin C; 612 milligrams of potassium and a trace of fat.

Yield: One boniato yields 2 servings.

Basic Preparation: **Boil:** Cut large boniatos in half or thirds. Place in a pot of boiling water. Boil until completely cooked (when fork tender). Drain, peel, and serve at once. **Bake:** Scrub 1 boniato per person and place directly on the oven rack, as you would a regular baked potato. Bake at 400°F for approximately 1 hour. Because the skin becomes crunchy and hard, it is important to check the center for doneness. **Microwave:** Microwave the same as baked potatoes, with cooking time between 6-9 minutes.

Source: Amy Simonne, Linda B. Boboff, Anne Cooper, Sandra Poirier, Mildred Murphy, Mary Jo Oswald and Chris Procise, University of Florida

15 Ways to Make a Difference

Everyone wants to make a difference in the world – but many aren't sure how to get started. Use this list as inspiration to start today.

1. Donate your old clothing or toys to a local homeless or women's shelter
2. Clean up the litter in a local playground or along a river.
3. Write a letter or send a card to a soldier serving overseas.
4. Volunteer at the library or at an adult education center.
5. Rake leaves or shovel snow for an elderly neighbor or single parent.
6. Recycle.
7. Donate a bag of groceries to a food bank.
8. Participate in a charitable event, such as a 3K walk for a cause you believe in
9. Become an organ donor. (Remember to tell your family members about your wishes.)
10. Take a care package to a shut-in neighbor.
11. "Adopt a family" during the holidays, donating gifts or providing the makings of a sit-down dinner.
12. Write a thank-you letter to a teacher or coach who made a difference in your life.
13. Donate your used computer to a local school.
14. Volunteer for an organization you believe in, such as an animal shelter or children's hospital.
15. Write a letter to the editor or notify your local political representative about an issue you believe in.

Source: Mayo Clinic Health Quest

A Variety of Options with Chicken

Variety, enjoyment and flavor are key components to healthful meals. When you think chicken, how does it measure up?

Chicken offers tremendous versatility due to its very mild taste. Chicken can be roasted, baked, oven fried, grilled, stewed or even microwaved. For variety, season chicken with different herbs such as tarragon, chives, or basil, try teriyaki, parmesan, lemon, Cajun or BBQ.

Boneless chicken breast cooks quickly and makes a great addition to salads, pasta, stir-fried vegetables or mixed with fruit for chicken salad.

To enjoy chicken safely, cook until it reaches 160 degrees Fahrenheit or until juices run clear. If there are leftovers, wrap them tightly and store in the refrigerator for no longer than three to four days or in the freezer for up to four months.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Lighten up Your Holiday Baking

Simple substitutions can make your recipes healthful without sacrificing taste.

Many recipes call for more sugar than is really necessary. Begin by cutting the amount by one-quarter to one-half. Dried fruits, such as raisins, dates or cranberries will add natural sweetness when you are cutting back on sugar. For cakes, fruit breads and muffins, use frozen apple juice concentrate, thawed to provide sweetness. Compensate for the extra liquid it adds by substituting it for half the milk (but not the eggs or oil) in a recipe.

Many holiday recipes contain saturated fat from lots of butter, cream and eggs. Healthier fats can be substituted in smaller amounts. Use $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of canola oil or “light” olive oil instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of margarine (a source of trans fats). “Light” olive oil has no detectable “olive” taste when baked with other ingredients.

Although a small amount of fat provides texture and flavor, you probably won’t need as much as traditional recipes require. Adjust your recipes to be lighter and leaner by substituting unsweetened applesauce or other puréed fruit for equal parts of oil or butter. Because oil is in a more liquid form than butter, you can substitute less fruit purée or less canola oil for butter. To replace cream, try low-fat evaporated milk or fat free half and half. Substitute two egg whites for one whole egg or try packaged egg substitute, if desired.

Many holiday recipes call for all-purpose white “enriched” flour. However, white flour has been refined and stripped of its natural fiber and some nutrients. A few simple ingredient changes can return the benefits whole grains provide. Begin by replacing half of the all-purpose flour with whole-wheat pastry flour, made from soft wheat berries. It has a lighter, finer texture than regular whole-wheat flour, making it perfect for cakes and cookies.

Other whole-grain flours — like barley, oat and brown rice flour — can replace $\frac{1}{4}$ of the flour in a recipe. For a crunchy texture and nutty taste, substitute $\frac{1}{4}$ of the all-purpose flour with nutritious wheat germ. Oats impart a hearty chewy texture and can replace $\frac{1}{3}$ of the all-purpose flour used in muffin and cake recipes. Rolled oats may be puréed in your blender to make coarse oat flour to substitute for all-purpose flour.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter

Holidays the Healthy Way

The holidays are in full swing, which means lots of family, fun and food. But it doesn't have to mean extra pounds. Even holiday treats can fit into a healthy eating plan. The key is balance and moderation.

To avoid holiday weight gain, balance the calories you consume with the calories you burn. Physical activity and moderate food choices will help. The tips below are gifts you can give yourself and your family to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Let the Holiday Spirit Move You!

