



Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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November 2020

Ask the Agent

Q: How many days before Thanksgiving should I put my frozen turkey in the refrigerator to thaw?

A: Great question as waiting too long can spell disaster! The USDA recommends thawing your turkey in the refrigerator. This is the safest method because the turkey will thaw at a consistent, safe temperature. This method takes some time, so allow one day for each 4 - 5 pounds of weight. Once thawed, you can safely keep the turkey in the refrigerator for an additional 2 days to cook it. For example, if your turkey is 16 lbs., you can move it from the freezer to the refrigerator as early as Friday, November 20 this year!

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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My great Aunt Polly lived an amazing life. Born on a farm in the red dirt hills of Oklahoma, she knew what it meant to work hard, play hard, and live life to the fullest. She died not long after I was born, but her life lives on in our hearts, minds, and..... 40 years of family letters passed between she and her siblings.



Many would agree that hand-written letters are quickly becoming a lost art. As we continue to be challenged with the restrictions and restructuring of our daily living habits, I suggest we resurrect this old fashioned way of communicating. We may not be able to join together in person during the holiday season, but we can celebrate with family in a different way by writing family letters like the ones we now cherish from my Aunt Polly's collection.

There are many benefits to sharing hand-written notes and letters with those we care about:

- 1) Regardless of your age, it's still exciting to get a hand-addressed letter or postcard in the mail. It's almost like getting a surprise gift. When you send a letter to an unsuspecting family member or friend, it offers the simple joy that comes from being thought of.
- 2) Sharing a written note can make lasting memories for those you send them to. As I was unpacking boxes from our recent move, I found a bundle of hand-made cards I made for my mom and dad for various reasons. Among them was a child's Valentine's card with a loop-sided heart telling my dad he was a great cook and I loved him—especially meaningful since my dad died when I was 19.
- 3) Making homemade cards and envelopes can be a creative way to express yourself or make a funny statement. For example, writing your note on the backside of a scrap of wrapping paper or decorating the outside of a blank piece of cardstock with a cutout cartoon from the Sunday newspaper can add special meaning to your note. Sure, you can add an emoji to an email note, but imagine how much more it would mean to get a handmade written note in the mail.
- 4) They offer you a chance to take a break from the crazy schedule you try to keep up with. Writing a letter requires an intentional focus. You can craft a better letter with the TV turned off and when you find a quiet space to compose your words. The person who receives this letter knows that you took special effort in sending a letter their way rather than simply re-posting a quote or sentiment from their social media feed.
- 5) Writing can be physically, emotionally and mentally therapeutic. During our current world-wide pandemic chaos, many of us are strapped to a screen typing emails, participating in webinars, or conducting a meeting online. That means you are spending a lot of time with your eyes on a screen. I suggest finding a space filled with ambient light and a good place to curl up with a notebook to write in. The break from the computer screen and formal seating space gives your body and mind a chance to relax and re-energize.
- 6) Writing letters gives you a chance to slow things down. With electronic communications, you may feel pressed to respond quickly, scan messages for the key points, or simply disregard the emails that you think are unimportant. When you write a letter, you are more apt to think through what you want to convey that is important before you begin to write it down. Likewise, when you get a hand-addressed letter in the mail, you not only feel it is important, but you know it was important for the person who wrote it, too!

Long after a letter or card is written and shared, it can remain timeless. The tradition of hand-writing doesn't have to be a lost art. It can be a renewed way of staying connected and creating a transcript of our lives as we live, grow, and change. Take a few minutes a write a letter. You'll make your own and someone else's day brighter!

Family Financial Planning



Financially Speaking- Black Friday Shopping on a Budget

As the Holidays are quickly approaching, are you starting to plan for your holiday shopping? Black Friday shopping is one of the most popular shopping day/days of the year, but it can also lead to financial strain for some.

