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Food and Fitness

"Over the River and Through the Wood…

…….to Grandfather's house we go!"

But now, **you're** the grandparents and they're all coming to **your** house for Thanksgiving! This could be stressful—or not, with just a little planning ahead.

Will they be with you longer than just the big day? Here are some tips to help you be ready and relaxed when they all arrive and the fun starts!

Start Now:

Do 15-30 minutes of cleaning every day. Start today!

Invite guests! **Decide** who sleeps where and put linens on beds now.

Wash, iron, and store table linens.

Clean out last

year's candles from candlesticks and buy new candles for Thanksgiving dinner!

Plan all menus for **every** day. Decide **what** foods you'll need to buy and **when** in order to do some cooking ahead.

Use your own home-canned vegetables and fruits or locally grown produce to save money and help the community.

Consider a daily "self serve" breakfast menu – dry cereals, fruits, yogurts, whole grain

muffins, oats, juice and skim milk.

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Websites of interest:

- **wvexplorer.com**
- **trails.com**
- **wvcommerce.org**

Fall Exercise—Great Opportunities

Cooler days are here with blessed relief from the hot summer for lovers of the great outdoors! Being out-

side is a great opportunity to continue your exercise program. Autumn outdoor exercise can help maintain your fitness developed during the summer and burn all those extra holiday calories before you eat them! Hiking is a different activity to try and offers a nice change from your normal exercise routine.

Hiking has been compared to working out in your own natural health club. It combines walking and climbing (great cardiovascular exercises) with weight training (good for bones and muscles). Nearly anyone can do it. You control the pace and are free to stop and rest along the way!

The American Hiking Society lists many benefits to hiking. Hiking can prevent heart disease, decrease blood pressure, reduce cholesterol, and aid in weight loss and blood sugar control for persons with diabetes. Hiking can improve arthritis by increasing muscle strength. Hiking is a great way to get away from the hustle of everyday life and reduce stress.

If you are not an experienced hiker, it is best to start with short hikes that last only an hour or so. It is best to plan hikes near civilization if you are a newcomer to hiking. With more experience hiking might eventually be a couple of miles a day or even a week of backpacking in the mountains. Before planning a hike in the wilderness you will need to be sure your body is in condition to tolerate the duration of the hike.

With beautiful fall foliage on display in our WV hills, what a wonderful time to consider planning a day hike to enjoy the brilliant colors and get exercise. West Virginia has many beautiful trails with breathtaking views of hills and valleys as well as bubbling streams. You can find a list of WV trails online at wvexplorer.com or at trails.com (select "hiking" and choose WV).

The WV State Parks Program offers a *Hiking West Virginia Program* in which you may enroll, receive a packet and earn rewards for hiking. More information is located on their website:

www.wvstateparks.com/

Click on “hikes and walks” or “park programs”.

Stay safe while exercising:

Never hike alone.

Pay close attention to warning signs and symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath, extreme fatigue, and dizziness. Report any of these symptoms to your physician.

Dress in layers.

Carry water and a light snack with you, and have a great time!

"Over the River and Through the Wood... (continued)

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Consider a daily self serve lunch menu—salad makings, sandwich makings, soup or chili you've prepared ahead and frozen in individual servings.

Consider short cuts if you're still working outside the home – pre-washed salad greens in a bag, frozen whole wheat rolls, pre-cleaned and cut fresh vegetables. Use frozen pre-chopped onions and green peppers to avoid long chopping sessions.

Make several vegetable casseroles ahead and freeze.

Serve steamed vegetables every meal.

Serve salad every meal.

Always accept offerings from guests who want to "bring a dish"!

Always enlist the aid of the younger crowd for table setting and cleanup!

Lessons from the First Thanksgiving

Speculation abounds regarding the first feast! There are written reports of a harvest feast shared between the Plymoth colonists and the Wampanoag Indians in 1621. Kathleen Curtin, Food Historian at Plymoth Plantation, attempts to separate fact from fiction in her analysis of that first meal.

Likely on the menu were fresh cod, clam and lobster. Wild game included venison, goose, duck and turkey, seasoned with olive oil, currants and parsnips. Corn, beans, squash, and wheat were available and were accompanied by walnuts, chestnuts and acorns. Fruits available to them were plums and berries.

The first feast was a coordinated effort between the pilgrims and the Native Americans. Working together, the Native Americans and colonists made the meal a success. In fact, this meal has become a symbol of cooperation and interaction between two peoples.

When you're planning the feast this year, remember these lessons from the first event: Keep it simple. Use what's fresh and local. Enjoy friends and family. And, like the first Americans, give thanks for nature's bountiful harvest.

Recipe Corner

Cajun Jambalaya

Whether feeding a large gathering or preparing an elegant table for two, poultry is often part of the holiday menu. Two uniquely different poultry traditions are presented here to suit the needs of either a large or a small group.

