

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



April - June, 2025

Spring Bucket List



With the changing of the seasons often comes the stress of a to do list. Whether you hope to clean things up from any winter projects, start getting your lawn or garden ready, or focus on decluttering, a Spring Bucket List can help. The difference between the bucket list and to do list is that it should also include fun activities in addition to the to do list.

Knowing about future rewards can be a great motivator. When making your bucket list, consider creating stipulations before participating in the fun activities on your list. For example, divide your list into a to do list side and a fun activities side, then determine how many to do list activities you will need to complete to earn the reward of the fun activity. In addition to the to do list of tasks you hope to accomplish, you can also include things on your bucket list that will help you focus on your health. For example, you could add a few new healthy recipes you want to try or practice a new mental health activity.

It can be helpful to build your bucket list with an accountability partner. This could be the rest of your family, a close friend or someone else who will help motivate you to keep accomplishing your tasks or even do them with you. If you have children, this bucket list can be a great learning opportunity for them and lead to lots of great family time together. If you plan to complete these tasks as a family, be sure to get the whole family's opinion of what they want to do for the reward activities.

If you need help thinking of what to put on your spring bucket list, there are plenty of examples online you can pull from. Be sure to only select things that are important to you and that you actually want to accomplish. Filling your bucket list with things that sound like you should do them could leave you unmotivated to accomplish everything on them.

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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Scam Prevention

**SCAM
ALERT!**

Scammer prevention is crucial to protect yourself from fraud and identity theft. Here are some tips to help you stay safe from scams:

Be cautious- Don't share sensitive information including bank account, social security numbers or passwords with anyone you don't trust. Be extra careful with emails or calls asking for personal or financial details. Block unwanted calls, text messages or emails.

Check for red flags- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! There should not be a sense of urgency to decide or give information, so pressure from a call or email should be a clear sign. Verify *their* information and ask to speak to their manager and identify the company or organization. Fact check the information and contact the organization directly using official contact info, not what's provided in the message.

Avoid suspicious links or attachments and only use secure websites- Look for HTTPS in the web address and a padlock icon in the browser when entering sensitive information online. Clicking on a link or opening an attachment may contain malware or lead to phishing sites.

Use unique/strong passwords- While it is cumbersome to change your password often and try to remember which password is for what, it is important to change them frequently. Making your password unique, long, or complex will help prevent scammers from easily hacking into your accounts. You can even add a two-factor authentication if possible for added protection.

Fraud alerts- It may be helpful to set up a fraud alert with the bank to be notified if a suspicious transaction takes place. Be diligent and regularly check credit card or bank statements making sure there isn't an unusual transaction that sneaks by.

Payment- Know how they want you to pay and never pay someone who insists you can only pay with cryptocurrency, a wire transfer service like Western Union or MoneyGram, a payment app, or a gift card. Do not deposit a check and send money back to someone.

Scammers are getting increasingly bolder in their methods by which they gather and use your information as well as what scams they are using to get the info. Scams come in all shapes and sizes; job scams, loan scams, shopping scams, prize scams, debt relief scams, dating scams, and the list could continue. Before you do anything, talk to someone you trust and let them know what happened. They can help you decide if it is a potential scam or not before it's too late.

If you feel like it is a scam, report it to the Federal Trade Commission at www.reportfraud.ftc.gov. You can also report it to the Better Business Bureau or your local consumer protection agencies. Reporting scams helps prevent future scams for others.

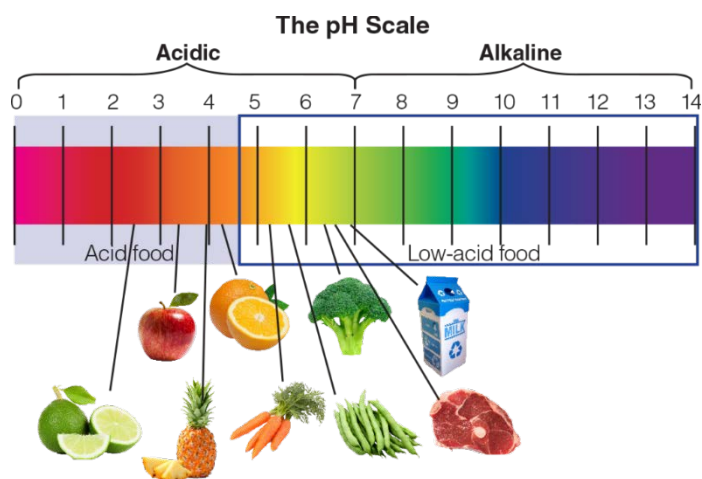
Pressure Canning vs. Waterbath canning

Preserving homegrown produce is on the rise as grocery prices have significantly increased. Food preservation comes in many forms – drying, freezing, fermenting, pickling, curing and canning! Food breaks down as soon as it is harvested or cut, creating an environment for bacteria to flourish. Different food preservation techniques hinder the growth and allow the food to stay safe to consume for longer periods of time.

