



Family & Consumer News



Surry County Center

August - October 2019

Inside This Issue

*What's in Season?
Bell Peppers*

*Freezing Bell or Sweet
Peppers*

*Food Safety Tips for
College Students and
Those of us at Home*

*Unlocking the
Mysteries of Medicare*

Diabetes & You

*Stop the Energy
Vampires*

Calendar of Events

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What's in Season? Bell Peppers

Named for their bell-like shape, bell or sweet peppers are actually a fruit that is in the same family as tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant. They come in a variety of colors, including green, red, yellow, orange, purple, white and brown. Their sweet, mild flavor and crisp, juicy flesh make them a cooking staple. Bell peppers can be stuffed and baked, grilled, roasted, stir-fried and served in salads, stews, and soups.

Red peppers are an excellent source of both vitamins A and C. Green peppers, the most common variety of bell pepper, are picked before they ripen and have a slightly sharper flavor. When left to ripen, green peppers turn sweeter and turn red, yellow, or other colors depending on the variety.

When purchasing bell peppers, you should be sure to select firm, crisp peppers that feel heavy for their size. They should be shiny and richly colored. Avoid any that are shriveled or have soft spots. For stuffed peppers, choose round, blocky-shaped peppers. Refrigerate unwashed peppers in a plastic bag for up to 1 week.

Red, yellow and other colored peppers are slightly more perishable than green peppers. Wrap leftover cut peppers in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 to 2 days.

When preparing always be sure to rinse bell peppers under cold running water just before using. To chop or slice, stand pepper on its end on a cutting board. Cut down 3 to 4 times to form vertical slices. Discard the stem, core and seeds. Remove the white veins or membranes. To cut the pepper into rings or prepare for stuffing, make a circular cut around the top of the pepper with a paring knife. Pull out and discard the stem, core and seeds. Slice crosswise to form rings or leave whole for stuffing.

Source: Oregon State Cooperative Extension

Freezing Bell or Sweet Peppers

Have more peppers than what you need and want to save money this winter? Freeze them! Peppers are one of the foods you can quickly freeze raw without blanching first. Frozen peppers work especially well as an ingredient in cooked dishes.

1. Select crisp, tender peppers.
2. Wash.
3. Cut out stems and cut peppers in half.
4. Remove seeds and membrane -- save time by using the tip of a spoon to scrape out seeds and membrane.
5. Cut peppers into strips, dice or slice, depending on how you plan to use them.
6. Freeze peppers in a single layer on a cookie sheet with sides, about an hour or longer until frozen. This method is often referred to as "tray freezing".
7. Transfer to a "freezer" bag when frozen, removing as much air as possible from the bag. The peppers will remain separated for easy measuring for use in recipes.
8. Pour out the amount of frozen peppers needed, reseal the bag and return to the freezer.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cooperative Extension



NC COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION

Food Safety Tips For College Students and Those of us at Home

When students pack up for college, they take along the basics - clothes, shoes, TV and laptop. Many students will also arrive at school with a microwave oven, mini-fridge, and other small kitchen appliances. Most students, however, don't know there are food safety considerations when cooking with these appliances.

College students are under a lot of pressure and they often get their meals the quickest and easiest way possible. When it comes to safely preparing meals, many college kids simply don't know what it takes to make the grade in food safety, and may end up with a foodborne illness.

The [USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline](#) receives many calls from parents or students with questions about the handling and storage of food for college kids. Here is a sampling of questions about how to safely cook and prepare foods while away at school.

Q: Several slices of pizza have been left out overnight. Is the pizza still safe to eat?

A. No. Perishable food should never be left out of refrigeration more than 2 hours. This is true even if there are no meat products on the pizza. Foodborne bacteria that may be present on these foods grow fastest in the "Danger Zone" (temperatures between 40 and 140°F. Discard all perishable food left at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in air temperatures above 90°F. Use safely refrigerated food in 3 to 4 days; frozen leftovers, 1 to 2 months.

Q: When I microwave the food according to the package's instructions, it's still partly frozen. Why doesn't it get hot enough?

A. In a large building like a dorm, electrical equipment such as computers, toaster-ovens, hair dryers and irons compete for current and

reduce the electrical wattage of a microwave. A community oven that has been used just before you, will cook slower than a cold oven. To compensate, set the microwave for the maximum time given in the instructions. Avoid using an extension cord with the microwave because power is reduced as it flows down the cord. Also, the cord might not be grounded.

Cover foods during cooking. Remember to stir or rearrange food and rotate the dish to eliminate cold spots where harmful bacteria can survive, and to promote more even cooking. Allow for standing time. The food continues to cook during this period. Finally, use a food thermometer to ensure the food reaches the safe internal temperature of 165°F. If the food has not reached that temperature or is not steaming hot, add more cooking time.

Q: What containers are safe for microwaving foods?

A. Glass, ceramic, and plastic utensils labeled for microwave oven use are safe. Microwave plastic wraps, wax paper, cooking bags, parchment paper, and white microwave-safe paper towels should be safe to use. Do not let plastic wrap touch foods during microwaving.

Do not use plastic cold-storage containers such as margarine tubs, take-out containers, whipped topping bowls, and other one-time use containers. The containers can warp or melt, possibly causing harmful chemicals to migrate into the food. Never use thin plastic storage bags, brown paper or plastic grocery bags, newspapers, or aluminum foil in the microwave oven.

For more information, visit <https://www.foodsafety.gov/>, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or email your question to: mpholine.fsis@usda.gov.

