

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



September-October, 2024

Winter Electricity Savings

Ready or not, here come the cold months! If you are looking for ways to save a little money this winter, start by looking at your electricity bill. It often costs more to heat your home in the winter than it does to cool it in the summer; people typically spend more time at home during the winter months, and with shorter days and more people around you could be spending more time with the lights on. If you are looking for ways to reduce these energy costs, start prepping your home now!

1. Check or install weather-stripping on your doors and windows – Sealing out drafts is a great place to start saving money. Doors and windows can leak out more heat than you might imagine, so having this layer of protection from the cold can be a big savings.
2. Check your thermostat – If you have a smart thermostat, you may be able to set it to be cooler or warmer during certain parts of the day. Set it a little lower while you are out of the house and set it up just before you plan to arrive home.
3. Check your heating system – It can be a good idea to schedule an annual heating system check-up early in the winter months to ensure it is clean and ready to run efficiently. A checkup could find problems early to prevent you from experiencing an expensive breakdown during a cold snap. In addition, regular check-ups can increase the lifespan of your system.
4. Check your air vents – make sure furniture and drapes are not blocking your heating vents. Not only will that prevent the warm air from circulating in your house, but it can also increase the air pressure in your ductwork, which can create cracks and leaks.
5. Check the insulation in your house – Good insulation can impact your heating bills. Add insulation in your attic, where utilities enter your home, and around plumbing to prevent heat from escaping and pipes from freezing.
6. Only wash and dry full loads of laundry and dishes – Running the washing machine, dryer, and dishwasher can use a lot of energy. Making sure the loads are full will prevent unnecessary additional loads down the road.

Checking these things and forming some new habits can really help you save on electricity during the colder months. Getting a jump start by starting now can help you see the full impact this winter!

Source:

<https://library.ndsu.edu/ir/bitstream/handle/10365/15105/ae1520.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

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GOLDEN PLAINS AREA
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Back to School – Brain Food



Diet plays a critical role in our health and development! We can support our children as well as ourselves by incorporating nutrient-rich foods that provide nutrients such as folate, omega-3 fatty acids and flavonoids, into our evening mealtimes or after-school snacks!

- **Green, leafy vegetables.** Leafy greens such as kale, spinach, collards, and broccoli are rich in brain-healthy nutrients like vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta carotene. Research suggests these plant-based foods may help slow cognitive decline, so they are a great choice for adults too.

- **Fatty fish.** Fatty fish are abundant sources of omega-3 fatty acids - healthy unsaturated fats that feed the brain, aid the process of building new cells, involved in eye function and have been linked to lower blood levels of beta-

amyloid—the protein that forms damaging clumps in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. Try to eat fish at least twice a week, but choose varieties that are low in mercury, such as salmon, cod, canned light tuna, and pollack. If you're not a fan of fish, ask your doctor about taking an omega-3 supplement, or choose terrestrial omega-3 sources such as flaxseeds, avocados, and walnuts.

- **Berries.** Flavonoids, the natural plant pigments that give berries their brilliant hues, also help improve memory, research shows. A study done by researchers at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital found that women who consumed two or more servings of strawberries and blueberries each week delayed memory decline by up to two-and-a-half years.

- **Tea and coffee.** The caffeine in your morning cup of coffee or tea might offer more than just a short-term concentration boost. In a study published in *The Journal of Nutrition*, participants with higher caffeine consumption scored better on tests of mental function. Caffeine might also help solidify new memories, according to other research. Investigators at Johns Hopkins University asked participants to study a series of images and then take either a placebo or a 200-milligram caffeine tablet. More members of the caffeine group were able to correctly identify the images on the following day.

- **Walnuts.** Nuts are excellent sources of protein and healthy fats, and one type of nut might also improve memory. A study from UCLA linked higher walnut consumption to improved cognitive test scores. Walnuts are high in a type of omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). Diets rich in ALA and other omega-3 fatty acids have been linked to lower blood pressure and cleaner arteries. That's good for both the heart and brain.

An effortless way to incorporate some of these foods such as nuts and berries into our diets is simply eating them raw as a snack. If you have kids with texture aversions, or family members who are just picky, you can blend these foods into a smoothie. Frozen or fresh produce can be used in smoothies which gives busy parents a little more flexibility when shopping for foods based on availability or shelf life. Smoothies are a wonderful way to incorporate (or sneak) a variety of foods, including green leafy vegetables, into our diets.. Leafy greens may get a bad rap at mealtime but are super nutritious and support brain health. Disguising spinach can be easier than other leafy greens. It has a very mild flavor and can be blended or chopped into undetectable pieces. You can add these to meatloaf, soups, or even your brownie batter!

