

Monthly Newsletter

BETTER LIVING BASICS

Healthy Holiday Habits

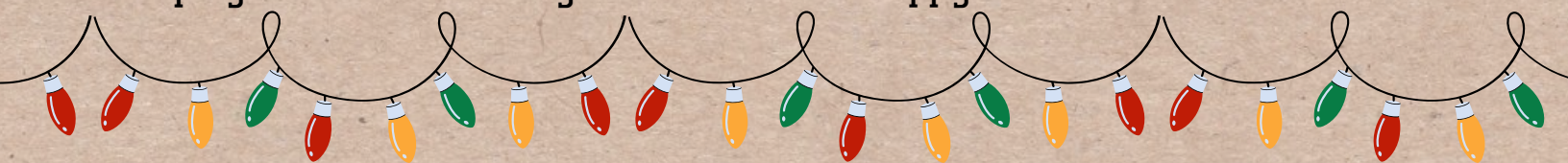


The month of December is typically filled with lots of yummy foods and quality time with family and friends. It is okay to enjoy the tasty Holiday foods, although here a few ideas to make healthier food choices while doing so!

- Enjoy meals regularly throughout the day instead of waiting for one big meal. Trying to “earn” your calories by restricting food or avoiding foods you crave may lead to overeating.
- Listen to hunger and fullness cues. Start with smaller portions and take time to savor the food to allow the body to recognize fullness.
- Choose low-sodium and reduced-fat ingredient options in recipes whenever possible.
- As with any other time of year, aim to fill half the plate with fruits and vegetables.

An idea for after a meal is to go for a walk. This aides in the digestion process and is a great chance to get some fresh air. Whether it be a 10-minute walk or 45-minutes, anything counts. Gather up your family and friends to walk with you to make it a fun activity!

I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



MUST-TRY RECIPE

Texas Bean Bowl

Ingredients (6 servings)

- 1 cup onion, minced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil (substitute: oil of choice)
- 1 (15-ounce) no-salt-added black beans
- 1 (15-ounce) no-salt-added pinto beans
- 1 (15-ounce) no-salt-added black-eyed peas
- 1 (15-ounce) no-salt-added whole-kernel corn
- 1 pound lean ground beef, cooked and drained
- 1½ cups tomato salsa
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chilies
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Optional garnishes, chopped: avocado, bell peppers, red onion, cilantro

Directions

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. In a skillet, sauté onion and garlic in oil.
3. Using a colander, drain and rinse beans, black-eyed peas, and corn. Add to onion and garlic.
4. Stir in the ground beef, salsa, diced tomatoes, green chilies, and salt, and heat through.
5. Serve in bowls and add optional garnishes as desired. This recipe can be used to make complete meals by adding it to a base, such as baked potatoes, brown rice, or lettuce leaves.

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
Serving size	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	300
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 7g	9%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 40mg	13%
Sodium 500mg	22%
Total Carbohydrate 38g	14%
Dietary Fiber 9g	32%
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 24g	48%
Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium	
*The % Daily Value is based on a diet of 2,000 calories a day is used for general guidance.	



If you have family members coming over for the holidays, make this recipe for everyone! Another idea is to make it ahead of time, freeze it in air-tight containers or freezer bags, then thaw it out when you are ready to eat it.

Current Programs

Get A Taste For Reducing Food Waste

Learn How To:

Reduce food waste in your home

The What and Why About Home Food Waste

Learn about the impact of food waste, why it happens, and how to limit it!

Let's Get Real About Meal Planning

Find out steps for planning meals with what you have and turning leftovers into a second meal.

Does Food Really Expire?

Understanding the Dates on Food Labels

Learn how to use the dates on food labels to buy, store, and eat safe and fresh food!

Composting Food Waste at Home

Find out which foods can be composted and different methods for maintaining your compost.

Session Start:

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity provider.

I am very excited about doing one of our new programs, "Get a Taste for Reducing Food Waste" with Foster Grandparents! This program discusses meal planning, composting, and how to understand expiration dates. We will be wrapping up this month!

I have completed two series at Copper Rawlings Senior Center and Lubbock Adult Activity Center! I had so much fun and look forward to working with them again!

I will be finishing up at Maggie Trejo Senior Center and Mae Simmons Senior Center in the early spring!

A FRESH START to a Healthier You!