If you make your family time active, you will become healthier and have fun doing so. Be adventurous and try something new, but also choose something you enjoy.

- Stick to your regular exercise routine as much as possible. Especially during the holidays, plan your physical activity routine in advance (don't leave it up to chance). Mark it on the calendar and consider it as important as any other appointment. Get at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity daily, and more if possible.
- Cut back on your family's television viewing time. Limit the number of hours your children spend playing video games. Instead make a new holiday tradition. Take a brisk walk around the neighborhood to see the holiday decorations or grab your bike, walking shoes or snow shoes and head out to the nearest trails or national park.
- Play some backyard football or Frisbee with children and adults before the big holiday dinner or during football half-time.
- Dance or exercise to your favorite holiday music.
- Make a New Year's resolution with friends to start a daily walking group.
- Be physically active to avoid or relieve the holiday stress.

Healthy Holiday Eating

- Overcome the urge to overeat. Standing by the buffet table is temptation to overeat. Remember holiday parties are a time to celebrate with family and friends, not just food.
- It's easy to overindulge during the holidays. Make sure to watch portion sizes and select one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods.
- Leave those extra calories behind – limit your intake of foods high in fat or added sugar.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Holidays the Healthy Way

Holidays are a great time to enjoy a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.

- Bowls of fresh fruit are a festive and sweet substitute for candy or chocolates.
- Remember calories add up! This is especially true during the holidays when we snack more. For a healthy snack, choose a piece of fresh fruit.

(continued next page)

- You've tried the leftover turkey sandwich; now try the leftover turkey salad! Add a few pieces of turkey to a generous portion of mixed greens, cucumbers, mushrooms, peppers, or any other vegetables you like. Sprinkle with dried cranberries for that authentic holiday taste.
- Check out <http://cdc.gov/5aday> for great ideas to serve your guests a variety of fruits and vegetables!

A Present Packed with a Colorful Variety

- For a great holiday gift, try going to your farmer's market or grocery store and selecting fresh fruits and vegetables. Place all your tasty treats in a basket, and you have a present packed with tasty fruits and vegetables.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Seven Ways to Get a Jump Start on Your Taxes

Earlier is better when it comes to working on your taxes. Taxpayers are encouraged to get a head start on tax preparation, especially since early filers avoid the last minute rush and get their refunds sooner.

Here are seven easy ways to get a good jump on your taxes long before the April deadline is here:

1. **Gather your records in advance.** Make sure you have all the records you need, including W-2s and 1099s. Don't forget to save a copy for your files.
2. **Get the right forms.** They're available around the clock on the IRS Web site, IRS.gov.
3. **Take your time.** Don't forget to leave room for a coffee break when filling out your tax return as rushing can mean making a mistake.
4. **Double-check your math and verify all Social Security numbers.** These are among the most common errors found on tax returns. Taking care will reduce your chance of hearing from the IRS and speed up your refund.
5. **Get the fastest refund.** When you file early, you receive your refund faster. When you choose direct deposit, you receive your refund sooner than waiting for a check.
6. **E-filing is easy.** E-filing catches math problems, provides confirmation your return has been received and gives you a faster refund.
7. **Don't panic.** If you have a problem or a question, remember the IRS is there to help. Try the IRS Web site at IRS.gov or call the IRS customer service number at 1-800-829-1040.

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Washington, DC

Your Child's Temperament

From birth, children have a natural style of interacting with or reacting to people, places and things that child development professionals and psychologists refer to as temperament traits. These traits are influenced by our environment, but the basic underlying temperament has been shown to persist into our golden years.

In the early 1900's it was believed that children were born as "blank slates," just waiting for parents to impress upon them the manner in which they were to behave. Since the late 1950's, many scientific studies of temperament have continued to show that children's health and development are influenced by temperament. We all know children who are much more challenging to deal with than other children from birth. The understanding that many behavior tendencies are inborn – and not the result of bad parenting – is a very important insight parents can gain from learning how their children react to their environment.

Clinicians use a series of interview, observations, and parental questionnaires to measure nine temperament traits using a scale indicating mild to intense response or reactions to the following areas: Activity, Rhythmicity, Approach/Withdrawal, Adaptability, Intensity, Mood, Persistence/Attention Span, Distractibility and Sensory Threshold. Once the scales are scored the results are combined to form three basic types of temperaments in kids.

Easy or flexible – usually calm, happy, regular in sleeping and eating habits, adaptable and not easily upset.

Difficult, active or feisty – often fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, fearful of new people and situations, easily upset by noise and commotion, high strung and intense in their reactions.

Slow to warm up or cautious – relatively inactive and fussy, tend to withdraw or to react negatively to new situations, but their reactions gradually become more positive with continuous exposure to the person or environment.

Parents need to get a clear picture of their own and their child's temperament. Respect your child's uniqueness without comparing him/her to others. Communicate. Explain decisions and motives. Listen to your child's view point and encourage teamwork on coming up with solutions to problems. Set limits to help your child develop self-control. Respect opinions but remain firm on important limits for behavior. Be a good role model!