Canning produce is a great way to avoid taking up freezer space and creates a stable shelf product. There are two types of canning techniques: water bath and pressure canning. Canning utilizes sterilized jars and heat to destroy microscopic bacteria and inactivate enzymes. Once the heat destroys the microorganisms, the cooling process begins and creates a vacuum seal that prevents contamination of the jar's contents.

Altitude plays a role in the time and temperature of the canning process. The food's natural acidity level will determine whether waterbath canning (boiling water canning) or pressure canning is the appropriate technique to use. The process of waterbath canning uses boiling water temperatures and the foods' natural acidity to kill bacteria, while pressure canning uses heat and a pressurized environment to kill pathogens that are heat resistant.

Naturally acidic foods have a pH level below 4.6 and will need to be preserved through waterbath canning. The lower the pH level, the higher the acidity is of the food item. Some foods border 4.6 pH so they can still be preserved using the waterbath canning technique with extra acid added. Common ways to add acidity are adding lemon juice, citric acid, or vinegar depending on the USDA approved recipe you are using. 4.6 pH is the magic number because bacteria can survive in pH level above 4.6. Low acidic foods or foods that have a pH level higher than 4.6 provide an environment for heat resistant pathogens to thrive because they lack acidity. The key to kill and prevent growth for low acidic foods is a pressurized environment and proper preparation. Altitude impacts how much pressure is needed to ensure proper preservation due to lower boiling point temperatures as altitude rises. Instructions will look different for pressure canners being used at sea level compared to eastern Colorado and our higher altitude. It is crucial to make sure your recipe is USDA approved and there are pressure modifications for altitude. Pressure canners need to be inspected annually to make sure the gauge is accurate and the gaskets are not dried out for successful food preservation.



To learn more about each process, ask your local extension office about upcoming canning classes!

Sources:

<https://nchfp.uga.edu/resources/entry/historical-origins-of-food-preservation>

<https://www.horiba.com/int/water-quality/applications/food-beverage/ph-measurement-of-pickled-fruits-and-vegetables/>

Information Overload



You wake up, check your phone, and suddenly find yourself overwhelmed by notifications, ranging from breaking news alerts to social media updates to unread emails. Thirty minutes have passed, and your mind is overloaded before you get out of bed and have your morning coffee. Sound familiar?

In today's digital age, we are bombarded with more information than our brains can handle. While instant access to information has its advantages, too much exposure can lead to stress, anxiety, mental fatigue, impaired decision-making, and even burnout. This phenomenon is known as information overload, which occurs when the volume of incoming information exceeds the brain's ability to process it effectively.

Why do we feel so overloaded?

Several factors contribute to the growing issue of information overload:

- **24/7 News Cycle:** With around-the-clock updates from news outlets and social media, people feel pressured to constantly stay informed, making it difficult to take a step back and process information mindfully.
- **Digital Connectivity & Multitasking:** Smartphones, tablets, and laptops have made information available 24/7, but this often results in us constantly switching between email, social media, and work, reducing focus, and increasing stress.
- **Misinformation & Content Overload:** The rise of clickbait, unverified news, and social media noise makes it hard to filter reliable information, leading to confusion and decision paralysis.

Managing Information Overload

While information overload is a modern challenge, there are simple, science-backed strategies to reduce stress and regain control:

1. **Set Boundaries on Information Consumption:**
 - **Schedule screen-free time** – Take regular digital detoxes, whether for a few hours, days, or even weeks. Research suggests digital detoxes improve focus and reduce stress.
 - **Turn off non-essential notifications** – Emails and social media should not control your time. Set designated times for checking emails, news, and social media instead of reacting to notifications throughout the day.
2. **Use Information Filtering Tools:**
 - **Save articles for later** – Apps like Evernote, Pocket, and Feedly allow you to collect and save important information without the pressure to read everything immediately.
 - **Block distractions** – Use browser extensions like News Feed Eradicator to limit distractions from social media rabbit holes.
3. **Practice Mindfulness & Load Reduction:**
 - **Use the 10-minute rule** – Harvard research shows just ten minutes of daily meditation can reduce cognitive overload and improve decision-making.
 - **Try focused work sessions** – To train your brain for deep focused work, try the [Pomodoro Technique](#), which emphasizes 25 minutes of focus time with a five-minute break.

- **Take mindful breaks** – Engage in activities that promote focus and relaxation, such as mindful walking or deep breathing exercises.

4. **Prioritize and Organize Information:**

- **Use the Eisenhower Matrix** – This [prioritization tool](#) categorizes tasks based on urgency and importance, helping you focus on essential tasks while setting aside less critical information for later.
- **Create an “information diet”** – Follow only credible sources and unsubscribe from low-value content. Focus on information related to your goals and responsibilities.

