Ask the Expert:
Energy-Saving Cooking in Winter
Written by Han Chen, Undergraduate Student in the Department of Food Science, Purdue University

The holiday season is upon us! Many families will be planning and preparing delicious meals for family reunions. Electric expenses may increase during this time. Although the heating system may play a major role, approximately 4.5% of total home energy is used in cooking, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Using kitchenware properly can help save money and energy. Here are some useful tips.

• Do not open the oven frequently to check on the food while cooking. Each time you open the oven, the temperature inside decreases, and more energy will be needed to heat it up again.

• Cook different foods in the oven at the same time.

• Turn the power off early and allow the residual heat to finish cooking food.

• Be sure to match the right size pan to the right size burner.

• Use copper bottom pots and pans if possible. Pans made with different materials have varying conductivity. Copper bottom pans heat up faster, saving time and energy in cooking compared to regular pans.

• Consider using microwave ovens if you can afford one. The California Energy Commission points out that microwave ovens can save 50% the energy that conventional ovens use. Microwave ovens are helpful when heating leftover foods. They are both fast and efficient for small portions!

When cold weather creeps in, so do germs! Hand sanitizers are a popular way to clean hands during winter months, but to what extent do they really work?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, washing hands with soap and water is the best way to kill bacteria on the skin surface. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should only be used when water and soap are not easily accessible. Most alcohol-based sanitizers contain either ethanol or isopropanol, or a combination of the two. The alcohol in sanitizers works instantly to kill most bacteria on skin due to its ability to alter proteins in bacteria and some viruses. However, hand sanitizers do not necessarily get rid of all germs or harmful matter.

Hand sanitizers cannot remove chemicals like pesticides or heavy metals that build up on the skin. They are also not effective in removing organic matter from hands, such as dirt, food, and dust. Other substances, like proteins and fats from food, make it harder for the alcohol to kill bacteria and viruses.

Sanitizers strip away the outer layer of oil on the skin so any superficial microorganisms are destroyed. To maximize the effect of a hand sanitizer, you should rub a dime-size dollop on your hands for about 30 seconds. If hands are dried after 10-15 seconds, you probably did not use enough and the effectiveness could be greatly reduced.

Tips for Effective Hand Washing:
- Rub hands together vigorously with soap for at least 20 seconds
- Scrub all surfaces including the backs of your hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails
- Rinse well
- Dry hands with a clean or disposable towel
- Use a towel or your elbow to turn off the faucet if possible

Hand washing, along with these other actions, will help one avoid getting sick this winter:
- Get vaccinated against the flu
- Stay hydrated and well-rested
- Stay active and exercise regularly

Breakfast for Kids that Fit MyPlate
Written by Kristen Herrera, Undergraduate Student in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Purdue University

Breakfast is an important meal to start the day. Children who eat breakfast have better test scores, attention and focus, and problem solving skills. Not only does breakfast improve kids’ academic performance, it also boosts their overall health and wellness, and lowers their likelihood of obesity.

Planning a healthy breakfast for kids can be challenging but MyPlate can help. MyPlate is a resource published by the U.S Department of Agriculture that provides useful tips and suggestions for eating a balanced meal that includes a variety of foods from the five food groups (dairy, fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins).

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Here are some simple ideas for a quick nutritious breakfast. Skip sugar-filled cereals and spread peanut butter, a good protein source, on a slice of whole-grain toast. Try a bowl of oatmeal topped with fresh berries. You may also try adding a lean cut of ham and a slice of cheese to a whole wheat bagel to build a breakfast sandwich. Create a parfait layered with low-fat yogurt, granola, and fruit of your choice. Complete the meal with a serving of low-fat milk. There are plenty of other options. Be creative with what you have on hand for a healthy start to the day!

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**Roasted Sweet Potato with Cranberries**

**Ingredients (4-6 servings)**

- 3 large sweet potatoes
- 1 cup fresh or dried cranberries
- 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp garlic powder

**Optional:**

- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 2 tbsp honey

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Peel sweet potato and cut into 1-inch cubes.
3. Coat bottom of baking sheet with olive oil.
4. Spread sweet potato evenly on pan.
5. Sprinkle salt, pepper, and garlic powder over sweet potatoes, lightly drizzle olive oil over the entire dish.
6. Bake at 400°F for 25 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.
7. Remove from oven, add cranberries and rotate pan.
8. Cook for an additional 15-20 minutes, the cranberries should burst.

**Notes:**

- If using dried cranberries, rehydrate them slightly by soaking them in hot water.

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**Vegetarian Shepherd’s Pie**

**Ingredients (4-6 servings)**

- 2 cups uncooked lentils, rinsed well
- 1 tbsp canola or olive oil
- 1 yellow or white onion
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 cup broth or water
- 1 tsp dried thyme or marjoram
- 1 tbsp tomato paste (optional)
- 2 cups variety of vegetables (chopped carrots, peas and corn)

**Mashed potatoes:**

- 2 lbs russet potatoes (6 medium sized)
- 4 tbsp (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 – 1 cup milk

**Directions:**

1. Chop potatoes into 1 ½ inch cubes. Boil in a large pot with water for 20-30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender.
2. Drain the potatoes and let sit for 10 minutes.
3. Saute the onions and garlic in saucepan over medium heat in 1 tbsp oil until tender.
4. Add tomato paste (optional).
5. Add broth, dried herbs, pepper, and lentils to pan. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to simmer for 30 minutes. Add salt once lentils are cooked.
6. Chop vegetables, and add them to the lentil pan. Cook for 10 minutes.
7. Preheat oven to 425°F.
8. Add butter, 1/2 cup of milk, and seasoning to the potatoes. Mash with a pastry cutter, large fork or use an electric mixture until the potatoes reach your desired consistency. Add more milk if needed.
9. Pour lentils into a casserole dish evenly. Cover with mashed potatoes.
10. Bake the casserole dish in the oven for 20 minutes. The mashed potatoes should brown a bit.
11. Remove from oven and serve warm.

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**Sources:**

- http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/nutrition/eat-right-at-school/when-packing-the-school-lunches-dont-forget-breakfast
- https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate
- https://www.rush.edu/health-wellness/discover-health/why-you-should-eat-breakfast
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Welcome to Our New IEFRN Newsletter Editor

Written by Quynh Nguyen, Undergraduate Student in the Department of Pre-Pharmacy, Purdue University

We are pleased to introduce Quynh Nguyen as the new editor of Indiana’s Emergency Food Resource Network (IEFRN) newsletter starting September 2016. Quynh is a sophomore in Pre-pharmacy in the College of Pharmacy at Purdue University. Throughout her study at Purdue, Quynh has had a strong interest in food insecurity and has chosen to focus on food insecurity education for an independent project with a senior student in Environment and Ecological Engineering.

She has also volunteered at Food Finders- Food Bank in Lafayette during summer 2016. She recently published an article on her volunteer experience with Food Finders in the Purdue Journal of Service Learning and International Engagement in October.

As the IEFRN newsletter editor, she is looking forward to fine-tuning her writing skills and effective communication. If you have any questions about the newsletter, don’t hesitate to reach out to Quynh at qpnguyen@purdue.edu.