



FOOD AND FITNESS

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“’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house...”

...not a creature could sleep for weeks before Christmas because they were too stressed out about all they still had to do—cleaning the house, shopping for gifts, wrapping gifts, writing Christmas cards, Christmas cookie baking, decorating the tree, decorating the house, etc., etc., etc. It wears a body out just to contemplate it all!

We invariably bring stress upon ourselves by scheduling too much



to do in a very short space of time during the Christmas season. Try to keep it simpler this year.

- Make a daily list of 10 things to do and prioritize from 1-10.

- De-clutter right after Thanksgiving—give away all the leftovers, clean out the fridge, and give away all the extras in the pantry.

- Look at your finances ahead of time and resolve not to spend money you don't have.
- Make gifts of



services you can offer to do for friends—picking up kids, going grocery shopping, helping each other with cleaning.

- Agree to have a Dutch treat outing together instead of giving a gift that you have to go shopping for.
- If you must go gift-shopping a plant or flowers brighten up the home any time.
- Limit the compulsory parties or nativity gatherings of years past to just one each this year.



Websites of interest:

- helpguide.org/mental/stress_management
- webmd.com
- mayoclinic.com
- heart.org

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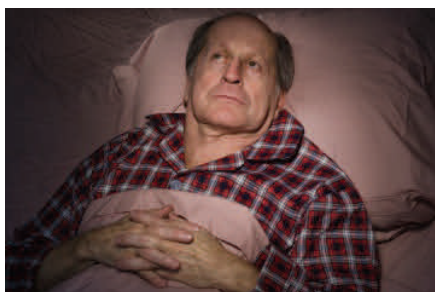


"...Mama in her stocking and I in my cap..."

Does a good night's sleep seem like something that happened in another lifetime? Can you remember the last time you woke up feeling like you had gotten enough sleep?

As people age, they may begin to experience changes in their sleeping patterns. However, disturbed sleep, waking up tired, and insomnia, although common, are not a normal part of aging.

The National Institutes of Health defines insomnia as "an experience of inadequate or poor



quality sleep" and the National Commission on Sleep Disorders research reports 30-40% of people in the U.S. have insomnia within any given year. This percentage tends to be higher among senior citizens.

Sleep is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle so what can you do?

There is growing scientific evidence that regular exercise helps you to sleep better.

In a study conducted at Stanford University, physically inactive older adults who engaged in low-impact aerobics and brisk walking for 30-40 minutes 4 days per week had improved sleep quality, longer sleep, and shorter time to fall



asleep than the non-exercise group. These seniors also reported feeling less tired during the day.

Research conducted at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

also found that middle-aged and older adults with insomnia who performed aerobic exercise had "dramatic improvement in quality and duration of sleep".

These subjects also reported less day-time sleepiness.

So, if you want to sleep better the key ingredient may be exercise. Exercise during the day helps your body to relax at night





“...had just settled down for a long winter’s nap.”

and fall asleep more quickly.

When designing an exercise program to aid



sleep, consider three factors:

Moderation -- Exercise should not be too easy or too strenuous; set your workloads so that the pace feels brisk or "somewhat" hard.

Consistency -- Have a healthy routine of exercise on most days of the week and try to go to bed at the same time each night.

Timing -- This is very important to the relationship between exercise and sleep. You don't want to exercise

in late evening or just before going to bed. This will make it hard for your body to relax, making it difficult to get to sleep.

Some studies have shown that raising your body temperature with exercise 4-5 hours before bedtime will give you the maximum benefit. The drop in body temperature in the hours after exercise makes it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep. A study at Appalachian State University however, found more improvement in sleep quality with morning exercise.

The important finding of all research was that exercise has yet another benefit....

“Mama in her Reeboks and I in my Nikes

Ran out to the garage and jumped on our bikes. (!)

You could hear us

exclaim as we rode out of sight

Happy Christmas to



all, and to all a good night!”

