FOOD AND FITNESS

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Giving When It Hurts

Is it harder to find "extra money" for gift-giving this year? Do you feel like you have to return the favor of a gift?

Chances are friends and family are in the same boat! Hard as it may be to do, why not have a discussion with them about how you might all celebrate Christmas on a shoestring budget.

Perhaps you can exchange your talents to show your love.

If you're a gardener you can give from your garden.

If you're a canner, you can give from your summer canning stock.

If you're a decorator, you can help a friend cleverly rearrange the furniture or re-hang pictures for a new look.

If you like to cook you can invite a family over for dinner or cook and deliver when they have a busy night. Your meal is your gift—a labor of love and time that will not be re-gifted!

Food gifts are always nice, but do you still have hot chocolate mixes, bean soup mixes, and spice bouquets from past years languishing in the pantry untouched? Remember, re-gifting is not usually a gift from the heart! See page 4 for hints for food gifts.

Vitamin D Deficiency?

According to Michael Holick, M.D. most of us living north of Atlanta are vitamin D deficient. Holick recommends asking your doctor to order a 25-hydroxy vitamin D level. Optimal levels are 50-60. Deficiency is below 30. Treatment if deficient consists of 50,000 IU Vitamin D_2 once weekly for 8 weeks, then every other week for life. More on this subject will follow next issue!

Websites of interest:

- notmadeofmoney.com
- nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/
- pauleugene.com

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How About Chair Aerobics?

Regular aerobic exercise is important for maintaining strength and stamina. Because joint pain and balance concerns can cause limitations for some senior citizens, chair aerobics can be an easier way to get regular aerobic exercise. Chair aerobics is a form of conditioning exercise in which the individual performs the entire workout sitting in a chair.

As is true with any aerobic exercise, the aim is to increase the heart rate so that the end result is an increase in cardiovascular fitness. If a seated workout is of high enough intensity, this type of exercise can result in an increase in stamina and can also help with weight loss, since it burns calories.

Chair aerobics exercise uses the arms and legs in rhythmic action. The exercises are not hard to do, but a beginner should always begin slowly and increase intensity gradually. Exercises included in chair aerobics should be performed for 20-30 minutes several times per week to get the optimal aerobic benefits.

Chair aerobics use toe tapping, jumping jacks, heel lifts, knee lifts, jump rope type movements and jogging in your chair. You can add arm movement to increase the intensity by punching your arms over your head one at a time, punching them across your body or pumping them over your head at the same time.

The best and safest way to begin a chair aerobics exercise program is to check with your local health club or senior center to see if they offer chair aerobics classes. You can also buy a DVD instruction video, find a television fitness show, or look online for instructions.

Chair aerobics is a fun way to get and maintain physical fitness. Weight training exercises can also be added to your workout to increase strength and stretching can increase flexibility.

Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice

Anyone who's ever dieted can testify to the difficulty of staying on track during the holidays. First there's Thanksgiving, with its emphasis on lots of rich food. Before we get the festive dishes washed and put away here come Hanukah and Christmas, which provide more opportunities to "blow it." By the time we get to January 1st, most of us are anxiously awaiting the day we can put our New Year's resolutions into action.

For those of us who have medical problems or are trying to preserve good health, eating in a healthy manner is top priority even during the holidays. This year, try planning ahead so you won't go overboard at every meal.

If you dine out, consider choosing a vegetarian entrée such as edamame (green soy beans), charro beans (black beans), chana masala (garbanzo beans), pinto beans, or a vegetable soup. If you dine with friends, offer to take a "safe" dish such as fat-free dip with fresh vegetables or fresh fruit kabobs. And if you're cooking at home for the holidays, continue to use herbs, spices and whole grain products in your cooking.

Some common substitutions in recipes will cut back on calories and add good nutrition:

- Add whole grain fiber, especially oatmeal, to holiday cookies and hamburger patties.
- Substitute unsweetened applesauce for some of the oils in baking.
- Bake fresh yams in the skins—they're good even without added fat or sugar!
- Use fat-free vegetable sprays instead of butter to sauté vegetables.
- Cook with fresh herbs and spices for more flavor and better health.
- Make your holiday buffet indulgent *and* healthy by using fresh fruits for garnishing, decorating and eating!
- For something sweet, dip strawberries in melted dark chocolate.
- Even a rich dip snack can be "healthier" by serving it with raw vegetables.