For tasty recipes check out <http://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/>.

Source: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/foods-linked-to-better-brainpower>

Benefits of Eating Wild Game and Fish

Are your taste buds ready to try something new? Something adventurous and on the wild side? Then expand your culinary horizons and experience new flavors with wild game. Plus, you will gain many health benefits when you eat game meat.

Many doctors and nutritionists recommend eating lean protein. Wild game is an excellent source of lean protein and has higher iron levels compared to domestic beef, pork, or chicken. In addition, wild game has higher levels of Selenium. Selenium is an important part of our diet and helps protect cells from damage. Game meat also has healthy omega-3 fatty acids. One of the most important benefits is that this naturally sourced meat does not have any added hormones or antibiotics.

Wild game, game birds, and fish provide unique flavors because of the animals' natural habitat and lifestyle. The meat has a distinct taste that sets it apart from domestically raised animals. Wild game has a wide range of health benefits and is a more sustainable source of food. Be adventurous and try venison, pheasant, or walleye.

Deer – The BEST Ground Venison Tacos

<https://www.missallieskitchen.com/venison-tacos/>

This is the best, simple and from-scratch recipe for ground venison tacos. Simple to make and no packets of seasoning from the store needed!

- **Prep Time:** 10 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 20 minutes
- **Total Time:** 30 minutes
- **Yield:** 4-6 servings
- **Category:** Main Dish
- **Cuisine:** Mexican American

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp. olive or avocado oil
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 lb. ground venison*
- 4–5 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 orange, juiced
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup water



Instructions

1. Begin by heating a large pan over medium heat on the stove. Add the oil to the pan and when the oil is hot, add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 3-4 minutes.
2. Then, add the ground venison and cook until browned, about 6-8 minutes.
3. Next, add the garlic, chili powder, cumin, salt, and pepper. Cook for 2 additional minutes before deglazing the pan with the orange juice, lime juice and apple cider vinegar.
4. Then, add the water and turn the heat to medium-low. Allow the meat to simmer for 5-10 minutes until the desired texture and moisture level are reached.
5. Serve in taco shells, lettuce wraps, burritos, quesadillas, nachos – however you like!

Notes

- This recipe will work with elk, beef, antelope, moose, bison, lamb – really any red meat.
- If you're thawing venison from frozen, try thawing it on a paper towel or drying it with a paper down and discarding old blood before cooking. This helps the meat to taste fresh and not "gamey."

Pheasant – Pheasant with Mushrooms

<https://honest-food.net/pheasant-mushrooms-recipe/>

You can use any sort of white meat poultry here, as well as any sort of mushroom.

- **Prep Time:** 15 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 20 minutes
- **Total Time:** 35 minutes
- **Course:** Main Course
- **Cuisine:** American
- **Servings:** 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1 cup pheasant, chicken or beef stock
- 1 pound fresh mushrooms, any kind
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup shallots, minced
- Salt
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 cup Armagnac or other brandy
- 1/2 cup cream
- 1 pound pheasant breasts (or other white meat poultry)
- 1 cup spinach, lambs quarters or amaranth greens, chopped

Instructions

1. Pour the stock into a small pot and boil it down until you have about 1/4 cup. Set aside. Cut the pheasant breasts into strips or chunks and salt well.
2. Slice the mushrooms into large pieces. Add the butter and shallot and toss to combine. Sauté, stirring often, until the shallot is translucent and the mushrooms begin to brown.
3. Sprinkle the thyme and a little salt over everything and mix well. Pour in the brandy and use it to scrape up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Turn the heat down to medium-high and cook until the brandy is almost gone.
4. Add the reduced stock, the cream and the pheasant strips and toss to combine. Bring this to a gentle simmer, turn the heat to low and cover. Cook like this for 5 minutes, or until the pheasant is just barely cooked through.
5. Toss the spinach in and serve with crusty bread, egg noodles or mashed potatoes.

Fish – Baked Walleye

www.food.com/recipe/baked-walleye-69347

- **Cook Time:** 30 minutes
- **Course:** Main Course
- **Cuisine:** American
- **Servings:** 4 servings

Ingredients

- 4 walleyed pike fillets
- 6 - 8 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup mushroom (sliced)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onions
- salt and pepper



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
2. Dip fish in melted butter, salt, pepper and lemon juice.
3. Place fish fillets into shallow baking pan.
4. Place mushrooms and onions over the top of fish, then spoon any remaining butter mixture over fish.
5. Bake at 350°F for 15-20 minutes until fish flakes.

