

# FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER

Ashe County Center

March 2017

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## How Long Will They Last?

Do you remember when appliance manufacturers prided themselves on selling appliances made to last? At one time, major household appliances would last as long as you owned your home. While we expect today's refrigerators, washers, dryers, ranges and dishwashers to last as long as they did in the past, their life expectancy is often ten years or less. Even though they won't last as long, technology has enabled us to have higher efficiency appliances which lowers the cost of operation. For example, today's washers and dishwashers use much less water; older dishwashers used ten gallons of water, today's use three to five gallons. Older washers used 35-50 gallons of water per load, newer high efficiency models 12-15 gallons.



What can you do to extend the life of newer appliances? Appliance experts recommend in addition to following manufacturers instructions in the owner's manual:

- ✓ Rinsing or scraping the solids off dishes before loading them into the dishwasher
- ✓ Cleaning dust from the coils at the bottom of the refrigerator often to prevent the appliance from working harder to stay cool
- ✓ Do not use foil under the coils in the oven to catch drips; oven coils can overheat and burn out faster.
- ✓ Prevent additional wear on the washing machine by not overloading. Overdosing laundry detergent can build up in the washer, so measure the detergent. Using detergent designed for HE washers creates fewer suds, which also helps prevent build up.
- ✓ Clean the lint from the dryer after every load of clothes has been dried. Also clean the dryer hose that carries air and lint to the outside of your home at least once a year for maximum efficiency and fire prevention.

## Product Labels Are Changing

Have you ever been confused by the many dates found on food and other products? There is the sell by date, use by date, best if used by, best before date or expires on a specific date. To help make purchasing products simpler and reduce food waste, labels may be changing. New labels will list only two phrases.

"Best If Used By" describes product quality, where the product may not taste or perform as expected but is safe to use or consume. Grocery manufacturers and retailers have proposed the change to ensure standard wording on packaged products that speaks to quality and safety.

The "Use By" date applies to products that are highly perishable and/or cause a food safety concern over time. These products should be consumed by the date listed on the package and disposed of after that date.

BEST IF USED BY  
DEC 11 16  
TFMD333B1 21:31  
Product of USA

Households waste an estimated \$1500 a year as a result of confusion over date markings.

New labeling should help reduce food waste.

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# Preventing Food Borne Illness

Food borne illness, or as it was once called food poisoning, is often in the news with recalls of products and closing of businesses that have been linked to making people sick. We can easily make ourselves sick by not following basic food safety at home. Here are some steps that can help keep us healthy as we prepare and enjoy meals at home.

**Clean Surfaces** - Bacteria that cause illness can survive in many places around your kitchen. Keep countertops and other kitchen surfaces clean to prevent cross contamination.

- ✓ Clean surfaces with hot water and soap to remove dirt and debris. Do this after preparing each food item and before going on to the next food item.
- ✓ Keep your refrigerator clean: Wipe spills immediately and regularly clean the inside with hot water and liquid soap. Dry with paper towels.
- ✓ After cleaning, you may sanitize surfaces as an extra precaution to kill germs. Mix a solution of one tablespoon of unscented (*regular*) liquid chlorine bleach and one gallon of water. Apply to surfaces and allow to stand for several minutes. Air dry or pat dry with fresh paper towels.

**Rinse Produce** - Rinse fresh fruits and veggies under running water just before eating, even if you plan to cut or peel them, because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside during cutting or peeling.

- ✓ Firm skinned fruits and veggies should be rubbed by hand to create friction or scrubbed with a clean brush while rinsing under running water.
- ✓ Packaged fruits and veggies labeled “ready to eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” do not need to be washed. Doing so may increase the risk for cross contamination.
- ✓ Dry fruits and veggies with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- ✓ Do not use soap or bleach to wash produce. These products are not intended for consumption.
- ✓ For more information, check out ProducePro factsheet at [fightbac.org](http://fightbac.org)

## Read The Label

Did you know that disinfectants can take from 30 seconds to 10 minutes to kill germs or mold/mildew? Read the label. Different products work in different ways and can have different instructions for use.

The label is where to find how to use a cleaning product. Follow the directions to get the best results.

## Sleep Your Way To Health

Snoozing more than five hours a night can lower your risk of developing hypertension, while sleeping more than six can help keep existing cases under control, say researchers at the University of Chicago. And, new research in the journal *Hypertension* has named sleep quality a factor: A lack of deep sleep, also known as slow wave sleep, was found to raise the risk of hypertension by up to 80% among elderly men. If you've been tossing and turning, talk to your healthcare provider.

## Hand Sanitizer

Tis the season for colds and flu. Are you one of the people who apply hand sanitizer often to prevent illness by keeping harmful bacteria off your hands? For hand sanitizer to be most effective look for a product that contains at least 60% alcohol. Remember to allow the sanitizer to air dry (*without wiping hands dry*). Check the date on the bottle to make sure it has not expired. Hand sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs and are not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy.



