Madison County Cooperative Extension Staff will be conducting a series of workshops on various topics. Listed are dates and topics. All events will be held at the Madison County Cooperative Extension Office.

- **April 22:** Youth Mini Garden Project  
  4pm – 5:30pm
- **May 26:** Growing a Vegetable Garden  
  1pm – 2:30pm and 6pm – 7:30pm
- **July 28:** Wildlife Habitat Management  
  6pm – 8pm
- **August 20:** Detoxify Your Home  
  1pm – 2:30pm and 6pm – 7:30pm
- **September 24:** Creating a Backyard Habitat  
  6pm – 8pm
- **September 15:** Composting/Vermiculture  
  1pm – 3pm and 6pm – 8pm
- **September 17:** Ecological Landscaping  
  1pm – 3pm and 6pm – 8pm
- **October 17:** Solar Energy for the House and Farm  
  9am – 4pm

Please see enclosed flier for details.

**Peanut Butter, Pet Food and Pot Pies: Avoiding Food Safety Issues in Child Care & Senior Citizen Setting**

*(This training was rescheduled from February 2009)*

With over an estimated 76 million food borne illnesses in the US each year, food safety is a hot topic in homes, grocery stores, restaurants and child care settings. Peanut butter, pet food and potpies contaminated with microorganisms have all caused illnesses and generated media coverage in recent years. Through examples drawn from recent outbreaks, this workshop will help you identify and manage food safety risks and help you develop a culture of food safety in your center.

**Presenter:** Dr. Ben Chapman, NCSU Food Safety Extension Specialist  
**When:** Thursday, June 4, 2009  
**Where:** Madison County Extension Center  
**Time:** 6:00pm – 6:30 pm Dinner and 6:30pm – 8:30pm Workshop
Canning season is just around the corner and it’s time to get prepared. Check equipment to make sure it is ready for use. Buy new lids to replace the lids used last year. Call our office to set up an appointment for checking your pressure gauge.

To learn more about canning or just to brush up on the newest information on food preservation, come to the **Canning and Preserving Made Easy** workshop. This program will be an introduction to canning, pickling, making jams and jellies, freezing, drying and storage.

**When:** Tuesday, May 19, 2009  
**Where:** Buncombe County Extension Center  
**Time:** 6:00pm – 9:30pm  
**Cost:** $10.00 (or $15.00 for couples)  
Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary by calling: Sue Estridge, Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Science at (828) 649-2411.

Other upcoming hands on canning classes this season are:  
**Making Strawberry Jam** - June 4th 9:00am – 1:00pm  
**Making Dill Pickles and Relish** - July 9th 1:00pm – 4:00pm  
**Canning Tomatoes** - August 6th 1:00pm – 4:00pm  
**Location:** Buncombe County Extension Center  
Call our office for pre-registration information and costs. Costs may vary due to cost for produce and materials.

A free energy saving workshop will be offered at the Madison County Extension Center. The workshop will cover no cost/low cost improvements where individuals can save on utility bills. Each participant will receive a free Home Energy Kit. At the end of the workshop, participants may sign up for a comprehensive home energy assessment by a Certified Home Energy Rater. Market value for a home energy assessment is $450.00 - you pay only $100.00. A $350.00 dollar savings! Only participants in the workshop will qualify and some restrictions will apply.

**When:** Thursday, May 28, 2009  
**Where:** Madison County Extension Center  
**Time:** 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm  
**Cost:** Free  
Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary by calling: Sue Estridge, Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences at (828) 649-2411.

**Super Sitter Babysitting Program**

If you are 11-16 and interested in babysitting this summer, make plans to attend Extension’s Super Sitter Babysitting Program! This three day class will cover all aspects of babysitting from basic first aid, ages and stages, basic child development, preparing healthy snacks and lunches, doing business and much more. Snacks and lunch will be provided each day. Class is limited to 12 students so sign up early to guarantee your spot!

**Instructors:** Eve Kindley, Extension Agent, 4-H and Youth Development and Sue Estridge, Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences  
**When:** June 29, 30 and July 1  
**Where:** Madison County Extension Center  
**Time:** 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
**Cost:** $25  
To request a registration form, please call Madison County Cooperative Extension at 649-2411.
DATES ON EGG CARTONS

More eggs are sold around Easter than any other time of the year, so this is a good time to refresh our memory about the dates on egg cartons.

