

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

Ashe County Center

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Become a Part of National "Dine In" Day

December 3, 2016 is Family and Consumer Sciences "Dine In Day"; a national initiative to encourage families to prepare and eat a healthy meal together at home and to raise awareness of the importance of families eating meals together. Eating together is a bonding experience for families. Setting a goal to have meals together at least 3 times a week can generate feeling of comfort and closeness. Regular meals together may provide a greater sense of stability for children and provide time for quality communication. Guarding mealtimes by turning off the television, cell phones and any other distraction is important. Eating meals at home also provides an opportunity to eat healthier.

New Wall Hanging Displayed in Agriculture Service Center

A special thank you to Extension and Community Association (ECA) members Sue Bradshaw, President of the Nathan's Creek ECA and Carol Skroch, a member of the Nathan's Creek ECA for creating the beautiful quilted wall hanging that hangs in the Agriculture Service Center Conference Room. The piece was quilted by Gillian Winterton of Laurel Springs Quilting and framed in a custom built barn wood frame by Barry Woodie, Maintenance Supervisor for Ashe County.

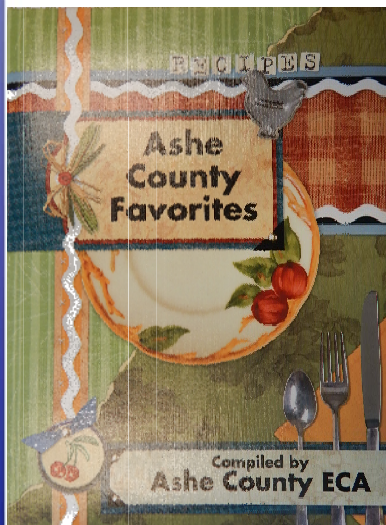
If you have not been one of the many who have attended meetings or educational programs in the Agriculture Service Center and seen the wall hanging, take time to come by and see the work of creative and skilled volunteers.



ECA Cookbooks Available

If you are looking for a special gift, consider a cookbook compiled by Ashe County Extension and Community Association (ECA). ECA has reordered a limited number of their cookbook, "Ashe County Favorites," after many requests from people who did not get a copy of the first printing and they have arrived! Cookbooks are \$15.00 and proceeds from the sale of the cookbooks will go to an endowment to benefit Ashe County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Program to be used for materials for educational programs.

For more information call the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Ashe County Center at (336) 846-5850.



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National Apple Month

October was National Apple Month. According to information from the National Apple Association, there is truth to the old expression, "An apple a day can help keep the doctor away." Research has continued to show a correlation of powerful antioxidants in apples and reduced risks of disease such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Eating apples increases the number of good gut bacteria; eating an apple a day for four weeks lowered blood levels of LDL cholesterol, the "bad cholesterol," by 40% in participants of a university research project. Women who eat a diet high in fruits (including apples) may have a lower risk of bone fractures. Soluble fiber, such as the pectin found in apples, may strengthen the immune system. Another research study found that overweight women who increased their apple consumption to 3 apples a day lost more weight on a low calorie diet than those who did not add fruit to their diet.

When selecting apples, select those that are firm to the touch and fragrant with no skin breaks or bruises, being careful to prevent bruising. Storing apples in the refrigerator slows the ripening and helps keep them crisp. Keep apples away from foods with strong odors as they will absorb odors and have an off flavor. Apples can keep 4-6 weeks when stored under refrigeration. Apples "mellow" and soften at room temperature. Remember to wash apples before eating, using running water and friction. It is common for apples to oxidize and become brown when cut. To prevent browning, place cut apples in a mixture of 1 part lemon juice to 3 parts water, or use a commercial anti-browning product (such as Fruit Fresh).

The following recipes using apples are great for the cold weather months ahead and will fill your home with the aroma of apples and spice.



Baked Apples

Cut cone shaped "caps" from tops of unpeeled apples and remove cores. Peel a narrow strip around the "equator" of the apple to prevent the apple from splitting as it swells in cooking. Place apples in a baking dish that has been sprayed with vegetable spray. Fill center of the apple with chopped dried fruit (*raisins, dates, figs, or dried pineapple*) and nuts (*pecans or almonds*). Apples may also be filled with leftover cooked rice. Once the apples are filled, sprinkle them with cinnamon. Bake on 350 degrees about 25 minutes or until apples are fork tender. Serve hot, warm or cold, as a side dish. They may also be served for breakfast. Store leftovers in the refrigerator.

Apple Cake

The following recipe for fresh apple cake is quick and easy to make and has more apples in it than most apple cakes. It is delicious plain, served with whipped cream or can be iced with your choice of icing.