Unlocking the Mysteries of Medicare

Does trying to pick the best Medicare prescription drug plan for you feel like trying to solve a mystery? Do you feel like you have more questions than answers? If so, join our SHIIP volunteers for one of the "Unlocking the Mysteries of Medicare" seminars. There will be fun, fellowship, and free gifts for everyone! We will also try to answer your questions in order to assist you in finding the best plan to fit your needs! Space is limited, pre-registration is required! Call 336-401-8025 to register!

October 18, 2019
10:00 am - 12:00 Noon
Surry County Resource Center,
Mt. Airy

October 25, 2019
10:00 am - 12:00 Noon
Pilot Center of SCC

November 1, 2019
10:00 am - 12:00 Noon
Elkin Center of SCC



NC DEPARTMENT OF
INSURANCE
SENIORS' HEALTH INSURANCE
INFORMATION PROGRAM

Diabetes & You

Are you or a loved one living with diabetes? Would you like to learn more about diabetes and try new diabetic friendly recipes? Join us! All classes are held from 12:00 Noon - 1:00 pm and are FREE to attend. Seats are limited. Call 336-401-8025 to register!

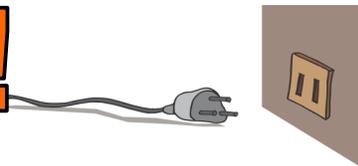
"Building Balanced Smoothies"
August 28, 2019

N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson

"Back to the Basics of Diabetes & Foot Care"
September 18, 2019
Reeves Community Center, Mt. Airy

"What Can I Eat?"
October 9, 2019
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Stop the Energy Vampires!



Remember the time when your home had only one TV and a computer was something you only needed at work? These days, most homes have multiple TVs and computers, all connected to various devices such as DVD players, game consoles, external monitors, and printers. While these cool electronics are packed with features that entertain us or help us be more productive, the energy consumed by all these gadgets in our homes can add up to nearly 10% of a household's monthly electric bill! The problem is that many people forget to turn off their devices when they aren't using them, and many electronics even continue to draw power after they've been turned off, wasting energy in the form of "vampire loads".

There is a convenient and low-cost solution. Replacing your conventional power strips with advanced power strips (APS) can help reduce the electricity wasted when these devices are idle, without your having to change the way you normally use your electronics. This would be a great holiday gift idea for those on your list which are a challenge to buy for.

APS are designed primarily for home entertainment centers and home office areas where there are typically many consumer electronics plugged into a power strip, and they work by preventing electronics from drawing power when they are off or not being used. There are a variety of different types of APS to fit different people's needs. For example, if you often fall asleep when watching TV at night, an activity monitor APS can turn everything off for you. Or, if you are always diligent about turning all of your electronics off when you aren't using them but are concerned about the lingering vampire power draw, a masterless APS can make sure that everything is completely off. Investigate your options and select the APS best suited to ward off the energy vampires in your home.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) Volunteer Quarterly Update

August 16, 2019 / 12:00 Noon
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson
If interested in becoming a SHIIP volunteer, call the Extension office at 336-401-8025.

T-Shirt Quilt Workshop

August 23, 2019 / 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Alleghany
Cost: \$20. Call 336-372-5597 for more information.

Diabetes & You:

"Building Balanced Smoothies"

August 28, 2019 / 12:00 Noon
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson

ECA County Council Meeting & Lunch

September 9, 2019 / 11:00 am-1:00 pm
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson
Meeting and lunch will be held in the Extension office kitchen. Call 336-401-8025 to register.

Diabetes You:

"Back to the Basics of Diabetes & Foot Care"

September 18, 2019 / 12:00 Noon
Reeves Community Center, Mt. Airy

"I Found a Quilted Heart Project"

September 19, 2019 / 9:15 am
Armfield Civic Center, Pilot Mountain
Sponsored by the Pilot Mountain Achievers ECA Club. These easy to make hearts are a perfect project for the beginner to experienced sewers. There is no cost to attend. Call 336-401-8025 to register.

CPR and First Aid Class

September 24 2019 / 1:00 pm-4:00 pm
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson
Cost to be certified is \$25. Spaces are limited.

Diabetes & You:

"What Can I Eat?"

October 9, 2019 / 12:00 Noon
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson

ServSafe - Food Safety Course and Exam

October 14, 15 and 17, 2019
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Dobson
Cost: \$100. For more information, please call the Extension office at 336-401-8025

Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and Medicare Advantage Plan Open Enrollment Period

October 15 - December 7, 2019

Unlocking the Mysteries of Medicare

October 18, 2019 / 10:00 am-12:00 Noon
Surry County Resource Center, Mt. Airy

Unlocking the Mysteries of Medicare

October 25, 2019 / 10:00 am-12:00 Noon
Pilot Center of SCC, Pilot Mountain

Extension and Community Association (ECA) State Council Meeting

October 20-23, 2019
Lake Junaluska
Call 336-401-8025 for more information.

Unlocking the Mysteries of Medicare

November 1, 2019 / 10:00 am-12:00 Noon
Elkin Center of SCC, Elkin

ECA Achievement Program - "Hats Off to ECA" Tea Party

November 14, 2019 / 3:00 pm
More details to come.

Accommodation Statement: For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the Surry County Center at (336) 401-8025, no later than five business days before the event.

Special Note: Registration for events listed in this calendar are required unless otherwise noted. Register by calling (336-401-8025)



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