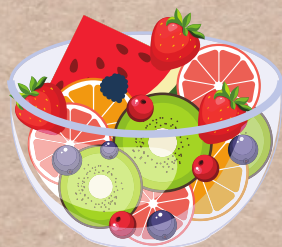
Join us and receive

- ◆ Support of friends
- ◆ Confidence to cook healthy meals for your children and family
- ◆ Practical cooking and shopping tips
- ◆ Handy kitchen tools
- ◆ Recipes for success in the kitchen



Program Updates

The first Thursday of each month the program "Choose Healthy" will be put on for youth at the YWCA! We made smoothies this month!!



CURRENT NEWS

Nutrition

Did you know that purchasing fruits and vegetables while they are in season is much cheaper than buying out of season fruits and vegetables?

Check out this seasonal produce guide to help you find out what is in season currently to help you save money during this holiday season! <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/resources/nutrition-education-materials/seasonal-produce-guide>



Physical Activity

Physical activity can sometimes be forgotten in the comfort and rest of the holidays. Look for ways to add movement into the festivities naturally. For example, bring games to gatherings that require people to get up and move around. Enjoy a walk-through holiday light display. Create a holiday-themed scavenger hunt for all ages. Turn on some music and have a dance party! Staying active can be simple and practical based on your lifestyle and traditions.

Gardening

Not all crops are well suited to every region. Identify plants that will work in your neck of the woods by looking up your plant zone—a geographic area based on average winter temperatures. Ashley Nussman-Berry notes that a common mistake for new gardeners is to plant the wrong crops: “I cannot grow citrus plants in zone seven, though I would really love to,” she says. “You have to grow what will survive in your area or you are just setting up your garden for failure.”

Type your zip code into the USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map to figure out your growing season and zone. This map divides North America into 11 planting zones. Take this information with you when buying seeds or seedlings (the packaging should clue you into which crops to grow).





Let's Talk Composting

When you hear the word “compost” do you feel intimidated? I know I did until I learned more about it! Now, it is super easy and is a great way to do something with your food scraps other than throw them away.

Did you know Americans throw away enough food each day to fill up the Rose Bowl? That fact is astonishing to me! Therefore, composting is a great way to return food back to the soil instead of it rotting in our landfills. The next few pages are tips to get your compost started!

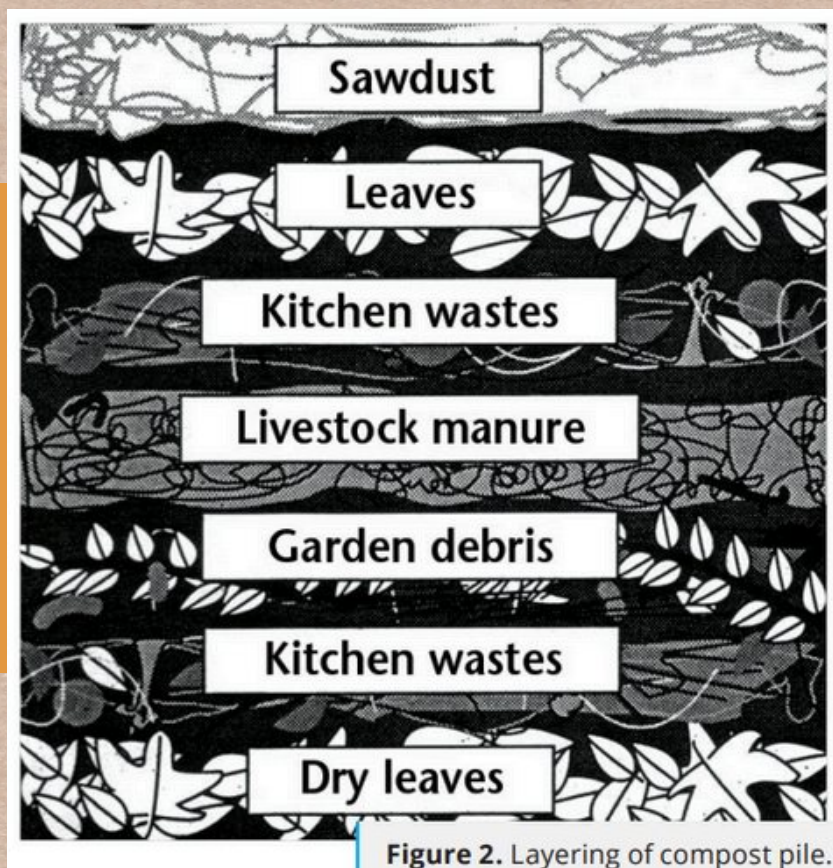


Figure 2. Layering of compost pile.

