



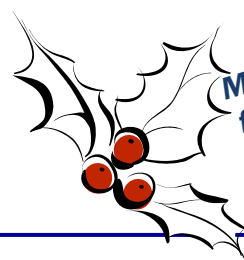
And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold
in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling,
how could it be so?

*It came without ribbons. It came without tags.
It came without packages, boxes or bags.*

*And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before.*

*What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.
What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.*

-Dr. Seuss



*May your holidays be filled with
family, friends and lots of love.
Happy holidays from everyone
at the GRG Project.*

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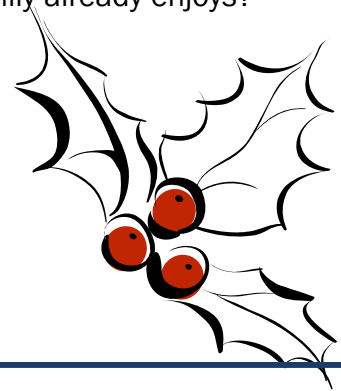


OLD and NEW Holiday Traditions

Holidays!

We are deep into holiday season and we urge you to remember that the most important part of this time—really, any time—is spending time with our families and loved ones. Traditions are an important part of family bonding and most cost nothing more than time and love. Why not add these tried-and-true traditions to the ones your family already enjoys?

- Light a nightly holiday candle.
- Read a holiday book to your children every night.
- Listen to holiday music at meal times.
- Make holiday crafts with your children.
- Sing carols with family and friends.
- Do family activities such as sledding, walking or playing games.
- Make gifts from your kitchen—cookies, quick breads, ornaments.
- String popcorn or make paper chains to decorate your home.



Fun Holiday-Themed Snacks!

Vegetable Tree

1 bottle light or fat free ranch dressing
 4 cups broccoli florets
 3-4 cups cauliflowerets
 1 medium carrot, sliced into rounds (circles)
 Optional: cherry tomatoes, olive slices, other vegetables

Cover bottom of 9 x 13-inch baking pan with a thin layer of ranch dressing. For best storage, use glass. Arrange broccoli so it forms a large Christmas tree in center of pan. Place cauliflower around outside of tree to fill in pan. Add carrot slices, etc. to form ornaments on the tree.

Serves 20. (Source: *Taste of Home Magazine*, 11/96)

Rudolph Sandwiches

Cut a slice of bread into four triangles and spread each with peanut butter. Use pretzel sticks for antlers and raisins for eyes. Add a half-cherry, strawberry, candy, piece of red apple with skin on for the nose, or a touch of red frosting.

Rudolph's Peanut Butter Cookies

½ cup margarine
 ½ cup peanut butter
 1¼ cups flour
 ¾ cup sugar
 1 egg
 ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon baking powder
 ½ teaspoon vanilla
 64 small pretzels
 32 cinnamon red hot candies
 Chocolate chips or raisins

Beat margarine and peanut butter for 30 seconds. Add half the flour and all of the sugar, egg, baking soda, baking powder, and vanilla. Beat until thoroughly combined. Stir in the remaining flour. Cover and chill 1 hour or until easy to handle. Work with half the dough at the time, keeping the rest refrigerated. Using 1 tablespoon of dough, shape it into a triangle about 2½ inches long and 2 inches wide on an ungreased cookie sheet. Lightly press pretzel antlers into sides at wide end of triangles. Add red candy noses and chocolate chips or raisins for eyes. Bake at 375° for 7 to 8 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Let cool 2 minutes on the cookie sheet. Carefully remove to rack to cool. Makes 32.

All holiday content on pages 2 & 3 originally published by Extension Nutrition Programs Newsletter, Vol. 00 Issue 12. buyeatlivebetter.org.





Holidays!

Turn Gift Giving Into Family Time

Another big part of the holiday season is gift giving. Remember that the best gifts don't need to cost a lot and you don't need to stand in lines at busy stores. Here are some great gift ideas you can make while spending time with your family.