Many eggs reach stores only a few days after the hen lays them. Egg cartons with USDA grade shield on them must display the “pack date” (the day that the eggs were washed, graded and placed in the carton). The number is a three-digit code that represents the consecutive day of the year (the “Julian Date”) starting with January 1 as 001 and ending with December 31 as 365. When a “sell-by” date appears on a carton bearing the USDA grade shield, the code date may not exceed 45 days from the date of pack.

Always purchase eggs before the “Sell-By” or “EXP” date on the carton. After the eggs reach home, refrigerate the eggs in their original carton and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator, not in the door. For best quality, use eggs within 3 to 5 weeks of the date you purchase them. The ‘sell-by” date will usually expire during that length of time, but the eggs are perfectly safe to use.

Source: Jackson County Cooperative Extension

BE ON ALERT FOR FRAUD!

With the current economic situation, fraud is on the rise around the country. Con artists can steal your money, your identity and even your self-respect. Protect yourself by looking for these warning signs:

• Someone asks you to send money to claim a lottery/prize or to obtain a credit or loan.
• Someone you don’t know requests that you send money via wire transfer, the most common way fraud criminals obtain money from victims. There is NO legitimate reason for someone who claims to be giving you money to ask you to wire money.
• An unknown caller claiming to be a lawyer or in law enforcement offers to help you get your money back (for a fee).
• The deal is only good for today or a short period of time.
• The seller offers “free gifts” in return for a minimum effort or fee.
• A “repair person” suddenly finds a dangerous defect in your car or home.
• You are given little or no time to read a contract.
• Someone is trying to scare you into purchasing credit protection plans.
• You are asked for your bank account or credit card number.

The best way to help stop fraud is to report it. IF a scam artist has contacted you or if you’ve been defrauded, contact the Federal Trade Commission and local law enforcement. By contacting the FTC at 1-877-382-4357 you can prevent others from becoming victims. The FTC gathers evidence, identifies fraud trends, and alerts law enforcement throughout the U.S., Canada and abroad.

Source: Jackson County Cooperative Extension
GYO- Grow Your Own

Remember the Victory Gardens of World II? There’s a new movement in the United States- “recession gardens”! More families are getting serious about gardening both to reduce food costs and to enjoy fresher produce. Are you planting your own garden this year? Here are 5 important components of vegetable gardening:

1. **Pick the right site.** Three elements are critical to a successful vegetable garden: sunlight, water and soil. At least 6 hours of sunlight are needed daily throughout the growing season. A close source of water is important- the closer to a faucet or hose the better. As for soil, it can be amended and improved over time to make it more productive. Now is a good time to come by the Cooperative Extension Office and pick up soil sample boxes and instructions. You send the samples off to the Soil Analysis Lab in Raleigh (you are responsible for postage) and then you get an analysis of your soil and what it needs, free of charge.

2. **Start small, then grow.** A huge garden can be overwhelming for a first time gardener or for someone who doesn’t have the time or energy to maintain it. The smartest strategy is to grow your garden slowly, as you learn what works best in your location and what your family likes to eat the most. Consider container gardening with a few containers on your deck or patio. Or how about a salad garden of lettuce and other greens, herbs, tomatoes and maybe radishes? What about a pizza garden- a fun one for kids to grow with Roma tomatoes, onions, garlic, basil, oregano and a pepper or two?

3. **Pick the right seeds or plants.** Some vegetables grow well from seeds (carrots, lettuce, beans and peas for example). Other do best with an indoor or greenhouse start, such as tomatoes, peppers and herbs. You may have heirloom seeds passed down in your family that you want to use. Look for unusual varieties to try too.

4. **Feed and water with care.** Once planted, the work is just beginning. Throughout the growing season your plants need enough moisture and the right balance of nutrients. Look at the instructions on your seed packet for information. Check out a gardening book from the library, call the Cooperative Extension Office for more information, or talk with a green-thumbed family member or friend.

5. **Pick and use the fruits and vegetables of your labor.** Harvest time is the tastiest part of the season. Freshly picked fruits and vegetables from your garden taste wonderful and they are nutritious too. Look for delicious ways to prepare them. Preserve some for use later in the year. Check out the upcoming food preservation workshops offered by Cooperative Extension this spring and summer.

