

December 2020 PSA's

12/7/2020 Pandemic-Friendly Holiday Activities

COVID-19 Has certainly put a damper on us all this year. Unfortunately it doesn't look like things will get much better anytime soon. Keep your Christmas merry and bright with these pandemic-friendly holiday activities.

- Host a virtual dinner party- share recipes with loved ones and get together on a video call to share what you made.
- Get out and exercise- possibly the easiest thing you can do that will work wonders for your mental health
- Host a neighborhood food drive or angel tree.
- Give gifts mindfully. Consider shopping local and only going out during slower times of day
- Add some spice to your zoom call- create some unique challenges like "most creative table setting" or "best dressed" to spice up the fun
- Share a virtual secret santa
- Identify new hobbies
- Check in with loved ones near and far.

For more information on keeping your celebrations safe and healthy, visit emersonhospital.org or panola.agrilife.org

<https://www.emersonhospital.org/articles/healthy-holiday-tips-covid-19-pandemic>

12/14/2020: Game & special meats

We all know that turkey time is just around the corner, but it's also hunting season! If you've got a hunter in the family, you may look forward to a special game animal ending up on your plate this holiday. Be sure to take care of these prizes safely to avoid foodborne illness. First, dress game in the field right away and chill as soon as possible. Roasting is usually a good method for preparing game- just be sure to keep your oven temp at least 325 so the meat doesn't remain at unsafe temperatures for too long. Always be sure to check a meat's internal temperature to be sure it's cooked adequately. You can find these safe minimum temperatures and other cooking tips on our website at panola.agrilife.org or the Food Safety and Inspection Service webpage at fsis.usda.gov.

https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/seasonal-food-safety/roasting-those-other-holiday-meats/ct_index

12/21/2020 Manage Holiday Stress

The holidays are supposed to be a happy and enjoyable time of year. However, they are usually quite stressful for most people.

1. Sleep- possibly the most critical health practice for mind and body
2. Slow down- spend 15 minutes a day to relax or just "be".
3. Exercise- it takes discipline, but this is also critical for both mind and body

4. Express gratitude- bookend your day with thoughts of the blessings in your life
5. Be present. Take time to invest in meaningful relationships.
6. Smile, laugh and lighten up- laughter lowers cortisol and releases endorphins.
7. Get organized- sit down and spend some time to prioritize and schedule tasks for the week. I promise it will be time well spent.

Whether you are planning for a big gathering or just spending time inside your household, take time for YOU this holiday season. For more information visit green.harvard.edu or panola.agrilife.org

<https://green.harvard.edu/tools-resources/how/7-simple-steps-manage-holiday-stress>

12/30/2020 Holiday baking tips

The holidays are coming up and if you're like me you may already be anxious about fitting into your pants when January comes. Here are some tips on simple substitutions to improve the nutrition in all your favorite holiday dishes.

1. Swap refined flour with whole grain flour. Many times you can substitute whole wheat flour in equal parts, or you can use a mix of the two flours.
2. Cut back on added sugars. Cutting back on 25% of sugars in a recipe will not make a notable difference in taste.
3. Increase fiber. This is another time where whole grains can make a difference. It's tempting to peel fruits and vegetables for cooking, but the skins often have a lot of fiber!
4. Spice things up. Instead of reaching for the salt or sugar, opt for aromatic spices that add flavor and provide cancer-fighting phytochemicals
5. Boost nutrients and flavor. Focus on dessert recipes with naturally sweet fruits, whole grains and nuts.

For more information on healthy holiday recipes, visit aicr.org or panola.agrilife.org

<https://www.aicr.org/resources/blog/healthy-holiday-baking-tips/>