



**ENERGIZE YOUR LIFE!**  
**EAT HEALTHY-BE ACTIVE!**

This newsletter is produced by the *Nutrition Education Network of Washington* to enhance communication and coordination among those who educate Washington families about nutrition and food. *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

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**SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION**

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To access past issues, go to  
<http://nutrition.wsu.edu/take5/index.html>.

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**This Month's Focus: *Healthy, Happy Holidays***

December can be a busy month celebrating joyful holidays and sharing time with family and friends. It can also be a challenging month to balance calories, with so many tempting treats and foods that represent our food traditions. In the winter weather and short daylight hours, it can be hard to get outdoor exercise like walking and riding a bike. This month's issue of the *Energize Newsletter for Nutrition Educators* focuses on helping the people we serve to have healthy and happy holidays.



Gifts from the Kitchen Class  
Photo used with permission from  
WSU Clark County Extension.

**Gifts from the Kitchen** – Many people love to give and receive holiday treats and sweets, but enjoying these throughout the season can add more calories than we need. For people who want to give homemade food gifts on the healthier side, Sandy Brown of Washington State University (WSU) Clark County Extension offers an annual class, "Gifts from the Kitchen." She offers great ideas like these: dry rubs and seasoning mixes that are lower in sodium, layered colorful dry beans in a jar with a packet of herbs, flavored vinegars, and even dog

biscuit mix. She also has suggestions for giving ingredients along with a kitchen tool, such as a whole-wheat pancake mix with a skillet or flipper, nutritious soup ingredients with a crock pot, cinnamon cookie mix with a cookie cutter so that a parent and child can make these together. Sandy says it's not just about the food, but also the packaging. She combs thrift stores for bottles for flavored vinegars and clear jars for some of the mixes, saves spice jars and oatmeal containers to re-use, and cuts Christmas fabric to make bags for casserole or soup mixes. Sandy has offered these classes each holiday season for the past ten years to the general public, Head Start moms, seniors, Salvation Army, and teen parent groups. Debbie Fredericks at WSU Cowlitz County Extension also offers the classes. Although the recipes and packaging change from year to year, the intent is the same to offer healthful and inexpensive ideas for food gifts that are attractively packaged. (Contact for Gifts from the Kitchen Idea Book (\$4.00 plus mailing costs): Sandy Brown, WSU Clark County Extension Faculty, Food Safety and Nutrition, 360-397-6060 ext 5700, [browns@wsu.edu](mailto:browns@wsu.edu))



Cocoa Cones in Gifts from the Kitchen Class  
Photo used with permission from  
WSU Clark County Extension.

**What's the Typical Holiday Weight Gain?** – Most people would guess about five pounds. It may be hard to believe, but it appears that all people gain between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day is just one pound. Researchers found that although the gain was small, subjects didn't lose it later in the year, which may contribute to gradual weight gain over many years. Little research on holiday weight gain exists, yet most of us know, data or no data, that we eat more this time of year. (Source: Yanovski, JA et al, "A prospective study of holiday weight gain." *New England Journal of Medicine*, 342(12):861-867, March 2000.)

**Holiday Food Safety and Food Prep Links** – For a one-stop shop with links to sources of information for holiday food preparation, go to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's site, "Helpful winter holiday food preparation, food safety, and healthy eating links" at <http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/helpful-holiday-links>. Nearly anything you could imagine has a resource: food safety for "planned overs," using up foods in the fridge before heading out of town so food isn't wasted, ingredient substitutions for lower fat and sodium, sending food gifts to troops overseas, and what to do safely with your prepared food if guests have an emergency and the meal must be delayed or cancelled. For those of us in parts of Washington where electricity may go out during winter storms, there's a section on how to tell if the freezer power was off while you were away. One link offers suggestions for fixing quick meals with primarily canned ingredients, in case you are short on refrigerator space or if a storm prevents going to the store. For more holiday food ideas including recipes for food mixes in a jar and lists of red and green fruits and vegetables, go to <http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/cook-it-quick-newsletter-december-2011>. Another useful site for holiday food safety tips is [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org).

**Place Settings and Optical Illusions** – We have known that when people use larger dinner plates they serve themselves larger portions than when they use smaller plates. For that reason, one useful strategy to avoid large portions is to avoid large plates. New research suggests now that the color of the plate and the color of the tablecloth also matter. It's called the "Delboeuf illusion," described in 1865 by philosopher Franz Delboeuf, who found that if the same-size circle is placed inside two separate circles, one larger and the other smaller, the inner circles appear to be different sizes as well. In the new research, when there was great contrast in color between the plate and the tablecloth (such as a white plate on a dark green tablecloth), the subjects served themselves about 10% more food. So if someone is considering portion size at the holiday table rather than aesthetics, they could go for monochrome with both plates and tablecloth. (Forthcoming publication in Journal of Consumer Research by Van Ittersum, K and Wansink, B, "Plate size and color suggestibility: The Delboeuf Illusion's bias on serving and eating behavior." [http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/faculty/van\\_ittersum/pubs/JCR\\_11-0251\\_FINAL\\_SSRN.pdf](http://mgt.gatech.edu/directory/faculty/van_ittersum/pubs/JCR_11-0251_FINAL_SSRN.pdf))

