Dear Extension Friend:

WOW…..Is January already over? Where does the time go these days? I don’t know about you, but this Florida girl has been frozen like a popsicle with the freezing temperatures this month. I hope you all have bundled up well!

In this month’s Newsletter I have included a few basic articles regarding Food Safety, Health & Nutrition and Money Management. The beginning of the year typically comes with resolutions to eat better and become more financially stable and sometimes we just need a refresher in the basics. Hope you all enjoy the Newsletter, and as always if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please give me a call.

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Inside this issue:

Health & Nutrition: Colors of Health

Red foods are great sources of lycopene, which help protect against heart disease. They’re also good sources of anthocyanins, which have been shown to help reduce cancer growth. Dietary sources include tomatoes, cherries, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, beets, radishes, pink grapefruit, rhubarb, pomegranates, watermelon, radicchio, red grapes and red pears.

Orange and Yellow foods contain beta-carotene, flavonoids and vitamin C which have been shown to strengthen the immune system and help keep certain types of cancer at bay. Dietary sources include apricots, cantaloupe, oranges, mangoes, nectarines, butternut squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, curr, yellow peppers, peaches and papayas.

Purple and Blue foods contain anthocyanins, ellagic acid and phenolics which can be accredited to promote brain health and good memory capacity. These foods are also linked to good maintenance of urinary-tract health. Dietary sources include blueberries, blackberries, plums, raisins, eggplant, purple cabbage and currants.

White and Tan foods contain flavonoids, indoles and isothiocyanates which have been shown to be potential cancer-fighting agents and promoters of heart health. Dietary sources include cauliflower, turnips, onions, jicama, mushrooms, parsnips, white potatoes, shallots, kohlrabi, bananas and garlic.

Green foods contain beta-carotene and lutein which have been shown to help maintain eye health and fight against certain cancers. Dietary sources include avocados, asparagus, kiwi, green cabbage, brussel sprouts, green beans, pears, peas, leafy greens and green peppers.

When all else fails……….Follow the Rainbow!
Food Safety: Just Say No To Bacteria

A healthy diet should consist of a variety of different types of foods. However, we must all take proper care to prevent foodborne illnesses resulting from bacteria. Specific kinds of bacteria can make people very ill and can even cause death. However, we all have the ability to fight bacteria and keep our food bacteria free by following four simple rules of cleaning, separating, cooking and chilling.

Clean:
Start your fight with bacteria by washing your hands thoroughly with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Try to use paper towels to dry your hands off. If you use a dish towel make sure it is fresh and clean. Kitchen dish towels should be frequently washed in your washing machine on the hottest cycle possible. Clean fruits and vegetables under running tap water, even if the skin will not be eaten. For those fruits and veggies with firm skins remember to rub firmly with your hands or a vegetable brush.

Separate:
Always keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from ready to eat foods to avoid cross contamination. Before handling any raw meats wash your hands again before you touch any ready to eat foods. Try and work with two separate cutting boards, one for raw meats and one for fruits and veggies. If you only have one cutting board available make sure you wash and sanitize it between uses. You can sanitize by mixing one teaspoon of chlorine bleach with one quart of water and then allow the mixture to sit on the surface for at least one minute. Be sure and rinse the surface with hot running water. Never place ready to eat foods on the same un-clean surface that raw meat, poultry or seafood has touched.

Cook:
Cooking foods to their proper temperature is the only way to insure all harmful bacteria has been killed. Use a food thermometer to make sure the internal temperature of all meats, seafood and egg dishes are cooked properly. Cutting the food open and looking at the color is NOT a good source of doneness. The internal temperature of roasts and steaks should be 145F. Poultry should reach a temperature of 165F, ground meat 160F and seafood 145F. It is recommended that eggs always be cooked until the yolk and white are firm and not runny.

Chill:
Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Refrigerate food quickly. As soon as you get home from the grocery store, immediately refrigerate or freeze the meats, poultry, seafood and eggs. Cooked food and cut up fruits and vegetables should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours. Refrigeration should occur within one hour if the room temperature is above 90F. Never defrost or marinate your food at room temperature. Defrosting should be completed under cold water, in the refrigerator or in the microwave. Marinating should always be completed in the refrigerator. If you have a very large amount of food, divide it into several smaller containers and refrigerate to allow quicker cooling time.

Following the guidelines above will help significantly reduce the chances of becoming sick from a food-related bacteria illness. Many consumers do not think about food safety practices until they themselves, or a family member, have been affected. Just remember to clean, separate, cook and chill and you’ll be on the path to safety. For more information on food safety contact your local Extension Office.

Money Matters: Tough Financial Times

No matter where you turn these days you hear about how difficult today’s economy is with millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet. Tough financial times are extremely stressful and can sometimes be down right overbearing. It doesn’t matter if you have $5.00 or $1 million dollars in the bank, everybody could use a few money management tips. With that being said, I have decided to devote a section of the newsletter to financial management tips. Keep in mind that some of the tips you may already be doing and hopefully others will give you new ideas.

Developing self-control of your spending is a basic step in cutting the cost of living. Some families instinctively seem to know how to get what they want, even on a limited income. But others need help in managing their finances to get what they need and want. Research shows that people worry more about money than any other family problem. While discussing relationships a very wise woman once told me “If you ever fight about anything, you’ll fight about money.” If families communicate and everyone understands what the financial situation is, there will be greater cooperation.

You and your family need to set goals and establish a plan for earning, saving, and spending money. Lack of planning may lead to serious difficulties. Planned spending is the first step for solving family money problems. Design your spending plan to suit your particular circumstances and your goals.

Here are the steps in making a personalized money plan.

1. Estimate your monthly take-home pay.
2. Write down an estimate of your basic expenses using your previous experience. Do not forget to include those expenses that occur quarterly or semi-annually, such as your insurance. If you are unable to recall the amounts, keep records of expenditures for two or three months. Your expenditures should reflect your goals. Almost every expense can be reduced. The main purpose of the spending plan is to give you direction in achieving your financial goals.
3. Test your spending plan. Write down every penny you spend for one month. (I mean everything from the groceries you buy to the change in the coke machine.) A simple spending record shows where your money actually goes. If record keeping like this for one month seems overwhelming, start out with just doing it for one week. The trial test will show whether the plan is realistic. A good spending record will also locate money leaks, or spending that you never really intended. I promise, you’ll be amazed at how much money you frivolously spend.

Happy Valentine’s Day