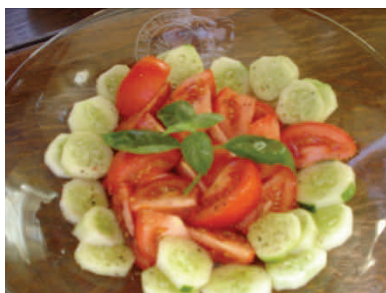




The Twelve Days of Christmas

The song—you either love it or it drives you crazy! First published in England in 1780, the music may actually be French in origin. Although the celebration varies by country and culture, the twelve days of Christmas traditionally begin with Christmas Day and end on the evening of January 5th.

In some areas it is popular to give gifts for each of the twelve days of Christmas. Others use it as a preparation for Christmas, starting on the 13th of December and ending on Christmas Eve.



Why not celebrate

and honor each of these days by cooking or doing something small or simple to commemorate this special time? Check out these suggestions for outings, recipes for light snacks and entrees and a special dessert to commemorate each of the twelve days of Christmas.

If you can't do it all twelve days just choose what you like and skip the rest!

“On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me: a Partridge in a Pear Tree...Fruity Jell-O—after a generous holiday meal, there's always room for Jell-O. Try making a sugar-free version with strawberries (or pears!)

for a light afternoon snack.. Add fresh fruit and chill in individual serving-size portions.

Second day...

Two Turtledoves...

“Cukes and Tomatoes” - go red and green for

the holidays. Use lemon or lime juice to add flavor. For more color and fiber, leave the peel on!

Third day....Three French Hens...

Asparagus with Peppers--- Prepare fresh asparagus for cooking.



Sauté them in a skillet coated with non-fat cooking spray until wilted. Serve with touches of red pepper for accent.

Fourth Day...Four Calling Birds...Take a walk and collect four red and green items from nature. Red berries and evergreen? Take a picture or gather the items to decorate your table.



Fifth day.... Five Golden Rings...Festive Quiche



The Twelve Days of Christmas

Bites---are easy for breakfast, brunch, or a light dinner with salad.

Festive Quiche Bites*

1 single layer pie crust

1 large egg

2 Tbs. reduced fat sour cream

2 Tbs. white cheddar or Parmesan

cheese, grated

2 Tbs. each red and green bell pepper, chopped finely

1 Tbs. green onion tops, chopped finely

1/2 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray muffin pan with cooking spray.

Roll pie crust dough into rectangle. Cut into twelve 2" squares. Fit squares of pie crust dough into muffin pan cups. Prick with fork and set aside.

Combine egg, sour cream, cheese, peppers, green onion, and salt.



Spoon a Tbs. of mixture into each muffin cup.

Bake for 12 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan and serve immediately.

**Original recipe from Anne Coleman. Google "festive quiche bites"*

Sixth day....Six Geese a Laying...

Pasta and Peas

8 oz. package bowtie pasta

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 Tablespoon olive oil

1 qt. spaghetti sauce

1 cup frozen green peas

Prepare pasta according to package directions.

Drain and set aside.

Pour olive oil into a 2 -qt. saucepan. Stir in garlic and sauté on low heat until wilted--- about 2 minutes.

Add spaghetti sauce and cook about 15-20 minutes over low heat. Fi-

nally add green peas and cook until they are done, about five minutes. Serve over pasta for a quick tasty lunch or dinner.

Seventh day... Seven Swans a Swimming...in a sea of Spinach with Peppers---

Sauté thinly sliced red peppers in a skillet with 2 Tablespoons olive oil and one clove garlic. Add fresh baby spinach leaves and stir until just wilted.



Eighth day....

Eight Maids a Milking...

Cheese Party Pepper Bites

1 medium green bell pepper
1 medium red bell pepper
4 ounces Neufchatel cheese, softened

2 teaspoons Greek seasoning blend
Juice of one fresh lime



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The Twelve Days of Christmas

(Continued from page 5)

Cut each bell pepper in half lengthwise; discarding the stems, ribs and seeds. Cut each half into six pieces. Arrange the pieces with the skin side down on a decorative serving plate. Set aside.

In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, seasoning blend, and lime juice with an electric mixer for about 1 minute or until creamy. Spoon the mixture into a piping bag or snip the corner off a plastic freezer bag and spoon in the mixture. Pipe about 1 teaspoon of the mixture onto each bell pepper piece. Garnish with fresh parsley or cilantro.