*Source: Jackson County Cooperative Extension*

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**Ten Ways to Use Your Freezer As A Money Saver**

Whether you have a stand-alone freezer unit or yours is part of your refrigerator, your freezer is either costing a lot in wasted energy or it’s saving you a bundle in food costs. Here’s how to make sure your freezer is saving you money:

1. Get a refrigerator/freezer thermometer to check the temperature. The closer to zero degrees Fahrenheit your freezer stays, the better. Food kept at zero degrees will last months longer than, say, 20 or 31 degrees.

2. Trapped air causes freezer burn. Make sure you select a container small enough so the contents fill it. You can remove a great deal of the air from a freezer bag without a fancy vacuum-sealing machine. Seal all but enough space to slip in a drinking straw. Now inhale on that straw to pull all the air out of the bag. Quickly zip the last bit. Pop it into the freezer.

3. It takes a lot more electricity to keep an empty freezer at zero degrees than a full one. Pack it as tightly as you can. If you don’t have enough food to do that, fill empty milk cartons with water and freeze them. The square shape is better than round jugs because you can stack them like bricks. Bonus: You’ll have plenty of fresh water in the event of a power outage.

4. You can freeze fresh zucchini. Choose young squash with tender skin. Wash and cut in 1/2-inch slices. Drop into boiling water for three minutes. Cool promptly, drain and package in zip-type bags or containers leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

5. To freeze fresh herbs (basil, cilantro, etc.), wash, drain and pat dry with paper towels. Wrap a few sprigs or leaves in wax paper. Seal in a freezer bag. Freeze. While still frozen, whack the bag on the counter top and the herbs will shatter. Chopped herbs in an instant! Use as you would fresh ones.

*Continued on next page*
Ten Ways to Use Your Freezer As a Money Saver – cont’d
6. To freeze onions, chop them and spread into a single layer on a cookie sheet. Freeze. Once frozen, pour them into zip-type bags or containers and replace in freezer.
7. Take inventory. The worst thing for your electricity bill is to keep opening the freezer. Post an Inventory List on the door. As you use something, mark it off. That way, you can "shop" the list not stand there with the door open.
8. To ward off freezer burn in an opened container of ice cream, place a piece of plastic wrap over the top of the ice cream before you return it to the freezer.
9. Cheese freezes well, but it changes consistency. Once frozen, you won't be able to slice it. Instead of freezing a large block, grate the cheese before freezing and freeze in smaller portions.
10. Before freezing bread and bakery items, slip a paper towel inside the bag to cover the item. Re-close, pressing out as much air as possible. It will be fresh months from now.

Source: Everyday Cheapskate

FOODS AND NUTRITION

Cheap and Healthy Shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grains</th>
<th>Produce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown or white rice</td>
<td>Cabbage</td>
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<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
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<td>Barley</td>
<td>Romaine</td>
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<td>Corn meal or grits</td>
<td>Leaf lettuce</td>
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<td>Store brand pasta</td>
<td>Cauliflower</td>
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<td>Beans and lentils</td>
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<td>Eggs</td>
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<td>Whole chicken</td>
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<td>Peanut butter</td>
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<td>Store specials on fish, meat, poultry</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9 Often Overlooked Cost Savers
1. Having the right ingredients on hand for preparing meals means you won’t spend extra dollars dining out.
2. Some options, such as chicken breast cutlets or ground turkey breast are good because they enable you to serve less meat per person.
3. Vegetarian options, such as lentils and rice, or bean soup with vegetables, are hearty and cheap and good for you!
4. Cabbage is often forgotten. You can use it for slaw, tacos, stir-fry dishes and more. It is cheaper than lettuce so helps you stretch the budget - buy one head of lettuce and when that runs out serve slaw - or stretch your tossed salad with shredded cabbage.
5. Apples and carrots make great snacks, brown bag treats and side dishes for meals and they are cheap when bought in bulk.
6. Grapes get used better and are great grab and go snacks when you wash them and portion them into baggies in your refrigerator. Choose them instead of chips!
7. Potatoes are under used. You can make oven fries, mashed potatoes, baked potatoes and even pizza with them!
8. Coupon clipping is only good when you are buying things you use on a regular basis otherwise the time is better spent to learn to cook more dishes rather than buy more convenience foods.
9. The best place to shop is often in your own pantry or freezer. Plan meals around using up things you have on hand.

Search for recipes with these items at www.foodandhealth.com

Source: Communicating Food for Health Article, March 2009
If you would like more information on any of the articles or interested in learning more about our programs, please feel free to call me at 828-649-2411.

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