## Staying Healthy At Work

Every year, the flu costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$7 billion in sick days and lost productivity. Last year, 79% of workers reported going to work sick, exposing healthy workers to active germs. Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces is critical to keeping your employees healthy. Desktops, computers, telephones and other high touch workplace surfaces (*light switches, door handles, restroom surfaces, etc.*) are perfect places for cross contamination of germs that spread contagious illnesses. Disinfecting high touch surfaces often can help promote a healthier workplace.

# Ashe County Drinking Water Screening For Private Water Supplies

Private drinking water supplies (*wells and springs*) should be screened each year for bacteria if your well is older than 5 years. Drinking water springs should be screened annually.

**Date:** Tuesday, March 7, 2017

**Time:** 7:30 a.m.—2:00 p.m. (*or until 150 bottles have been distributed*)

**Cost:** \$10.00 Ashe County Residents, \$12.00 Out of County Residents

**Where:** Agriculture Service Center Conference Room (*134 Government Circle, Jefferson, NC 28640*)

## To participate in the water screening:

- Come to the Agriculture Service Center Conference Room on March 7, 2017 between 7:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- You will receive a sterile bottle for collecting drinking water sample and directions on how to take the sample for accurate results
- You will be given dates to choose when you would prefer to return water sample to the Agriculture Service Center
- You will receive your screening results by mail in 2-3 weeks of your screening
- You will receive recommendations on how to improve your water quality if bacteria is found

## Coliform Bacteria:

**Coliform bacteria have no color, smell or taste.** The only way to detect if water is contaminated is to have water screened. Coliform bacteria are “indicators.” If they are present in your water supply, this indicates the possibility that other potentially harmful bacteria are also present. Coliform bacteria are naturally present in the soil and can enter drinking water supplies that are not properly sealed.

## Fecal Coliform Bacteria:

Fecal coliform bacteria come from the intestines of humans and warm-blooded animals. If they are present, this indicates that other potentially harmful bacteria and viruses from sewage, septic system leachate, or manure may also be present. These can cause serious illnesses, such as dysentery, cholera and hepatitis. Others cause cramps and severe diarrhea, which can be fatal in young infants, the elderly, or people already in poor health or with compromised immune systems.

**Water with coliform bacteria or fecal matter has no odor, taste or color.** The only way to know if water is contaminated is to have water screened.

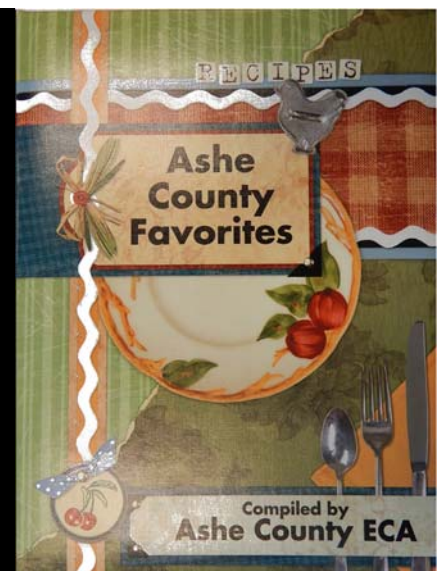
*Sponsored by: North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Ashe County Center and Town of Jefferson Water Resources*

## ECA Cookbooks Available

If you are looking for a special gift for yourself or someone else, 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.



# Scarves



Cold weather has us covered up with layers of clothes. Items we often wear over and over are scarves. Since they are worn next to our skin, they absorb body oil and perfumes which can cause fabric damage. A scarf worn most days should be washed at least two times per month, especially during the cold weather season. Follow manufacture instructions for cleaning scarves, which is the best way to help them last longer. If care labels are going to be removed from scarves, snap a picture of the label to reference when it comes time to clean it.

## Where Are You Storing Your "Stuff"

If you are like most of us, you may have accumulated more “stuff” than you have storage space. This is how things that are important to us often end up in our basements. Once there, out of sight, out of mind. Meanwhile, time passes and depending on the condition of your basement and how things were prepared for storage will determine if your valuables will stand the test of time. The majority of most basements are below grade which makes them susceptible to moisture. Running a dehumidifier in the basement can help preserve stored belongings and help protect the basement from mold and mildew. Keeping the relative humidity of the basement at or below 50 degrees will keep mold and mildew from growing. Investing in a hygrometer will help you know the relative humidity in your basement. Running the dehumidifier and keeping the water emptied can play an important part in keeping your stored valuables in good condition. Use air tight hard plastic containers and store them off the floor—some sources recommend one foot above the floor.

## Roasted Vegetables

Tired of the same old vegetable prepared the same old way or struggling to get family members to eat vegetables?

Try roasted vegetables. This technique enables you to use whatever you have on hand to make a wonderful side dish. Scrub the outside of the vegetable and leave peeling on for added nutrition and fiber.

