Cook Smart, Eat Smart

Despite the popularity of high-end television cooking shows, Americans have largely forgotten how to cook more than just the simplest convenience foods. Our inability to prepare our own meals is costing us money and contributing to health problems linked to obesity.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension has developed a cooking education program, Cook Smart, Eat Smart, designed to bring North Carolinians back to the kitchen with simple, nutritious recipes and cooking methods.

“We tell people to eat more meals at home to improve their nutrition, but we can’t really ask them to do that if they don’t know how,” said Dr. Carolyn Dunn, Cooperative Extension nutrition specialist and chair of Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina. Eat Smart, Move More is a multi-agency program that focuses on improving nutrition and physical activity among North Carolinians.

Cook Smart, Eat Smart not only teaches consumers basic cooking methods such as roasting, stir frying or using a crock pot, but it also provides information on practicing home food safety, buying and using basic pots and knives, and getting more for your money at the grocery store.

Cook Smart, Eat Smart was developed by Dr. Dunn and four North Carolina Family and Consumer Sciences Agents, responding to families’ need to prepare simple meals at home to improve nutrition, control portion sizes and save money on their food bills. North Carolina ranks 16th nationally in adult obesity and fifth in adolescent obesity. The Agents pilot-tested the program with clients in their own counties.

Now, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agents across the state are offering Cook Smart, Eat Smart workshops. During four hands-on workshops, participants will have the opportunity to participate in cooking and sampling a variety of recipes. Participants also will receive a complete book of recipes tested during the program.

Cook Smart, Eat Smart was developed with support from the Dinah Gore Foods, Nutrition and Fitness Endowment and the Family & Consumer Sciences Foundation.

Cooking education takes Extension back to its roots, to the days when home demonstration agents helped homemakers learn new cooking skills. “But today, cooking education is more about teaching a basic skill that families need”, Dunn said.

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Cook Smart | Eat Smart is a basic cooking class that will help you develop skills you need in order to prepare more meals at home with simple healthy preparation techniques, simple ingredients and simple equipment. Call 488-3848 to register.

**4-week program**
October 6
October 13
October 20
October 27

6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Cost: $35 (for all 4 classes)

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Once again, it’s time for North Carolina’s Medicare beneficiaries to make a decision about their prescription drug coverage. Medicare Part D — the federal program’s prescription drug benefit — open enrollment begins November 15 and runs through December 31. During this enrollment period, people with Medicare can sign up for a prescription drug plan (PDP) or switch their current Medicare Part D plan.

SHIIP, the Department of Insurance’s Seniors’ Health Insurance Information Program, is available to help seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries with the enrollment process or answer any questions about the program. Trained SHIIP counselors are available to meet with you face-to-face at the Swain County Cooperative Extension Office.

SHIIP created the following frequently asked questions to guide you through the Part D enrollment process. If you have additional questions, call SHIIP at 1-800-443-9354 or visit www.ncshiip.com.

**What is a Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan (PDP)?** Medicare PDPs are insurance plans approved by Medicare and sold by private insurance companies that offer prescription drug coverage to people with Medicare. All people on Medicare are eligible to enroll into a Medicare PDP regardless of their income or assets. Medicare PDPs work like any other insurance products — they have premiums, co-payments, deductibles and formularies (list of approved drugs that the plan will cover).

**What if I cannot afford a Medicare PDP?** There is federal assistance available for people with Medicare who have limited income and resources. If you qualify, you can receive assistance with premiums, deductibles and prescription co-payments. To apply for the Low Income Subsidy (LIS) program contact SHIIP at 1-800-443-9354 or make an appointment with a SHIIP counselor by calling 488-3848. You can also call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or visit their website at: www.socialsecurity.gov for help.

North Carolina residents may also apply for assistance through the Governor’s NCRx program by calling 1-888-488-6279 or visiting www.ncrx.gov.

**Should I change my current PDP?** Many Medicare PDPs change their formularies and prices every year, so it is possible that the PDP you chose for 2009 won’t work as well...

### White Bean Spread with Garlic and Rosemary

*(a sneak preview from Cook Smart, Eat Smart)*

- 2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 large garlic cloves, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary (or 3 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary)
- 1 (16-ounce) can white beans, drained

Heat a non-stick pan over medium heat. When pan is hot, add olive oil, garlic and rosemary.

Add beans and a small amount of water to pan. As beans cook, mash them with a wooden spoon or potato masher. Cook until mixture is a loose spread consistency (it will thicken as it cools).

