

HEALTHY, WEALTHY, AND WISE

Practical Knowledge for Everyday Living



March 2007
Volume 2, Issue 3

Agent's Corner

I hope you all enjoyed the cool weather while it lasted. Florida's spring is approaching and we all know what that means—hot weather that will soon turn into very hot weather.

But spring also represents renewal—a time to clean out the old and start over fresh. Rearrange your furniture. Try a new hobby. Read a good book. Get a new haircut.

A little positive change can make a huge difference!

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The Wordsmith

Grok: (v.) to understand profoundly and intuitively

Example: Despite reading the story three times, she just couldn't *grok* its plot.

Mark Your Calendar!



The Master Gardener Plant Sale & Gardening College is teaming up with the Water Wise Expo to bring you a full day of learning and fun!

This event will take place on March 31, 2007 from 8:00am - 1:30pm at the Manatee County Fairgrounds.

For more information, call (941) 722-4524.

Consumer Alert: Internet Scams

The cyber crooks are at it again. Every year, these criminal geniuses devise new and inventive ways to sneak into our computers and "borrow" our personal information.

Why do they do this? The simple answer is because they can. Unfortunately, that's bad news for us honest internet users who simply want to make convenient at-home purchases, get and/or share information, or communicate with family and friends.

There are some things that we as consumers can do, however, to protect ourselves from these internet parasites.

Anti-virus software can be very effective in protecting your computer from unwanted viruses, Trojan horses, worms, spyware, and adware. But its effectiveness depends on regular updates. Most programs include a renewable subscription to an automatic updating service.

Remember, when shopping online, never enter your credit card or other financial information into an unsecure site. Two ways to tell if a site is secure: there will be a little padlock symbol in the lower right-hand corner and the web address at the top will begin with "https" and not just "http." The "s" means "secure."



SECTION A: THE GOOD LIFE



Some Facts About Flu Shots

Flu season in Florida generally lasts through March and sometimes into April. So if you haven't gotten a flu shot yet, it's not too late!

Here are some facts about flu shots that you may not have known:

- It takes your body two weeks to create antibodies for the flu after a vaccine. Early vaccination is recommended.
- People with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, or heart disease should get a flu shot every year since the risk for complications is greater.
- If you are allergic to eggs, talk to your doctor before getting a flu shot. The viruses used in the vaccine are grown in chicken eggs and you could have a reaction.

"Truth sits upon the lips of dying men." - Matthew Arnold

Snoring Keeping You Up? Try These Remedies!

Snoring can be a big problem, leading to loss of sleep for you and your partner. Long-term snoring problems can also lead to a more serious condition called sleep apnea in which you may stop breathing temporarily throughout the night.

There may be a simple solution.

"Anti-snoring" pillows, which can be found at housewares stores, can help keep the head and neck aligned properly, allowing air to travel unimpeded to the lungs. These are best for people who prefer to sleep on their sides.

Another easy remedy may be the use of adhesive nasal strips that help hold the nostrils open, allowing for easier breathing. These work best for people whose snoring may be due to nasal congestion.

Some snorers may require a minor surgical procedure to correct the problem. Three tiny soft polyester inserts are placed into the back of the mouth to help support the soft palate, helping to prevent blockage. This technique is best for those severe snorers who have not found relief from the more common, over-the-counter remedies.



Viral Vacation?

Exotic vacation locales may also mean exotic illnesses. If you find yourself sick while on vacation, have no fear! There are two things you can do to make sure that you get the best medical care possible while away from home.

Make a list of any chronic conditions and allergies that you may have and learn how to say them in their language, if possible.

Take a credit card. Many foreign doctors will expect payment up front. If you need assistance with money, such as a funds transfer, contact the United States consular office.

To Buy or Not to Buy: Organic Produce

The trend towards organic is growing. Many people are deciding that traditionally grown foods contain too many chemicals and too many pesticides. And genetic modification of some foods is just too "science fiction" for many people's tastes.

Organically grown foods, many contend, are tastier than their conventionally grown counterparts because allowing the fruit or vegetable to grow at its natural pace maximizes the food's flavor.

Organic growing processes are also often considered more environmentally friendly. Many people concerned with the future welfare of our planet choose organic produce for this very reason.

The current argument against going

organic is cost. Organic produce tends to be pricier, but with its growing popularity, the price is coming down.

How do you know if it's really organic? Most organic foods possess a USDA Certified Organic seal. However, another way to tell if those bananas are organic is by looking at the Product Look Up Code (PLU) - the little sticker on each fruit that contains the fruit's code number. If it's preceded by "9," it's organic. For instance, "regular" bananas have a code of 4011. If they are organic bananas, the code would be 94011.



Look for this seal when buying organic—that means it's certified.

SECTION B: HOME ON THE RANGE



Caring for Your Cast Iron

A cast iron skillet is one of the most useful tools a cook can have. But it also needs a lot of tender loving care.