Make Tree and Wreath Ornaments

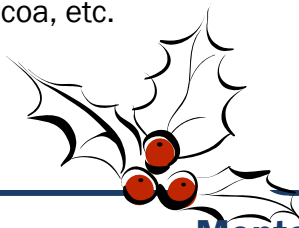
Use holiday cookie cutters to cut shapes and use ribbon to make hangers.

2 cups white or whole wheat flour
1 cup salt
1 cup water

Combine flour and salt in a large bowl. Add water, a little at a time, mixing as you pour. Form into a ball and knead 7 to 10 minutes until dough is smooth. Shape into ornaments. Remember to put a hole in the ornament for hanging; a straw works well! Bake at 325° for 30 minutes, or until dry. Dough can be made ahead and kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Make Gift Certificates

Make gift certificates on old Christmas cards or with paper and stickers. List what you will do for that person; for example, give a free hug, wash the dishes, babysit for one hour, make a cup of hot cocoa, etc.



Make Play Dough

Make play dough, place in plastic bag, and decorate the bag with stickers or ribbon.

1 cup flour
1 cup water
1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
2 Tablespoons cream of tartar
¼ cup salt
Food coloring or flavored drink powder

Stir and cook over medium heat until it's thick. Keep in a plastic bag or wrap and put in refrigerator.

Make a Fruit Basket

Choose a few apples, oranges, and/or canned fruits, arrange in a basket or decorated paper bag.

Make Holiday Breads

Use your favorite quick bread recipe - banana, pumpkin, etc. Use small coffee cans, soup cans or even tuna cans to make different sizes and shapes for attractive gift giving. Be certain to grease cans thoroughly to prevent sticking and bake according to package directions. Wrap bread in plastic wrap or bags. Decorate with stickers, ribbons or holiday wrap.

Montana DPHHS Offers Holiday Food Safety Tips

Food is an important part of many holiday celebrations. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) offers reminders to help ensure the holiday season is free of illness from food. Read the entire article at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/newsevents/newsreleases2013/november/foodtips.shtml>. Here are a few highlights:

- Vacuum packaging leftover cooked meats and cooked poultry is not encouraged, due to the increased risk of botulism poisoning.
- Consume or discard refrigerated leftovers within one week. Frozen foods should be consumed or discarded within six months.
- Homemade pumpkin pies should remain refrigerated until served.
- In refrigerators, keep raw, animal foods below or away from other foods that are ready-to-eat. Separating raw food from ready-to-eat foods will reduce the chance of cross-contamination, which can transfer harmful microorganisms from one food to another.
- When transporting foods that normally require refrigeration, keep in a cooler or insulated bag to ensure the food stays at or below 41 degrees.



Health & Nutrition

Combine Cooking Time with Family Time

If you're caught between finding time to prepare meals and spending quality time with your children, try cooking with them. Children enjoy helping in the kitchen and often are more willing to eat foods they help prepare. Involve your child in planning and preparing some meals and snacks for the family.

When your child is helping you with food preparation, don't forget cleanliness. Wash hands using soap and warm running water before and after handling food or utensils.

It is important that you give kitchen tasks appropriate for your child's age. Be patient as your child gains new skills at different ages. Children have to be shown and taught how to do these activities. Each child has his or her own pace for learning, so give it time and the skills will come. Expect a few spills. It's a small price to pay for helping your children become comfortable around food.