Due to COVID19, Black Friday will look a little different as sale prices have already started hitting in-store and online. The pandemic does not seem to be discouraging Americans from spending this year, this could be due to the popularity of online sales. According to Small Business Trends, 42% of Americans plan to spend \$500 on Black Friday Sales.

Sticking to a budget often proves difficult for people when they see flashy advertisements for items they have been wanting for awhile. Retailers know that shoppers are prepared to spend during the holiday season and take full advantage of this with great marketing techniques. The best way to be prepared for Black Friday and Holiday shopping is to make a plan ahead of time and prepare a budget.

- Start by setting your budget. Have a set amount in mind that you plan to spend. Sometimes this is money that has been set aside each month in anticipation for the holidays, or this might just be what you have left over after paying your bills. Having a total amount you can spend, will tell you how much you can spend on each gift. This will also help limit the "impulse buying," which can bust your budget quickly. Remember just because it is on sale does not mean that you need to buy it.

- If you don't have a budget, check out the Essential Living Skills: Money Management to get started. <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/S134G.pdf>.
- List all the people you will need to buy gifts for and what you are planning to buy for them. For each person set the amount from your budget you are able to spend on them.
- Start comparing deals online and in-store. Give yourself plenty of time to make a good decision and find the best price for the gifts on your list. This strategy will help you get the most for your money.
- Shopping online vs. in-store- When we are shopping on a budget, sometimes it is hard to avoid all the good deals if we are in the store and can physically touch the items. One way to stick to your budget and enjoy the in-store experience is purchasing with cash only. Shopping with only enough cash to cover the costs of your planned purchases is a good way to stay within your budget. Online shopping is also a great option because you can search for just the items you are wanting to purchase and buy them only.

Black Friday shopping is a great way to help your financial budget and purchase gifts at a great cost, but it does take some intentional planning and budgeting beforehand.

*Written by Kristin Penner, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent,
Haskell County*

1. Approximately, how long should you allow for thawing a frozen turkey in the refrigerator?
 - A. 24 hours per each 1–2 pounds of turkey
 - B. 24 hours per each 4–5 pounds of turkey
 - C. 24 hours per each 6–7 pounds of turkey
2. What is a safe internal temperature for cooking a whole turkey?
 - A. 145°F
 - B. 155°F
 - C. 165°F
3. Which of the following are important practices to follow if stuffing a turkey?
 - A. Do not mix wet and dry ingredients for a stuffing until just before stuffing the bird
 - B. Stuff the turkey loosely
 - C. Cook a stuffed turkey immediately
 - D. Use a food thermometer
 - E. b, c, and d
 - F. All of the above

Test your Turkey Knowledge!

Take the full quiz and find the answers on our website at:
<https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/nutrition-food-safety.html>

4. What is the longest that perishable food should sit out at room temperature on a buffet table?
 - A. 2 hours
 - B. 3 hours
 - C. 4 hours
5. If you are serving 20 people at a holiday party, what size of turkey should you buy?
 - A. 10 pounds
 - B. 15 pounds
 - C. 20 pounds
 - D. 25 pounds



HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

K-State Research and Extension has developed a designated website to assist Kansas individuals, families, ag producers, and agencies during these unprecedented times with the COVID-19 pandemic:

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/about-us/covid-19-extension.html>

To reach Geary County K-State Research and Extension, call our office at 785-238-4161 or by email at ge@listserv.ksu.edu

Family Food Budget

Eat Right when Money's Tight
USDA Tip Sheet

The Eat Right When Money's Tight food budget tip sheet released in early November by the United States Department of Agriculture is timely help during the holiday season. With food costs on the rise, families are looking for smart ways to keep the food budget under control. Here is a sampling of some of the suggestions offered by USDA:

BEFORE SHOPPING

1. Plan your weekly meals and snacks.

Preparing in advance will help you know what you need and also help you put leftovers to good use.

2. Use store circulars and go online to look for coupons, sales, and stores specials.

Only use coupons on food you normally eat. Make sure the coupons give you the best value for your money.