**Pass on Propane** – When power goes out, and people are hungry, some unknowingly use their propane camp stoves or propane barbecue grills inside the house. This practice is extremely risky. While these methods of cooking are fine outdoors where there is plenty of fresh air, indoors the propane-heated burners emit carbon monoxide which can cause poisoning, brain damage, and death. The same holds true for propane heaters which should not be used indoors. Propane itself is an asphyxiant, which cuts off oxygen to the body. Exposure to very high levels of propane can cause death by suffocation. Using charcoal indoors is also potentially dangerous because it, too, can cause carbon monoxide poisoning. For information on preventing carbon monoxide poisoning in a variety of languages, go to [www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/disaster/carbon-monoxide.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/disaster/carbon-monoxide.aspx).

**Low Cost Exercise** – Gym memberships and home exercise equipment aren't an option for most of us, and there are plenty of ways to be physically active, even when the weather is cold and wet, and daylight hours are short. Here are a few:

- Check out a DVD from the local library on yoga, aerobics, Zumba, hip-hop. Adults and kids can do many of these together.
- See if your cable service has a station with free exercise videos. Many come with the cable service; others charge a fee.
- Blow up a balloon and play indoor volleyball. If there are young children in the household, don't do this if you think they could choke on a deflated or burst balloon.
- Walk laps through an indoor mall. Some malls open early for walkers before the stores open, which can be a good idea because it is less crowded and it's not possible to succumb to the temptation to buy something.
- Remember that many household chores can count as exercise: shoveling snow, raking leaves, vacuuming.
- Swim at an indoor community pool.
- Play with your kids at the playground instead of watching or talking on the phone. Play tag or keep-away.
- Turn on some music and dance.
- In an apartment or other buildings, take the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Perhaps the most useful one of all: Push back from the table when you have eaten the right amount of food that your body needs.

When it comes to outdoor activity, the Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan aims to increase the number of people who have access to free or low cost recreational opportunities for physical activity. To read their priority recommendations, see <http://depts.washington.edu/waaction/plan/pa1/index.html>.



**OUR MISSION:** *The Nutrition Education Network* coordinates nutrition education efforts to communicate consistent, positive and relevant messages to increase awareness of healthful and enjoyable eating among low-income families. *Energize* is one way that *the Network* shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

"Now bring us some figgy pudding" in the song "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" dates back to Victorian England when commoners would carol at homes of wealthy people, asking for figgy pudding or other food. Some carolers would include in their version of the song, "We won't go until we get some." Figgy pudding is a steamed, dense cake-like boiled pudding made with dried fruit such as raisins, currants, apricots, or figs. Although it is rich, as are many holiday desserts, the inclusion of fruit makes it a tad more nutritious. A more recent twist on this old tradition is Seattle's Great Figgy Pudding Street Corner Caroling Competition, held the first Saturday in December as a fundraiser for the Pike Market Senior Center and Downtown Food Bank. At its 25<sup>th</sup> Silver Anniversary event two weeks ago, more than 40 caroling teams sang their hearts out not for pudding but for donations feed hungry people. To read more about the Pike Market Senior Center, Downtown Food Bank, and the caroling competition that drew about 10,000 people, go to <http://pikemarketseiorcenter.giving.officelive.com/default.aspx>.

**EAT TOGETHER EAT BETTER – Family Meals Focus**

*Because our readers have told us that Family Meals is a hot topic, in the May 2011 issue we began a small section on recent news relating to this topic and our long-standing signature program, Eat Together, Eat Better.*

**Celebrating Family Food Traditions** – Holidays are wonderful times to enjoy certain dishes that are part of family traditions that often aren't eaten at other times during the year. Family food traditions are included in a recently completed pilot project by WSU Extension. The project focuses on family meals and education modules to use with youth, adults, and families are designed to help families eat together more often. In the pilot test, the "Celebrate Together" received positive feedback. According to Shirley Calodich, participants seemed to like sharing family and cultural traditions. One aspect of the activity involves placing foods from their celebrations in the five food groups. (For a downloadable copy of the activity, contact *Energize* writer Martha Marino, [martha\\_marino@yahoo.com](mailto:martha_marino@yahoo.com). To hear more about the pilot for Eat Together Eat Better, contact Shirley Calodich, WSU Extension, [sbroughton@wsu.edu](mailto:sbroughton@wsu.edu).)



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