Transfer to a serving bowl and allow to cool prior to serving. Serve with carrot sticks and whole wheat crackers. Makes 6 servings.

Note: This easy appetizer can be made in advance and stored in the refrigerator. Gently heat prior to serving.

**Nutrition Information Per Serving:** Calories 140; Total Fat 5g; Saturated Fat 1g; Protein 4g; Carbohydrates 12g; Fiber 4g; Sodium 273 mg
Candy Apples, Pumpkin Pie . . .

. . . Visions of Sugar Plums—these are sentiments of several “sweet” holidays approaching us, just as the rate of obesity in North Carolina rapidly nears 30%. This season, consider alternatives to sugary treats, for your health and that of your family and community.

Diets high in refined sugars can promote obesity, while increasing the risks of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease, as well as tooth decay.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends that a person who consumes a 2,000-calorie diet (an average adult) should not consume more than 40 grams of refined sugars, or 10 teaspoons per day. That is the equivalent of one 12-ounce can of regular soda! Children’s sugar intake should be limited as much as possible.

According to the USDA, the average American consumes about 150 pounds of sugar every year, or 46 teaspoons (almost one cup) of added sugar per day—over four times the recommended limit. One study found that the average added sugar consumption for children ages two to five was 15 teaspoons per day, the equivalent of one and a half cans of soda.

According to the Census Bureau, Americans eat an average of 25 pounds of candy a year, nearly half a pound per week. Halloween seems to start us on the downward spiral of overindulging.

However, Halloween can also be a perfect opportunity to teach kids about healthy eating. If your kids do get Halloween treats, help make that food a part of a healthy eating plan by establishing the following guidelines before children go trick-or-treating:

- Set limits about when candy can be eaten and how much candy is appropriate
- Show your kids that it’s ok to eat candy in moderation as part of a healthy eating plan
- Encourage kids to bring home all of their candy for you to inspect. Make sure each piece is wrapped well to prevent food contamination by hand-borne bacteria. This will also help to prevent extra litter of candy wrappers on the side of the road.

Do your part to promote healthy eating this Halloween, by handing out alternatives to candy. Fun stickers, pencils and temporary tattoos are good options, as well as, small granola bars, fruit, whole grain crackers or baked chips, so that kids are getting more of the healthy carbohydrates and less sugar. Together, we can help decrease the rate of obesity in our state and still enjoy an abundant holiday season.

Update

Community Garden

The first season of the community garden is growing strong! Our 17 gardeners, managing 14 plots, have produced an array of vegetables, flowers and herbs.

If you or anyone you know are interested in joining the community garden for the 2010 growing season, please contact Swain County Cooperative Extension at 488-3848 to check availability and to be placed on the waiting list.

Medicare Part D Open Enrollment . . . continued from page 2

for you in 2010. Just like with any insurance product, it’s important to make sure that your coverage continues to meet your needs year after year. By comparing plans, you can see if another Medicare PDP would save you money and/or cover more of your prescriptions. Start your comparisons now so that there is plenty of time to shop around before making your decision. If you do sign up for Part D or change your current plan during the open enrollment, Nov. 15 – Dec. 31, your new plan will take effect on Jan. 1, 2010.

What other options are available for Medicare prescription drug coverage? Some Medicare Advantage plans contain prescription drug coverage. If you have questions about Medicare Advantage plans, contact SHIIP for assistance.
What's Happening?
Call Swain County Cooperative Extension at 488-3848 for more information.

COMING SOON!

Make Your Own Earth-friendly Cleaning Products is an easy and fun way to help the environment and save money. This class will cover the basics of cleaning your home without harsh chemicals, using simple and safe ingredients. Class will be held on Tuesday, September 22, from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Swain County Extension. Cost is $7 and will include recipes and a sample of each product that we prepare in class.

Herbs for the Holidays - Growing your own herbs beautifies your yard AND enhances culinary experiences with a wide variety of tasty and aromatic combinations. This class will explore unique opportunities for using your dried herbs in preparing holiday meals and making your own gifts.

ON-GOING PROGRAMS

SHIIP Senior Health Insurance Information Program is a consumer information division of the NC Department of Insurance that assists people with choosing a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. Call 488-3848 for an appointment.

Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less is a program that will explore behaviors that help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight by living mindfully and creating new, lifelong habits. Weekly 90-minute meetings include weigh-ins, goal setting, nutrition education, counseling and support, information, recipes and cooking demonstrations.

Pressure Canner Testing: Did you know that if you have a pressure canner with a dial gauge, you should have it tested every year. Please call us if you need to have your gauge tested.