3. For added savings, sign up for the store discount card or bonus card at your local supermarket.

DURING SHOPPING

1. Have something to eat before you go shopping. It's easier to stick to your shopping list when you are not hungry.

2. Try store brands. They are the same quality and cost less.

3. Compare products for the best deal.

Use unit pricing and also the Nutrition Facts labels to get the best product for your money. For more on food labels go to: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/nutrition-food-safety.html>.

4. Check "sell by" or "use by" dates.

Buy the freshest food possible. For more on food product dating, look for the food product dating fact sheet posted on the Geary County K-State Research & Extension website at: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/nutrition-food-safety.html>

Family - Healthy Eating

It is often difficult staying on a healthy eating track during the busy holiday season. Remember, food is as much a part of holiday celebrations as being with family and friends, therefore, the holiday season comes with the challenge of trying to make healthier choices when many holiday foods and traditions don't fit in that category. However, research shows that Americans typically gain 1 to 3 pounds, or even more, during the holidays. The concern is that most people don't lose that excess weight and it adds up, potentially causing chronic health problems. So, making the effort to stay on track can go a long way.

It is possible to reduce the large amounts of fats and sugar usually found in holiday recipes without drastically changing the holiday foods that you love to eat. It just takes a little planning and a few simple changes and you can enjoy great-tasting holiday foods and still maintain a healthy lifestyle. For example, fruits and vegetables can be used to replace sugars and fats in recipes and other simple modifications can be made to reduce the calories of your favorite holiday recipes.

Here are a few other healthy tips to rehab your recipes:

- Use unsweetened applesauce or mashed ripe bananas instead of butter in recipes.
- Cut the amount of sugar listed in recipes in half.
- Use spices to add flavor such as cinnamon, allspice, or nutmeg instead of sugar or salt.
- Whole grain flour can be substituted for 1/4 to 1/2 of refined flour.
- Use yogurt or cottage cheese instead of sour cream.
- Use low-fat cheese in place of higher fat cheese.
- Use skim milk instead of whole milk.

Healthy Holiday Eating Tips

Try any of these changes one at a time, making the recipe a little healthier each time you prepare it. If you prefer not to change your favorite recipes, portion control can help reduce calorie intake during the holidays and in the end any of these changes will pay off, in a healthy way, in the New Year.



Aunt Debbie's Famous Corn Dip

2 cups fat free sour cream
1 cup fat free real mayonnaise
1 (4-oz) can diced green chilies, drained
1 medium red onion, finely diced

2T. finely diced Jalapeno pepper (optional)

4 cans (11 oz.) white shoepeg corn OR Mexicorn

4 cups low fat sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

Pepper to taste

Serve with corn tortilla chips or whole grain crackers.

1. In medium bowl combine sour cream and mayonnaise. Set aside.
2. In large mixing bowl, combine green chilies, red onion, Jalapeno pepper, and corn.
3. Add sour cream mixture to vegetables and stir until fully combined.
4. Add cheese and then pepper to taste. Chill for 2 hours and serve.

Geary County

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Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

October 15—December 7

Medicare Open Enrollment —You should take a look at your Part D Prescription plan each year during open enrollment. You can evaluate your options to ensure you have the best and most economical coverage. Open enrollment runs from October 15 thru December 7. We are taking appointments now. Call soon to set your date and time!

Coming Soon

Quick Meals for Busy Families II—The original program was offered face to face in January and February 2020 with great success. After many requests for a reprise, the 4-session class will be offered again in a virtual format. Participation is FREE due to a grant awarded by the American Heart Association in partnership with the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences. Each family will receive great healthy recipes and some other tools to add to their kitchen inventory!

December 15—February 23

****Strengthening Families 7-17—Zooming weekly on Tuesdays from 4:45—6:00pm December 15, 2020 thru February 23, 2020. Families will be asked to make an appointment prior to the first class session to receive resources and the DVD needed for participating in the program. If you are interested in registering, call Deb Andres at 785-238-4161 to make your appointment.**



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