Other wild game recipes: [Colorado Parks & Wildlife - Wild Game Recipes \(state.co.us\)](http://ColoradoParks.com/WildGameRecipes)

Make-Ahead Meals Simplify Dinner Time

Families often find themselves juggling after-school activities and busy evenings. The daily grind of work, errands, sports, homework, and other commitments usually leaves little time for preparing a healthy, well-balanced meal. With some planning, preparing freezer meals in advance can be a game-changer. It can reduce mealtime stress, save money, and ensure meals are always on hand. Following proper food safety guidelines is essential to keep your freezer meals safe and delicious. Here are some tips for preparing and storing freezer meals.



Freezing and Food Safety

According to the USDA, freezing food at zero degrees Fahrenheit keeps it safe by inactivating microorganisms that cause spoilage and foodborne illnesses. It is important to remember that these microbes will become active once food is thawed. Therefore, handle thawed food as you would fresh food, ensuring it is thoroughly cooked to kill most microorganisms. Remember, freezing preserves but does not improve food quality. For example, a well-seasoned casserole will retain its flavor and texture if properly prepared and frozen but freezing cannot improve ingredients that were subpar before freezing. Proper preparation and packaging are essential to maintain your meal's original quality.

Tips for Successful Freezer Meals

- **Start Small or Go Big:** You can begin by using leftovers to create freezer meals or dive into batch cooking by preparing multiple meals at once.
- **Batch Cooking:** Prepare multiple batches of main ingredients like beef, pork, or chicken. For example, brown two pounds of ground beef instead of one, then freeze the extra pound for future meals like tacos or spaghetti.
- **Buy in Bulk:** Purchase extra items when they are in season or on sale, then prepare them in larger quantities. This not only saves time but also money.
- **Portion Meals:** Portion each meal according to your family size and freeze them in airtight containers made for the freezer to maintain freshness and prevent freezer burn.
- **Meal Swaps:** To add variety to your frozen meal selection, consider setting up a meal swap with a friend or family member.
- **Choose Freezer-Friendly Recipes:** Choose recipes that freeze and reheat well, such as soups, stews, and casseroles. Select dishes your family loves or visit [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov) for nutritious meal ideas.
- **Test Freezability:** If you are unsure how well a meal will freeze, freeze a small portion first to ensure the quality is acceptable.
- **Undercook Meals:** Slightly undercook foods such as pasta before freezing, as they will be reheated after thawing.
- **Shop Smart:** Look at weekly grocery store ads for sales and choose meals based on sale items to prepare and freeze at a lower cost.
- **Keep an Inventory:** Maintain a list of your meals in the freezer to ensure they are eaten in a reasonable time and do not go to waste.

Storage and Thawing Tips

- **Cool Foods Completely and Rapidly:** Before freezing, cool foods completely to prevent ice crystals from forming. Rapid cooling can be achieved by placing the meal pan in a sink of ice water and stirring every 5–10 minutes. This is especially important for large amounts of food.
- **Remember the 2-hour rule:** Ideally, foods should be cooled and placed in the freezer within two hours of preparation to ensure safety and freshness.
- **Proper Packaging:** Use packaging made for the freezer, such as airtight containers, freezer bags, or vacuum-sealed bags. This helps reduce freezer burn and preserve food quality.
- **Label Your Meals:** Label items with the preparation date, "use by" date, and reheating instructions to keep track of your meals and ensure they are used in a timely manner.

- **Use Within Three Months:** For optimal taste and quality, most make-ahead meals should be used within three months.
- **Thaw Safely:** To prevent bacterial growth, safely thaw food in the refrigerator the night before, in cold water, or in the microwave. Never thaw food on the kitchen counter.
- **Slow Cooker Thawing:** When using a slow cooker, completely thaw the food before placing it in the crockpot to avoid the "danger zone" (40-140°F), where bacteria can grow rapidly.

By following these guidelines, you can make freezer meals a convenient and safe option for your busy family, ensuring nutritious home cooked meals are always ready to enjoy.

Adapted from: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/make_homemade_tv_dinners_for_convenience

Sources:

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/freezing-and-food-safety>

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/keep_make_ahead_freezer_meals_safe

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/humannutrition/nutrition-topics/eatingwell-budget/makeaheadmeals-documents/freezingcombinationdishes.pdf>

Stress Management



Stress is a part of life and can affect your well-being if it becomes chronic or overwhelming. How you respond to these stressors is important and can improve *or* hinder your overall health. When stress is managed effectively, you can see an improvement in both your mental and physical health. It is important to have a variety of stress relief tools in your toolbox as not all techniques work the same for everyone. You may find that certain strategies work best for specific circumstances.