5. **Leverage Trusted Sources:**

- **Fact-check before you share** – Rely on credible news sources, academic research, and government sites (.gov, .edu, .org) to minimize exposure to misinformation.
- **Limit mindless scrolling** – Instead of endlessly consuming content, choose what is worth your attention.

Eisenhower Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do First Tasks that need to be done right away <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Schedule Tasks that are important but can wait <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____
Not Important	Delegate Tasks that are urgent but not important <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____	Don't Do Tasks that can wait and aren't important <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

Information is everywhere, but how you manage it is up to you. By setting boundaries, filtering distractions, and prioritizing meaningful content, you can reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance productivity. Start small. Try one strategy today and see how it impacts your mental well-being.

Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_overload
<https://lesley.edu/article/why-brain-overload-happens>
<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/11/strain-media-overload>
<https://phys.org/news/2024-03-overload-personal-societal-danger.html>

The Benefits of Family Time



In today's world, family time has become more important than ever. As families become busier, quality time spent together can often take a backseat. However, dedicating time together as a family offers numerous benefits that positively impact both emotional and physical well-being. Strengthening family bonds through shared experiences can create lasting memories, foster a sense of support, and improve overall well-being. So, turn off the TV, put down the cell phone, and unplug from technology. Be present with your family and enjoy the benefits of family time.

Relationships

One of the most significant advantages of spending time with family is the strengthening of relationships. Individuals can connect on a deeper emotional level, which develops trust and love. These shared experiences create a sense of belonging and closeness among family members. This strengthens the emotional foundation of family members, encouraging them to support each other through life's challenges.

Stability

Family time also plays a crucial role in providing a sense of security and stability. A supportive family offers a safe environment where individuals can be themselves. Children develop positive self-esteem and confidence. When parents model healthy interactions and problem-solving strategies, children learn important social and emotional skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Having a safe space to communicate decreases behavioral problems with children. Spending time with children also leads to positive outcomes such as improved academic performance and decreased substance use. Having strong family bonds helps support members when they are facing difficult situations.

Physical and Mental Health

Engaging in family activities has been linked to various physical and mental health benefits. Outdoor activities like hiking, biking, or playing sports together promote physical exercise and contribute to better overall health. These activities not only improve cardiovascular health but also help reduce stress and anxiety levels. Mental health is equally improved by spending quality time with family, as it offers a sense of relaxation, emotional support, and the opportunity to unwind. The positive reinforcement that comes from family interactions fosters a happier mindset and lowers the risks of depression and anxiety.

Values

Finally, spending time as a family encourages the development of life skills and values. Through shared activities, families have the chance to teach one another important lessons in responsibility, cooperation, and empathy. For example, working together to prepare a meal, solving a problem, or completing a project allows family members to practice teamwork, patience, and communication. These valuable lessons are not only beneficial in the family dynamic but also help with relationships outside of the home. The time spent together as a family acts as a foundation for growth and the development of positive habits.

Family time is invaluable for nurturing strong, supportive relationships, enhancing physical and mental well-being, and teaching important life lessons. It is essential to recognize the lasting benefits of spending time together as a family. Whether through simple daily activities or special events, family time plays a vital role in creating a balanced, fulfilling life for everyone involved. Building and maintaining a strong family takes time and attention. Each family member needs to make their family a priority.



Ways to Spend Time with Your Family

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Cook and eat a meal together | Help with daily routines |
| Read together | Special one-on-one time |
| Get outdoors – hike, fish, camp, etc. | Exercise together |
| Family date or game nights | Family trip or staycation |
| Volunteer together | Build or craft together |

Resources

Why the Family Meal is Important – <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=why-the-family-meal-is-important-1-701>

Family Quality Time – https://www.uwyo.edu/wind/_files/docs/f2f/f2f%20family%20quality%20time%2010-13.pdf

Fun Family Activities to Do at Home this Weekend – <https://www.parents.com/fun/activities/outdoor/weekend-family-activities/>

Balancing Benefits and Risks of Processed Foods

We are surrounded with choices of processed foods, but research suggests high intake of these foods, especially those highly processed, are linked to various health problems. Are all processed foods unhealthy? What is the difference between healthy processing versus not so healthy processing, and how do we find a balance?

Processing can be beneficial to health. It can increase digestibility and nutrient availability, keep food safe from bacteria and risks of foodborne illness, provide shelf-stable food forms, and dramatically reduce food waste. Historically, processing was critical to preserve food sources for survival and prevent nutrient deficiencies and conditions such as scurvy. Unfortunately, some modern food processing is linked to just the opposite – diet-related diseases such as overweight, obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, colorectal cancer and risk for chronic kidney disease. Let's take a closer look at the health pros and cons.