### Ingredients

Your choice of raw vegetable (*sweet potatoes, yellow squash, zucchini, carrots, potatoes, asparagus, yellow, red or green peppers, onions*)

Olive oil or vegetable oil (*enough to coat veggies*)

Fresh grated garlic or garlic powder (*amount to your liking*)

Fresh (*or dried*) thyme (*amount to your liking*)

Rosemary, *if desired*

Salt (*amount to your liking*)

Pepper (*amount to your liking*)



### Instructions

Preheat oven to 375-400 degrees or higher. Wash and scrub vegetables. Cut into one inch pieces. Dry with a paper towel or drain. This will help the oil stick to the vegetables. Place cut vegetables into a bowl or plastic food grade bag. Add oil, grated garlic, salt, pepper and herbs. Close bag and move vegetables around to coat, or if using a bowl, stir to coat. Spray a baking pan (*9x13 or larger*) with vegetable spray and place vegetables in a single layer on the pan. Place pan in the oven and set time for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and turn/stir vegetables. Place back in oven and cook until tender and beginning to turn slightly brown.

### Notes

- \* *To prevent having to scrub the baking pan, line with heavy foil and spray foil with vegetable spray before adding vegetables.*
- \* *The higher the temperature of the oven, the more closely the vegetables need to be watched.*
- \* *Be sure to cook in a single layer; if they are not, the vegetables will steam not roast, leaving them less solid.*

# If the power goes out, what can I keep?

Refrigerated Foods - If the power goes out, what can I keep? If your power goes out for an extended time, here are some tips to remember.

- Keep the refrigerator doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature
- Place a thermometer in your fridge and freezer
- Use a tip-sensitive digital thermometer to check foods (cooking and storage temperatures)
- Have items that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on an outdoor grill
- Unsafe food may not appear or smell to be spoiled
- A closed fridge will keep food below 41 degrees about 4 hours after a power loss
- A closed freezer can keep food below 41 degrees for up to 48 hours if full and the door/lid is kept closed

Foods that are safe to keep if they are held above 41 degrees for over two hours include:

- Butter, margarine
- Hard cheeses: cheddar, Colby, swiss, parmesan, provolone, romano
- Processed cheeses
- Grated parmesan, romano or combination (*in can or jar*)
- Peanut butter
- Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles
- Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, hoisin sauces
- Open vinegar based dressings
- Pies, *fruit*
- Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas
- Breakfast foods - waffles, pancakes, bagels
- Fruit juices, *opened*
- Canned fruits, *opened*
- Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates
- Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices
- Vegetables, *raw*



## Surviving Allergy Season

Spring is just around the corner and many of us dread the pollen that often ends up in our homes. To help prevent runny eyes and nose and the discomfort of allergy season, here are a few steps to take to improve indoor air.

- Keep windows closed during allergy season to prevent pollen from drifting in.
- Place walk off mats at each entryway to your home to “catch” pollens that are normally tracked throughout the home on our shoes.
- Change the filters often in your heating/cooling system. Use filters that will trap large and small particles. Change the filter when it looks dirty.
- Avoid “stirring up” pollen during cleaning. Dust with a damp cloth (*instead of a dry one*). Spray polish/cleaner on the cloth to capture the pollen and dust.
- Use a vacuum cleaner that prevents dust and pollen from escaping once in the appliance.
- Pollen collects on our clothes and hair when we are outdoors during high pollen times. Changing clothes and washing hair often will help prevent runny eyes and nose.



# Upcoming Extension and Community Association (ECA) Meetings

## Jefferson ECA

March 10, 2017

10:00 a.m.

Agriculture Service Center Conference Room

April 14, 2017

10:00 a.m.

Agriculture Service Center Conference Room

May 12, 2017

10:00 a.m.

Agriculture Service Center Conference Room

## Nathans Creek ECA

March 15, 2017

11:30 a.m.

Smoky Mountain Barbeque

April 19, 2017

11:30 a.m.

Smoky Mountain Barbeque

May 17, 2017

11:30 a.m.

Smoky Mountain Barbeque

## *Special Announcement*

I will be retiring in March from my position as Ashe County Extension Director and Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences. I have been fortunate to be able to return to my hometown to a job that I have enjoyed. My work with Extension has enabled me to teach subjects in Family and Consumer Sciences, or as it was called when I was in college, Home Economics. Watching youth and adults learn skills that have improved their everyday lives has been rewarding. I have loved meeting people throughout the county and state that, without working in my role, I would have never met. I have been amazed at the generosity of people in our county, having watched many give hours and hours of time and skills, along with financial resources for the betterment of others throughout our county and abroad. A special thank you to the Ashe County ECA members and Ashe Extension Advisory Council for their time and talents and other resources provided to make a difference in our county.

I am leaving behind an excellent staff who are committed to their work and the betterment of our county. They are awesome.

Extension Administrative Assistant Vickie Moore is also retiring. What an asset she has been to our office and Extension! She will be missed.

I hope you will continue to support Extension in our county. I have seen first hand its value. Extension resources and opportunities have benefitted many people in our county every day.

My very best to you.

Sincerely,

*Carolyn B. Shepherd*

Carolyn Shepherd  
Ashe County Extension Director