Cajun Jambalaya is distinctively different from the Creole tradition. It originates from Louisiana's rural, low-lying swamp country where crawfish, shrimp, ducks, venison, and other wild game are readily available.

Any combination of meats, including chicken or turkey may be used to make jambalaya. Cajun Jambalaya has more of a spicy flavor than its cousin Creole Jambalaya. Since tomatoes were rarely used in Cajun cooking, the Cajuns omitted the tomato and browned the meat for color. Jambalaya lends itself to large gatherings and saves money by making use of what's available. Enter Thanksgiving turkey for a healthier version of an old favorite!

3 ribs celery, finely chopped

1 large bell pepper, chopped

2 medium onions, chopped

5 cloves garlic, minced

3 cups cooked brown rice

1 Tbs. Tony Chachere Cajun seasoning

1.5# turkey meat from Thanksgiving

1 whole bunch parsley, minced

1 whole bunch green onions and tops, finely chopped

Use cooking spray and water to sauté celery, bell pepper, and onion until wilted. Add garlic and stir one minute until softened.

Add brown rice, already cooked according to package directions. Add Cajun seasoning (more if you dare) and mix well.

Add turkey, green onions, and parsley and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring constantly to keep rice from sticking.

Cornish Hens with Couscous

Cornish Hens are a practical and tasty option for discriminating diners. Small households shouldn't have to sacrifice when it comes to eating Thanksgiving Dinner. Treat yourself to this main dish and you won't miss the turkey. Or better yet, don't wait until a holiday to serve it because every day is a day to be thankful!

2 Cornish Game Hens, skin removed

1 tsp. fresh ground black pepper

1 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. coriander

1 tsp. ginger

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Recipe Corner (continued)

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½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. nutmeg

1 Tablespoon. olive oil

1 cup chicken broth

3/4 cup whole-wheat couscous

1 cup seedless red grapes

3 Tablespoons roasted pecan halves, chopped

3 green onions, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Arrange hens cavity side down, on a rimmed baking sheet. Set aside. In a small bowl combine pepper, ginger, cinnamon, coriander, salt and nutmeg. Set aside 1 tsp. of this spice mix. Combine remaining spice mix with oil to make a paste. Rub paste over hens, dividing it evenly. Bake for 30-40 minutes, until thickest part of thigh reaches 170 degrees with a meat thermometer. Loosely cover with foil and allow to stand for 10 minutes.

In a medium saucepan over medium high heat, bring broth and remaining spice mix to a boil. Stir in couscous, cover, turn off heat and set aside for five minutes.

Stir grapes, pecans and green onions into couscous. Transfer couscous to serving dish or individual plates and top with a portion of Cornish hen. Garnish with fresh rosemary. (A version of this recipe appears in *Clean Eating*, Sept/Oct., 2009.)

Pumpkin Cheesecake "Light"

If you want to have a slightly different take on the usual pumpkin pie, this recipe for *Pumpkin Cheesecake* is distinctively light without sacrificing flavor. Neufchatel cheese is a soft unripened cheese that originated in France. The American version, similar to cream cheese, is made from pasteurized milk, is slightly lower in calories and has more moisture. It can be substituted with success in most recipes that call for cream cheese. While most cheesecake recipes are naturally high in fat and calories, this version has been slightly modified to reduce the fat and includes pumpkin, adding more nutrition! Another healthier choice is to substitute reduced fat graham crackers for the ginger snaps. Good cooks can usually find a way to make recipes lighter!

Crust:

1 cup gingersnap cookie crumbs, from about 20 crushed cookies

1/3 cup finely chopped pecans

2 Tbs. light margarine, melted

2 Tbs. sugar or Splenda

Filling:

2 8-oz pkg. Neufchatel cheese, room temperature

1 8-oz pkg. fat free cream cheese

1/2 cup sugar or Splenda

1/4 cup light brown sugar

2 eggs and 1/4 cup egg sub.

1 cup canned or fresh pumpkin puree

1/2 cup light sour cream

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Recipe Corner (continued)

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1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 1/2 Tbs. flour

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1/2 tsp. nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray sides and bottom of an 8" spring form pan. Cover outside of pan with 2 layers of heavy-duty foil. Stir together all crust ingredients until crumbs are moistened. Press mixture into bottom and sides of pan. Bake for 6 minutes. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack. Reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees F.

With electric mixer on medium speed, beat cheeses and sugar until light and fluffy. Slowly beat in eggs and egg substitute. Add pumpkin, sour cream, and vanilla and beat well. Reduce speed to low and beat in flour and spices just until combined. Pour filling into baked shell.

Bake cheesecake for 65-75 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Refrigerate for at least 10 hours until thoroughly set. Bon appétit and may your holiday be a healthy one!