2-year olds can:

- Bring ingredients from one place to another
- Wipe table tops
- Tear lettuce or greens
- Break cauliflower
- Snap green beans
- Play with utensils

3-year olds can do what 2-year olds do, plus:

- Wrap potatoes in foil for baking
- Knead and shape yeast dough
- Pour liquids
- Mix ingredients
- Shake liquids in covered container
- Spread soft spreads
- Place things in trash

4-year olds can do what 2- and 3-year olds do plus:

- Move hands to form round shapes
- Cut parsley or green onions with dull scissors
- Mash bananas using a fork
- Set the table

5-year olds can do what 2-, 3- and 4-year olds do, plus:

- Measure ingredients
- Cut with blunt knife
- Use an egg beater

*Information adapted from:
"Combine Cooking Time with Family Time" developed by Alice Henneman, MS, RD, Extension Educator, as part of "Cook It Quick!", University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE 68528-1507*

Your kids will love helping you make this easy and healthy version of one of their favorite foods!

Chicken Fingers

1 pound boneless chicken (2 breasts)

¼ cup milk or buttermilk

1 cup crushed cereal or bread crumbs

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

Optional: ¼ teaspoon garlic or onion powder or Italian seasoning

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease cookie sheet. Crush cereal (or bread crumbs) in large plastic bag. If desired, add salt, pepper and other spices. Pour into large plate. Remove skin and bone from chicken breast. Cut each breast into strips. Pour milk into pie plate or shallow dish. Dip chicken strips in milk and then in crushed cereal (or bread crumbs). Place chicken on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F. for 20 to 25 minutes. Serves four. Dip ideas: ranch dressing, barbecue sauce, honey mustard, sweet and sour sauce or catsup.



Resources

Get a Jump on Your 2014 Spending Plan

In today's economy, many circumstances can lead to a person's interest in developing a spending plan. Perhaps you feel that your expenses are out of control or that you are over-your-head in debt. A sudden drop in income as the result of temporary layoffs, cutbacks or downsizing in your company or because of loss of child support, illness, death of a family member, unplanned pregnancy, or divorce may contribute to a person's desire to develop a spending plan.

Families who have a spending plan say it is an effective tool to help them get a grip on their money. A spending plan can help families spend hard-earned dollars more effectively, live within their income, reduce the need for consumer credit, save for things wanted and develop skills in financial management.

A spending plan has five steps:

1. List your monthly income
2. List your monthly expenses
3. Balance your monthly income and expenses
4. Review, track expenses and revise the spending plan
5. Manage the Spending Plan

The **MSU Extension MontGuide, *Developing a Spending Plan*** offers you step-by-step procedures for these five steps. In addition to a monthly spending plan worksheet, the MontGuide includes answers to questions like:

- What are sources of income?
- How much should you spend on things like food, clothing and transportation?
- Are you spending too much on housing?
- How much should you have in an emergency fund?
- How much debt can you safely assume?
- What do you need to increase or decrease in order for income and expenses to balance?

You can get your copy of this MontGuide for FREE!

- Download it at <http://www.montana.edu/extensionecon/financialmgtpublications.html>
- Order it online at <http://store.msuextension.org/>
- Call **(406) 994-3273** and request a copy.

Getting the most from your income requires careful planning and wise spending decisions. A spending plan based on what your family considers to be most important can help balance spending with available income and resources. Keeping track of spending will help ensure that money is available for the things your family needs most.

Do you have a friend or family member experiencing a financial crisis? Do you want to know how you can help?

The MontGuide, ***Helping Friends Cope with Financial Crisis***, can help you assist loved ones during their time of need by helping them find resources and by identifying the warning signs of depression.

This MontGuide is also **FREE** and you can get it the same ways (above) you can get the Spending Plan MontGuide.

See these MontGuides, and many more, in their entirety at

http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/msu_montguides.html





Useful News

Your Kids' Video Games: YOU Have the Control

For many families, video games are a part of everyday life. Many games allow players to talk and play with other people — or buy more content right from the console or game. And plenty of games are designed with a grown-up audience in mind. That's why it's important to find out your **parental control options**. Depending on the system, parental controls might include:

Game Rating Restrictions This setting lets you decide which games can be played on a console or handheld gaming device based on the rating from the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). For example, you might set the system to allow games Rated E for Everyone to be played, but not games rated Teen or above.