Cast iron skillets need to be seasoned before they can be used. Seasoning helps prevent various chemical reactions caused by acidic foods such as vinegar and tomatoes that can lead to corrosion.

To season your cast iron skillet, first scrub and clean it thoroughly with steel wool. Then dry it, oil it with vegetable oil, and bake it empty in the oven

at 350°F for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Cool the pan, oil it again, and re-bake it for another 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Cool it again and then wipe away any residual oil. You're all done! This process seals the pores in the iron and prevents rusting.

Never wash cast iron in the dishwasher. Always dry it thoroughly after use and rub it with a little oil before storing it. If corrosion or rusting occurs, scrub the rust off with steel wool and re-season it following the above procedure.

"Did you ever see an unhappy horse? Did you ever see a bird that had the blues? One reason why birds and horses are not unhappy is because they are not trying to impress other birds and horses."

~ Dale Carnegie ~

B₁₂ for Better Health

Vitamin B₁₂ is an important nutrient that is vital to DNA production and maintenance of healthy nerve and red blood cells.

Fatigue and dizziness are the first signs that you may be deficient in this vitamin. If left unchecked, a more serious condition called *pernicious anemia* can result as well as nerve damage and perhaps even dementia.

Where can we get this vitamin? Well, the vitamin molecule binds to protein, so foods rich

in protein are good sources of B₁₂. These foods include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products.

Stomach acid helps separate the B₁₂ from the protein, so people who take a lot of antacids or those with decreased stomach acid (such as older adults), are more likely to suffer from a B₁₂ deficiency.

Vegetarians and vegans are at a higher risk as well. It is recommended that these individuals take a multivitamin to ensure they are getting enough B₁₂.

How do you like your steak?

The following are the USDA temperature guidelines for steak doneness:

- Rare is 130°F.
- Medium rare is 145°F.
- Medium is 160°F.
- Medium well is 165°F.
- Well done is 170°F.

There's also a quick fingertip test that you can use to determine doneness. Relax your non-dominant hand. Touch the tip of your index finger to the tip of your thumb. With your other index finger, gently press the meaty part of your hand below the thumb. This is the approximate consistency of a rare steak. Next, do the same with the middle finger—this is a medium rare steak. The ring finger to the thumb represents a medium well steak. Finally, the pinky to the thumb would be the consistency of a well done steak.

Flavor of the Month

Irish Scones

Ingredients:

- 1 cup white flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 lb. butter, softened
- 2 oz. sugar
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 2 oz. milk
- Sultanas (white raisins), optional
- Walnut halves, optional

Directions:

Mix flour and baking powder. Add butter, blending until mixture is butter-colored. Add sugar and continue to mix well. Add half the beaten egg and all the milk. Add raisins or some nuts, if desired, mixing well to make a sticky dough. Turn dough onto floured board and knead at least 5 minutes or longer. Cut dough into rounds and place on greased baking sheet. Brush tops of scones with remainder of beaten egg. Place walnut halves on top, if desired. Bake at 350°F to 375°F for 15 to 20 minutes, or until brown.

Makes 6 scones.

SECTION G: ODDS & ENDS



Volunteer News: HCE & The Guild

HCE News: Our club is growing! Keep up the good work.

Don't miss our March 5 meeting at 3:00pm. We will be having a speaker from the Osteoporosis Foundation.

On March 14, we will be visiting the Southeastern Guide Dogs. If you wish to attend, please call the office.

If you are interested in attending the March 27 planning meeting in Bartow, please let us know.

GUILD News: We had another successful distribution day on February 12. Many handcrafted items were donated to various organizations throughout Manatee County. Thank you to everyone who helped out by either donating items or helping to distribute them. We couldn't have done it without you!

We are still in need of yarn. If anyone has any yarn they would like to donate, please call Sharon or Sam at (941)722-4524.

March Birthdays

Joan Tessler	March 6
Shirley Dunham	March 9
Betty Dombroski	March 18
Elda Boyer	March 23
Marilyn Wolter	March 29

Don't Forget to Spring Forward



Daylight Savings Time begins three weeks early this year. So remember to set those clocks ahead on March 11!

Upcoming Events & Important Dates

March 5, 2007 1:00–3:00 pm	Guild Birthday Lunch
March 5, 2007 3:00–4:00 pm	HCE Meeting
March 11, 2007	Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 12, 19, and 26 1:00–3:00pm	Guild Meeting
March 14, 2007 9:00am	Field Trip to Southeastern Guide Dogs
March 17, 2007	St. Patrick's Day
March 27, 2007	HCE Planning Meeting in Bartow
March 31, 2007 8:00am–1:30pm	Plant Sale/Gardening College/Water Wise Expo

Manatee County Extension Service

Solutions for Your Life.

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HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