Ninth day...Nine Ladies Dancing...Dance your way



down to the library to see how many great books you can find about holiday traditions. This is a trip that would be grand entertainment for your relatives or grandchildren, and it's FREE!

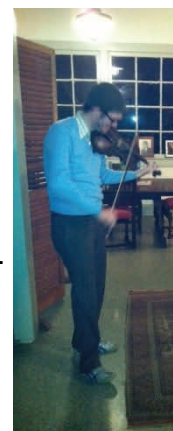
Tenth day. ..Ten Lords a-Leaping

Is all this excitement



making you "punchy"? Then take out your festive punch cups but go easy on the work. Pour your favorite light fruit juice cocktail over fresh frozen fruit and you'll have an instant refresher and energizer! Try Light Cranberry/Raspberry Juice Blend with frozen strawberries.

Eleventh day...Eleven Pipers Piping...Holiday music abounds—enjoy it!! Support your local symphony orchestra or maybe an as-



piring young violinist by attending a concert. Sometime these performances are free to the public---check your newspaper for local listings.

Twelfth day...Twelve Drummers Drumming...If

you've gotten this far, treat yourself to a festive holiday Red Velvet Cupcake, or 12 of them.

Red Velvet Cupcake

2 ½ cups cake flour
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
2 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder



The Twelve Days of Christmas

1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1/4 cup applesauce
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 whole egg plus 2 egg whites
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup fat-free buttermilk
2 Tbs. red food coloring
1 tsp white vinegar
1 tsp. baking soda

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. If you prefer a whole cake spray two 9-in round cake pans with cooking spray. Line the bottoms with parchment



paper.

In medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and cocoa powder. Separately, in large bowl beat together sugar, applesauce, and oil with electric mixer. Add egg and egg

whites one at a time, plus vanilla, beating well continually.

Add half the flour mixture to egg mixture, stirring well. In a small bowl combine fat-free buttermilk and food coloring. Then add buttermilk mixture to egg and flour mixture, stirring well. Finally add the rest of the flour mixture, mixing all until well combined.

Combine baking soda and vinegar in small bowl or measuring cup. Allow it to fizz, then fold it into batter.

Immediately spoon batter into muffin pans lined with foil cups if you prefer cupcakes. Bake 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in one cupcake comes out clean. Remove from muffin pans and cool completely on wooden or wire rack. Chill cupcakes one hour then frost with low-fat cream-cheese icing, below.

Cream Cheese Frosting

3/4 cup fat-free small curd cottage cheese

3/4 cup fat-free vanilla yogurt

16 oz. reduced fat cream cheese

1 1/2 cup powdered sugar

Drain/press any ex-



cess liquid from cottage cheese. Place yogurt and cottage cheese together in food processor and process until smooth. Gradually add chunks of the cream cheese to food processor, processing again until smooth.

Add sugar in three parts, processing to mix between additions. Cover frosting and refrigerate until hardened enough to spread.

*Original recipe from Maddie Ruud at <http://maddieruud.hubpages.com/hub/Red-Velvet-Cake>

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News You Can Use



A new study published in the November 23, 2011 *Lancet* rein-

forced the safety and effectiveness of statin drugs for management of heart disease and those at high risk of heart disease. Some of the statin drugs include Zocor, Lipitor, Crestor, and Mevacor.

The study followed more than 20,000 people for

11 years with half the subjects taking simvastatin (Zocor) and half taking a placebo. The simvastatin group had a 23% drop in risk of heart events with no increase in cancer or other non-vascular disease risk.

Study author Howard Weintraub of New York University Medical Center suggested statin drugs were a necessity for control of heart disease in western populations with high calorie consumption and low exercise. Statin drugs help

to lower levels of bad cholesterol, raise levels of good cholesterol, and provide anti-inflammatory protection to arteries in the heart and throughout the body. Study author Richard Bulbulia of the University of Oxford says statins protect against heart attacks,, strokes, and other vascular diseases.