Source: Gulf Coast Edition, Living Well in Florida, Winter 2006

Bringing a Dish to the Holiday Party

How to travel safely with prepared foods

In our "oh-so-busy" world, holiday entertaining is often a communal affair, with friends and relatives contributing to the feast.

But bringing a dish to share can be an unintentional invitation to unwanted guests – bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. To be sure these party crashers don't make it through the door, Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education and Meetings, The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips for traveling safely with prepared foods.

Prepare with Care

Safe food travel starts with safe food preparation. That means clean hands, utensils and food preparation surfaces. Use hot water and soap to effectively get rid of bacteria. Thoroughly wash your hands before and after food preparation. Never ever go directly from working with raw meat, poultry or seafood to working with other foods without washing your equipment – cutting boards, dishes and utensils – and your hands with soap and hot water. If you don't do this, you run the risk of transferring the bacteria that live in these uncooked foods to other items on your menu.

Cooked Foods

Divide cooked foods, including meats, gravy, dressing, stews and casseroles, into small containers and refrigerate or freeze immediately, as appropriate to the item. Using multiple small containers, rather than one large one, has many benefits. Cooked food will cool or freeze faster and more evenly, and can be thawed or thoroughly reheated in less time. When it's time to travel, smaller containers are easier to fit in a cooler. And don't worry if they take up more space – that's a good thing. A fully packed cooler maintains its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.

Uncooked Foods

Even uncooked foods require some special attention. If you're bringing raw fruits or vegetables, remember that they don't receive the safety benefits that cooking provides.

- Before purchasing or packing these items, check for visual signs of spoilage. These include unusual odors or colors, or shriveled, moldy or bruised items.
- If possible, rinse just before preparing and serving. Use running water. If standing water is used, the microorganisms that have been rinsed off one item can be transferred to another.
- If you need to bring them ready-to-eat, rinse, then blot dry with a paper towel and pack in containers or plastic bags. Make sure there is no excess liquid in the containers. Store them in the refrigerator until it's time to leave, and then pop them in the cooler.

Pack Safely

Pack the cooler as close to departure time as possible.

- If the cooler is only partially filled, pack the remaining space with more ice packs or plastic bags filled with ice cubes. Use sealable bags so that if the ice begins to melt, the liquid is contained.
- Once the cooler is packed, consider the best location in your car. If you are traveling in a warm climate with the air conditioner running, keep the cooler in the car; in a colder climate with the heat running, store it in the trunk.

Source: The Soap and Detergent Association

Florida Food Fare

by Jean Meadows and Mary King
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Sage

Description: Sage is a shrubby perennial herb which grows to about 2 feet and is a cousin to the vivid scarlet salvia. *Salvia officinalis* is the common grayed-green sage grown as the culinary herb. There are several others also used for culinary purposes with varying flavors; pineapple, tri-color, purple and variegated.

History: Sage originated on the shores of the Mediterranean, and now grows as a weed in Greece, Italy and Spain. It is one of the older and best known herbs. Early Romans and Greeks put sage in many dishes - and were probably the ones who originated sage stuffings for rich meats such as pork and duck. The Romans took it to England where the use of it has flourished since. "Eat sage in May, and you'll live for aye," is an old English jingle.

Availability: Cut fresh sage is usually available year round in local markets, although harder to find during the hot summer months. It can be grown in an herb garden or potted and will thrive most of the year. If potted, it can be pulled inside during cold winter snaps and will need to be protected during the summer from too much hot sun - in partial shade or north side of house.

Nutritional Value: Sage, like most herbs, is very low in sodium and calories, so it can be used for flavoring in low-fat, low-sodium diets. Sage is high in vitamin A, calcium and potassium, but since it has such a strong flavor, the amounts used in most recipes are minute and do not contain much nutrition.

Selection and Care: Fresh sage leaves will keep moistened and refrigerated for 10-14 days. The leaves can be sprinkled with water and kept in a plastic bag or sprigs of sage can be kept in a glass or small jar of water and refrigerated. For the best quality of dried sage the leaves should be taken before the plants reach the blooming stage. Clippings can be tied in very small bunches and should be dried quickly over the stove or spread in a shady well-ventilated place. Leaves should then be stored in airtight containers to preserve the flavor.

Basic Uses: Sage is used primarily in stuffings for poultry, fish and other meats, sausages, soups and chowders. It also compliments the flavors of pork, beef, veal, lima beans, onion, eggplant, tomatoes, cheese and potatoes. Sage is often an ingredient in marinades and sauces and even used in potpourri.

Recipe:

Walnut Sage Pate

1/2 cup chopped walnuts	2 cups cooked lentils
1/4 pound silken low-fat tofu	2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup fresh sage, chopped, stems removed	1/4 teaspoon white pepper
3 crushed garlic cloves	1 teaspoon seasoning salt
	1 teaspoon tamari or low sodium soy sauce

Toast walnuts at 375 degrees F. for 8 - 10 minutes. Combine all ingredients in blender and puree until very smooth. Serve on bread or crackers or as a dip with fresh vegetables. Serves 8.