EASY GARDENING: COMPOSTING

Joseph Masabni¹ and Patrick Lillard²

If we composted many of the things we throw away, such as kitchen scraps, grass clippings, leaves, and other landscape debris, we could divert 20 to 30 percent of the trash currently going into landfills. By composting these materials, we can reduce the amount of waste we generate and produce organic matter and nutrients for our garden, landscape and yard.

Composting is simply the process of organic material decomposition. The resulting substance is called compost. Every garden benefits from the addition of compost because it supplies many of the nutrients plants need and also

- ▶ Improves the soil's physical characteristics
- ▶ Increases the soil capacity to hold water and nutrients
- ▶ Increases soil aeration

MATERIALS FOR COMPOSTING

Many materials can be put in compost piles, including:

- ▶ **Kitchen scraps.** Fruit and vegetable trimmings, coffee grounds and filters, and eggshells are great items for the compost pile. Do not use animal products such as grease, fat or meat trimmings, or dairy products because they break down very slowly, attract rodents and other pests, and have an unpleasant odor when they decompose.
- ▶ **Grass clippings.** Grass clippings (Fig. 1a) have relatively high nitrogen content and make good compost. Mix green, fresh clippings with soil or dry plant material such as leaves to keep the grass from compacting as it settles. Compaction prevents air from entering the pile and slows or prevents the composting process.
- ▶ **Dry leaves.** These are plentiful in the fall, and rather than putting them out by the curb, put them in your compost pile. Most leaves decompose faster and more thoroughly when shredded before they are added to the pile. If you do not have a shredder,

place the leaves in a row on your yard and cut them up with a rotary lawn mower. Rake up the chopped leaves and add them to the compost pile. (Figs. 1a and 1b.)

- ▶ **Manure.** Chicken, cow and horse manures are great nitrogen sources for compost piles. Cat and dog feces should never be put in a compost pile because they can carry disease organisms.
- ▶ **Sawdust.** Sawdust is plentiful at sawmills in many areas, especially in East Texas. Always compost sawdust before adding it to your garden because it can tie up nitrogen in the soil as it decomposes. Add extra nitrogen to sawdust to speed its breakdown.
- ▶ **Other materials.** Sod removed from the lawn, hay, non-noxious weeds, shredded newspaper, and hedge clippings can all be composted. Large twigs break down slowly so do not use them.



Figure 1. Grass clippings and leaves (1a) make good compost. Leaves compost faster if they are shredded before being added to the pile (1b).

¹Assistant Professor and Extension Horticulturist

²Extension Assistant
The Texas A&M University System

COMPOSTING CONTINUED

You can buy many types of composting bins, but you can also make one easily with wire fencing, cement blocks, bricks, or even scrap lumber. Less room is required if the pile is enclosed, but if you have adequate room you can also leave it free standing. With an enclosed pile, leave an opening on one side so the compost can be turned with a fork to allow air to enter the pile. The compost pile should be located:

- ▶ In a secluded area
- ▶ Preferably near the garden
- ▶ In a partially shaded area to prevent the pile from drying out too fast
- ▶ In a spot with good drainage so it does not become waterlogged



Ideally, a compost pile should be made up in layers. The first layer should be coarse plant material, such as branches and twigs, to allow oxygen to circulate up through the pile. The second layer should be 6 to 10 inches of finer plant material such as leaves, grass clippings, and kitchen scraps. The third layer should be a 1 inch layer of soil or manure, which provides microorganisms and nitrogen. The microorganisms are what actually break down the plant material. To do this they need food in the form of nitrogen. If you use soil for this layer, add 1/3 cup nitrogen for every 25 square feet of compost pile surface area. The nitrogen


IN-GROUND COMPOSTING

Composting can also be done directly in the ground, preferably where a garden row is to be planted the following season once the raw material has completely composted. To do in-ground composting:


1. Dig up the area—a long row or a raised bed—and remove the soil.
2. Fill the hole with the organic materials, such as shredded newspapers and dry leaves.
3. Cover it up with the original soil.
4. Let this area rest, or compost, for a few months.
5. Turn the soil and use it as a new planting bed.



WHAT IS BLT?



Better Living for Texans (BLT) is a nutrition education program for adults and children that are SNAP participants and SNAP eligible. The BLT program helps people make healthy meals, improve their physical fitness, save money at the grocery store, grow their own foods, and adopt better food safety habits.



We provide research and evidence-based nutrition, health and wellness knowledge to empower individuals, families, and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives.

The BLT program helps people make healthy meals, improve their physical fitness, save money at the grocery store, grow their own foods, and adopt better food safety habits.



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Contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about setting up a program!