Time Limits Some game systems let you set days and times your kids can play, and for how long.

Profiles Some systems let you create multiple profiles with different settings for each. So while your password-protected profile might allow you to play any game, your nine-year-old's profile might be limited to games rated E for Everyone. If your system doesn't have profiles, you may have to reset the preferences each time you play.

Disabling Internet Access This setting can prevent your kids from accessing online features. For example, some systems include parental controls that allow you to mute or disable online chat, which might include profanity or bullying by other players. Some systems that offer online gaming also give parents the ability to approve friend requests or create approved lists of friends their kids can play with or talk to.

In-game Purchase Restrictions Sometimes you can buy downloadable games or downloadable content with the credit card tied to your account. But in most cases, you can set a password to restrict those purchases.

Video games have their own rating system from the ESRB.

Ratings, printed right on the game box — or included at online storefronts for games downloaded directly to a game console — include:

Age Ratings On the front of most game boxes, age rating symbols (Early Childhood to Adults Only 18+) give you an idea of the ages the game may be appropriate for.

Content Descriptors On the back of the box, the content descriptors detail game elements — like violence, sex, language, and gambling — that may have triggered a particular rating.

Rating Summaries If you're looking for more information, check a game's ESRB rating summary, a detailed description of key content. Rating summaries aren't printed on the box, but you can look them up for most games at <http://www.esrb.org/index-js.jsp> or using the ESRB's free mobile app. Games that are available only as a download through a console or handheld storefront do not get rating summaries. Other organizations offer even more detailed information on game content. For example, Common Sense Media has game reviews, including recommended ages, at <http://www.common Sense Media.org/game-reviews>.

Online Rating Notice If a game is online-enabled, it will include the notice, "Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB." That tells you that players could be exposed to chat — text, audio, or video — or other types of user-generated content that aren't part of the game's rating.

Look Up Your Game System

To find out about a game system's parental control options, look it up in at <http://www.esrb.org/about/resources.jsp> or check with the manufacturer. **Microsoft** offers parental control information at <http://getgamesmart.com/>. You'll find information for **Nintendo** systems at www.nintendo.com/consumer/info/en_na/parents.jsp, and for **Sony** at <https://support.us.playstation.com/app/answers/detail/>

Information adapted from <http://www.onguardonline.gov/articles/0270-kids-parents-and-video-games>

Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana—By County

Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Liz Werk
MSU Extension
(406) 353-2656

Big Horn County—Wyola
Kristy Old Coyote
LBHC Extension
(406) 638-3114

Big Horn County—Hardin
Janice Eckman
Parent Place
(406) 665-4151

Big Horn & Rosebud Counties—Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Ryhal Rowland
MSU Extension
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Cascade County—Great Falls
Jona McNamee
MSU Extension
(406) 454-6980
Mariellen Ritts
(406) 453-3554

Custer County—Miles City
Don & Vivian Westall
(406) 234-6727

Dawson County—Glendive
Pete Bruno
Family Life Institute
(406) 939-5591

Fergus County—Lewistown
Denise Seilstad
MSU Extension
(406) 535-3919

Flathead County—Kalispell
Nikki Roth
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
(406) 756-1414

Gallatin County—Bozeman
MSU Extension Family & Human Development
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Carrie Jackson/Connie Bremner
Eagle Shield Center
(406) 338-7257

Hill County—Havre
Lea Ann Larson
MSU Extension
(406) 265-5481

Hill County—Rocky Boy Indian Reservation
Mary St. Pierre
Stone Child College & MSU Extension
(406) 395-4875

Lake County—Ronan
Nori Pearce
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Lewis & Clark County—Helena
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Rocky Mountain Development Council, Head Start
(406) 457-7308
Jackie Stoeckel
DPHHS, Child & Family Services - Program Bureau
(406) 841-2402

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WORD—Local Living Family Center
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Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

**Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family.
Whatever you are, whoever you are,
you need one.**
~Jane Howard