Stress relief strategies can be categorized into short-term and long-term. Some helpful and

effective stress relief strategies may include:

Short-term strategies: Fast acting, very little practice to master, immediate relief

- Deep breathing
- Guided mental imagery - Imagine your happy place.
- Enjoy Creativity – create or view others art/music/dance.

Long-term strategies: Promote resilience to stress and improve overall wellness.

- Healthy diet
- Social support
- Make time for Leisure activities (fishing, dancing, walking, yoga, etc.)
- Prioritize Exercise

When you are stressed, your body releases cortisol and other stress hormones. If this response goes on for too long, it can put you at risk for certain health conditions such as digestive problems, weight gain, anxiety, headaches, sleep problems, concentration, memory, high blood pressure or heart disease.

Sometimes the best way to reduce stress is by cutting out something in your life that is not bringing you joy and causing you more stress. When you make a small change, like decluttering a room or even just a portion of the room, it could make a big difference in the daily stress that a ‘messy’ space brings. Other examples of stressors that could be removed to help eliminate stress are watching the news and becoming overwhelmed by situations out of your control, consuming too much caffeine, or constantly being connected to a device. Changing some of these daily habits could be instrumental in helping you feel better. Getting rid of the things that are adding to your stress can help you experience more peace.

Finding the best strategy that works for you may take some experimenting and practice. Prioritizing your personal self-care is important and can help reduce stress by incorporating an exercise routine, hobby, or leisure activity into your daily regimen. Keeping stress at a manageable level is important for your overall health and well-being.

Sources: American Heart Association, www.heart.org

Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.org

The Dignity of Risk

Always keeping our children under a watchful eye or perpetually doing things for others who are capable of doing for themselves can lead to unintended consequences. Anita Bundy, a Colorado State University professor and head of the Department of Occupational Therapy in the College of Health and Human Sciences, is conducting groundbreaking research on the benefits of embracing risk.



Bundy, whose research into play began three decades ago, along with other experts say challenging themselves helps girls and boys develop self-confidence, resilience, and the ability to assess risk. The same goes for adults with disabilities and/or elderly people.

“Adults of any age with or without disability benefit from support and other ways of mitigating risk. What’s more, a degree of risk is often beneficial, if not essential, even when it’s in the context of something that is more than a little scary and when other people disapprove.”

Risky play is defined as unstructured and exciting activities that may involve challenges like speed, heights, obstacles or other factors that make the outcome unknown.

“When we consider freedom from any possible physical injury to be more important than self-efficacy, self-esteem, and enjoyment, we run the risk of inflicting psychological harm,” Bundy said. “With adults, the concept is similar — providing support to enable another to go a little beyond what they feel comfortable doing.”

“With older adults, the concept often applies to maintaining skills and involves assessing the benefits, discussing and mitigating the risks.”

Bundy said falls happen among older people, but walking – even after a fall – may have longer-lasting benefits because not walking as much makes it harder to walk.

“I prefer to think about a balance between providing adequate help (duty of care) and taking away the dignity of risk—and to think about this balance for all people,” she said. Routinely doing things for others even when they can do it for themselves, or continually saying ‘You can’t,’ gives the message, ‘You are not capable.’ Sooner or later those individuals believe that to be the case. “Overprotection of people of all ages and abilities leads to feelings of helplessness and incompetence.”

Remember, nobody succeeds all the time. The best thing we can do as a parent is to be encouraging while also being realistic. Prepare your child for the possibility of failure, encourage their effort, be empathetic toward their disappointment, and be honest about the setbacks that you’ve faced as well. When it comes to older adults, having a good understanding of activities they have always enjoyed and planning appropriate opportunities to make the most of their abilities and experiences is key.

Program Highlight

Join us for our first ever Women's Health Summit! We will cover topic areas of: mental health, menopause, pelvic floor health, nutrition, and women's empowerment. Childcare and lunch will be provided. If there are topics you want to learn about at a future Women's Health Summit, please contact your local FCS Specialist!



First Ever Regional
Women's Health Summit
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBER 19, 2024

Washington County Event Center
551 w. 2nd St.
Akron, Colorado

Join us in celebrating and empowering women's health!

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Upcoming Events!

- **ServSafe Handler Training** –
 - Monday, September 9th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **Eastern Region Women's Health Summit** –
 - Saturday, October 19th from 11:30-4:30. If you have questions or want more information, contact your local FCS Specialist. To register, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/womens-health-summit-2024-tickets-1001462951647?aff=oddtcreator>
- **ServSafe Handler Training** –
 - Tuesday, October 29th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Phillips County Fairgrounds in Holyoke. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu

Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVnN5X513c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

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