Recipe Corner

Gifts from the Heart

Even though we love our friends and wish good health for them, we sometimes give food gifts that we would never dream of eating ourselves! Here are a few healthier food gift items you can make in the kitchen for your friends and neighbors that won't wreck their health goals.

Classic Gingerbread Boys

These can be used as decorations for the Christmas buffet, as holiday additions to a lunchbox, or as a festive decoration for a gift.

½ cup soft margarine

½ cup sugar

1/2 cup molasses

1/2 cup applesauce

1 cup whole wheat flour

2 cups unbleached flour

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon nutmeg

½ teaspoon soda

¾ teaspoon ginger

¼ teaspoon allspice

Cream soft margarine and sugar. Add molasses and applesauce. Then blend in dry ingredients and spices until the mixture forms a soft dough. Cover and chill 2 to 3 hours.

Roll out onto a lightly floured board. Roll ¼ inch thick and cut into desired shapes. Cook 10-12 minutes at 375 degrees. Remove at once and cool. Store in tightly covered container or zip-lock plastic bag until ready to use.

Nutty Granola

Use what you have on hand and what is readily available in your area. The granola will taste great even if you leave out some of the nuts or berries!

2 cups rolled oats

1 cup high fiber dry cereal

1/2 cup slivered almonds

1/8 cup unsweetened flaked

coconut

1/4 cup toasted pumpkin seeds

1/4 cup sunflower seeds

1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons soft margarine spread

1/3 cup honey

1/2 teaspoon vanilla

1/2 cup raisins, or dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

In a large bowl stir together cereal, oats, almonds, coconut, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, pecans, cinnamon and salt. In a small saucepan melt spreadable margarine with honey over low heat, stir-

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ring. Add vanilla and pour over solid mixture; toss to coat well.

On a large baking sheet, spread the granola evenly in a thin layer. Bake, stirring every 5 minutes to keep from sticking or burning, until golden brown and crisp, about 20 minutes. (Do not overcook; the granola will crisp more when cooled.)

Cool the granola on the pan on top of the stove and stir in dried fruits. Granola may be kept in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week. Serve at room temperature in a bowl with milk, or as a snack. Or wrap in a plastic gift bag as a treat for your neighbors and friends.

Lil's Apple Cake

Try wrapping this gift in brown paper and decorate with a few springs of holly and a red ribbon!

1 cup chopped pecans, divided
1 cup low fat sour cream
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs or equivalent egg substitute
1 Tbs. vanilla extract
1 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
2 cups finely chopped, peeled Granny Smith apples

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake 1/2 cup pecans in a single layer in a shallow pan 6-8 minutes or until toasted and fragrant, stirring after 4 minutes.

Beat sour cream and next 3 ingredients at low speed w/ electric mixer 2 minutes or until blended.

Stir together flour, baking powder, soda and salt. Add to sour cream mixture, beating just until blended. Stir in apples and 1/2 cup toasted pecans. Spoon batter into a greased and floured 9x5-inch loaf pan. Sprinkle with remaining chopped pecans; lightly press pecans into batter.

Bake at 350 for 60 to 65 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted into center comes out clean. After baking 50 minutes, shield with aluminum foil to prevent excessive browning. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes; remove from pan to wire rack.

Note: To freeze, cool bread completely; wrap in plastic wrap, then in aluminum foil. Freeze up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature.

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Food and Fitness

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Cajun Christmas Mix

This recipe can be modified according to your preference of nuts and cereals.

24 oz. toasted almonds or walnuts

6 cups high fiber cereal like shredded wheat or other whole grain cereal

1 cup goldfish crackers

1/2 cup soft margarine

1.5 tsp. paprika

1.5 tsp. thyme

1/4 tsp. Black pepper

1.5 tsp. Tabasco sauce

1 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce

1 tsp. Tony's or other Cajun seasoning

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. In a large shallow roasting pan combine nuts, cereal, and goldfish. Melt soft margarine and stir in all seasonings. Pour over mixture and toss to coat. Bake one hour, stirring every twenty minutes. Cool on paper towels. Store in airtight container or wrap in holiday bags and tie with decorative ribbon.

When giving food gifts it's nice to include the recipe with the gift.