Heating (including pasteurization and canning), cooling, freezing, fermenting, curing and adding salt and sugar:

Pros: Preservation extends shelf life, reduces food waste and hunger, and improves nutrition worldwide. Heating to a high enough temperature kills most disease-causing microorganisms and breaks down enzymes that contribute to spoilage. For example, pasteurization kills harmful bacteria like *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *E. coli*, which can cause potentially life-threatening food poisoning symptoms. The heat in canning has important food safety effects too.

Freezing preserves foods at their peak freshness and quality. This locks in nutrients and makes healthy foods available year-round at affordable prices.

Fermentation is associated with increasing overall microbial diversity in the gut which leads to better gut health. For example, including fermented foods in a healthy diet can reduce chronic inflammation (such as arthritis, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease).

Cons: Salt preserves food but consuming too much can raise blood pressure and increase the risk for cardiovascular disease. Sugar is also an effective preservative, but too much can be harmful to health. The addition of nitrates and nitrites in curing meats like deli meats, sausage, bacon, and salami can increase risk for colon cancer, and health impacts of other preservatives may still not be completely known.

Changing the amounts/types of nutrients through processing such as enrichment, fortification, heating, and milling:

Pros: Fortification is when vitamins, minerals, fiber, folic acid, etc. are added to food that were not originally present to make up for dietary shortfalls and improve public health. Examples include milk with vitamin D, salt with iodine, and calcium in fruit juices. Fortification helped eliminate and reduce various nutritional deficiency diseases and conditions in the U.S.

Enrichment is when vitamins, minerals etc. are added back to food where they were already present but lost during processing. For example, refined grains are often enriched with iron and riboflavin.

Cons: Heat can degrade some vitamins but rarely enough to impact overall health and nutrition. Fortification and enrichment cannot replace all lost nutrients. For example, when grains are milled, the bran and germ are stripped away, removing fiber, B vitamins, and other health-promoting bioactive compounds.

Increased digestibility and absorption through processes like heating, refining, extrusion, and hydrolysis:

Pros: Heat breaks down some of the fibers and cell walls and makes food easier to digest. This decreases the energy needed to digest food while increasing nutrient uptake. Modern methods like hydrolysis also increase digestibility by breaking bonds of large, complex molecules to smaller ones.

Cons: Processing may not only remove beneficial nutrients but can also break down the natural food matrix and cause food components to be absorbed more quickly than the body can process them. For example, refining of grains and other starches breaks down the naturally occurring cell structure. This leads to a rapid digestion of the remaining starch while depriving the beneficial bacteria in our large intestine of fiber. The intact food matrix is a key part of why starches in whole or minimally processed foods, like beans, brown rice and vegetables, are associated with better health outcomes than refined products such as white bread. If digestion of starch, sugars, and proteins is too rapid it can also lead to excess fat production by the liver. Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is one of the most common causes of liver disease in the United States.

Good general advice is to limit the consumption of ultra-processed foods. Keep the following tips in mind too.

- **Cook at home.** Cook at home as much as possible using unprocessed and minimally processed ingredients.
- **Limit ultra-processed foods.** Check the ingredient list and avoid foods with numerous additives and those mainly made from processed ingredients.
- **Understand benefits.** Be informed about the many forms of processing, like pasteurization, freezing, fermentation, and heating, that provide significant health benefits with no harm. Rely on information from research-based, reputable sources.
- **Check ingredients.** Limit salt, added sugar, and refined starches. The Nutrition Facts label provides a wealth of information. Check the amount of sodium and added sugars. Look for “whole” grains versus refined “enriched” grains. Be aware an ultra-processed food with added vitamins and minerals could resemble the nutritional content of a whole food, but they are not equal. Whole or minimally processed foods typically contain other trace nutrients, fiber and intact food structures that are not reflected on the nutrition label.
- **Use the Ratio.** Choose packaged grain foods with at least one gram of fiber for every 10 grams of carbohydrate per serving.

Program Highlight

Kids in the Kitchen is being offered in Yuma County during the month of March. It is an after school, five-week series for kids between the ages of 10 – 13 focusing on hands-on activities and lessons related to learning cooking skills and the benefits of eating healthy and preparing food from scratch. Class topics include 1) Breakfast and Beverages, 2) Food Science with Bread and Butter, 3) Cultural Foods, 4) Food Preservation and 5) Pantry Challenge Cook-off.



Upcoming Events!

- **ServSafe Handler Training** –
 - Monday, April 14th from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush. Taught in Spanish only. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **ServSafe Manager Training** –
 - Thursday, April 24th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Burlington Community Center in Burlington. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **ServSafe Manager Training** –
 - Wednesday, June 11th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush. Taught in English with Spanish simultaneous translation. 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-NbtiQryVnn5X5I3c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

CSU Extension – Morgan County: <https://www.facebook.com/extensionmorgancounty/>