Ingredients:

4 cups chopped apples
1 3/4 cups white sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup vegetable oil
2 eggs, beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 9x13 inch baking pan. In a bowl, stir together the sugar, flour, baking soda, salt and spices until well mixed and set aside. In a large bowl, stir together oil, eggs and vanilla, mix well. Stir in the dry ingredients, add apples then the nuts. Pour into the prepared pan and spread evenly. Batter will be thick. Bake in the preheated oven for 45 minutes, or until cake springs back to the touch.



The Best Medicine During Cold and Flu Season

Our mothers reminded us. We learned it in elementary school. We reminded those with whom we work and we try to remember ourselves because we know it is important. And we know how to do it, yet we sometimes forget and take shortcuts! What is it? Handwashing!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, handwashing reduces the amount of antibiotics people need which can help prevent antibiotic resistance. It can prevent 30% of diarrhea related illnesses and 20% of respiratory infections. Handwashing also helps prevent illness from germs already resistant to antibiotics and difficult to treat.

Wash hands following these steps:

1. Wet your hands with running water — either warm or cold
2. Apply liquid, bar or powder soap
3. Lather well
4. Rub your hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds (*singing happy birthday twice is about 20 seconds*)
5. Rinse well
6. Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel or air dryer
7. If possible, use a towel or your elbow to turn off the faucet

Remember to wash hands:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

Pumpkin Pancakes

(makes 8 pancakes)

Looking for ways to use pumpkin during the holidays? This recipe for pumpkin pancakes makes eight fluffy, delicious pancakes.

Ingredients:

2 cups dry pancake mix
1 cup water
1/2 cup 7-Up or water*
3/4 cup canned pumpkin
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch of cloves



Directions:

In a large bowl, mix together the pancake mix, water and 7-Up until well blended. Add pumpkin, cinnamon and cloves and mix until blended. If the mix is too thick add a little water; if too thin, add a little more pancake mix. Heat griddle and spray with cooking spray. Pour 1/4 cup of batter onto griddle or in skillet. When bubbles appear on the top of the pancakes, flip and cook until golden on both sides. Serve with maple syrup or your favorite pancake topping.

*7-Up makes pancakes lighter and fluffier – you may use all water if you wish.

Tips For Using A Slow Cooker (Crock Pot)

Preparing food in a slow cooker is a great way for busy people to have home cooked meals with little clean up.

Do you know if your slow cooker cooks food to a safe temperature? If you are not sure, take the following steps to check your cooker for accuracy.

- Fill the cooker with 8 cups of water. Heat the water on low for 8 hours.
- Check the water temperature with a food thermometer. Do this quickly as the temperature drops 10 to 15 degrees once the lid is removed.
- If the temperature is less than 185 degrees, the cooker is not safe to use and should be replaced.



After testing your cooker, practice these tips for safe cooking.

- Always start with a clean cooker, utensils and work area.
- Wash hands before and during food preparation, especially after handling meat and poultry.
- Refrigerate perishable foods until preparation time. You can chop meats and vegetables in advance, but they must be stored separately in covered containers in the refrigerator.
- Use only thawed meat or poultry.
- Do not place large pieces of meat or a whole chicken in the slow cooker. Instead cut into small pieces. Otherwise, the food will cook so slowly that the temperature could stay in the danger zone (*for bacterial growth*) too long.
- Fill the cooker between 1/2 and 2/3 full. Vegetables cook slower than meat or poultry so place them on the bottom, add the meat, then cover with liquid (*broth or sauce*).
- Don't peek! Every time you remove the lid, it can take 20 minutes to regain the lost heat.
- If you are not home during the entire slow cooking process and the power goes out, throw out the food, even if it looks done!
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat and poultry dishes have reached a safe internal temperature.
- Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking.

Cornbread Casserole

The following recipe for cornbread casserole is made in the crock pot. Not only is it a comfort food for cold weather, it uses ingredients that we often have on hand.

Ingredients:

1 (19oz) can dark red kidney beans, *drained and rinsed*
 1/2 medium onion, *chopped fine*
 1 red pepper, *chopped*
 1 jalapeño pepper, *chopped*
 1 cup frozen corn kernels
 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 tablespoon brown sugar
 2 tablespoons hot sauce
 1 cup taco sauce
 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 1 box cornbread mix
 Fresh cilantro, *optional*

Instructions:

Gently mix together all of the ingredients except the cheese, cornbread mix and cilantro in slow cooker. Cover and cook on low 3 to 4 hours. Prepare cornbread batter. While batter is setting, sprinkle bean mixture with cheese. When batter is thick, pour over the top of the bean mixture and cheese. Cover and cook on high 30 minutes or until cornbread is cook through. Top each serving with cilantro, if desired. Store leftovers in the refrigerator.



Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Shepherd

Carolyn Shepherd
 Ashe County Extension Director