



Earthly Elements

"Helpful Information From The Trenches"

Issue 4

Winter Edition

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Holiday Time



WOMEN, WHOLE GRAINS & STROKE

Eating more whole grain foods, such as certain breads and cereals, may help women reduce their risk of ischemic stroke. These are the most common kinds of strokes, and they happen when blood to the brain is blocked.

That's the finding of a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston studied more than 75,000 women, ages 38 to 63, and found that those who ate the most whole grains had the lowest rates of ischemic stroke.

Women who ate the equivalent of two or three pieces of whole-grain bread a day had a 30 to 40 percent lower risk of ischemic stroke than women who ate less than half a slice a day.

Some of the whole-grain foods the women also ate included cooked oatmeal, whole-grain breakfast cereal, popcorn, wheat germ, brown rice, and couscous.



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Brighter Days Ahead

Pay attention to your energy levels. If you get sleepier earlier in the day during autumn, do something about it now. It's easier to maintain vitality than to build it from scratch during the winter.

Get a half-hour of sunlight each day, preferably in the early morning or late afternoon. Wear sunscreen with a minimum 15 SPF; fair-skinned people should use 30 SPF or higher.

Replace fluorescent lighting and warm-white bulbs with broad-spectrum bulbs marked 90 CRI (color rendering index), indicating that the bulb is 90% equivalent to natural sunlight.

On overcast days, make sure your home is brightly lighted.

DON'T HIBERNATE during winter (or the summer)! Plan a regular schedule of outdoor activities to ensure an ongoing relationship with the sun!



Superplants

To the Rescue!

Stale Air?

If the wintertime air in your home or office seems a bit stale, here's a green way to scrub it: Grow more houseplants! Of course plants take in carbon dioxide and give back oxygen, but they do more than that for our personal breathing space.

NASA researchers have found that in concentration, certain indoor plants (see picture) purify the air of enclosed environments, such as air-tight office buildings and houses (and spacecrafts, too.) The plants remove indoor pollutants, including the odors of paint, adhesives, particle board, stains, varnishes, ammonia, alcohol, formaldehyde, toluene, and trichloroethylene.



The Areca Palm is #1 for easy care and cleaner air.

Stale Brain?

Taking it a step further, researchers in the U.S. and Australia report that having live indoor plants can improve our ability to concentrate and produce on the job. So clear the air—and your head—by growing more indoor plants!

“Feel Good”



Body Polisher

Try this fun & fruity skin treatment.

To do:

Mash 1 medium banana in a bowl.

In blender, whirl 3 tablespoon-size chunks of papaya; add to banana.

Stir in 2 tablespoons honey & 2 tablespoons sugar.



To gently exfoliate, rub paste with a light touch in small circular pattern wherever you wish, especially tending to elbows and knees. Rinse.

Now feel the delicious difference: banana soothes and tightens skin, vitamin and carotene-rich papaya cleanses and helps eliminate impurities, honey nourishes and restores a natural moisture balance while sugar grains exfoliate.

Herbal Vinegars:

a gift from the garden

Homemade herbal vinegars make a lovely holiday gift. Here's how to make them:



1. Start with good vinegar, such as wine, rice, or sherry vinegar. Avoid distilled white vinegar because its flavor overwhelms most herbs.

2. Select herbs such as tarragon, rosemary, lavender, lemon grass, thyme, dill, mint, or opal basil.

3. Wash herbs and pat dry. Chop lightly. For every cup of loosely packed herbs, you'll need two cups of vinegar. If you use dried herbs, use half as much vinegar. Single-herb vinegars work best, but experiment with combinations if you wish.

4. Place the herbs and vinegar in a clean container and cover. Infuse in a dark spot at room temperature for several days until color and flavor suit your taste.

5. Sterilize decorative glass bottles (available at any dollar store, TJ Maxx, Home Goods etc.) in a pan of boiling water for 15 minutes. Cool. Strain the herbs from the vinegar infusion and fill bottles. Add fresh sprigs of herbs if desired. Store at room temperature out of bright light. The vinegars keep for about 6 months.

Time to "Treecycle"

Did You Know....

It takes an average of 7 years to grow a 6 foot tree....

Your holiday tree doesn't have to end up at the local landfill at the end of the season. Instead, make the most of your tree by recycling it. Here's some creative suggestions.....

Make potpourri. Dry the branches, then remove and crumble the needles. Mix needles with cinnamon sticks or whole cloves, place in a bowl, and enjoy!



Give it to the birds. Stand your tree about 10 feet from the bird feeder or in a corner of your garden as a shelter for birds. Decorate branches with fruit slices, pine cones smeared with peanut butter, seed cakes, and suet bags. To prevent the tree from blowing away in winter winds, attach it to a stable support with wire or twine.



Make a window box or planter arrangement. Cut branches into smaller pieces, and insert into box or container. If the container has frozen soil in it, either drill holes in the soil where you want to insert branches or adding hot water and wait for the soil to unthaw. If you have an empty pot or box you can put foam for dry arrangements (NOT OASIS) at the bottom and poke the branches into that.



Baking it Safe with Children



As your children get older, it's natural for them to want to help you in the kitchen. It's the time of year after all, when family recipes and traditions get passed on. So this year, let them join in.

Maturity level, rather than age, should be the deciding factor whether they're ready or not. Mom knows best on this one! Encouraging them to help you bake cookies, pies and other family favorites can be a wonderful bonding experience.



Life Lessons

This can also be a fun and “hands on” way for older “helpers” to learn and practice their math skills. Measuring is a big part of baking and recipes often have to be doubled, tripled, or cut in half. With younger “cooks” start off with simple tasks such as stirring and cleaning up. Some children might just be content to read the recipe aloud while you do the work.

Safety First

Ask what your children know about kitchen safety and the potential dangers that exist. After assessing their knowledge (or lack of) you'll need to teach them some basic kitchen safety rules. Insist that these rules **MUST** be followed anytime they help with cooking or baking. Make sure they know that although baking is fun, it's not a time to play. They should

also know **NEVER** to use the oven/stove, sharp utensils or electric appliances unless YOU or another adult is present.

Equipment

You might need to modify your equipment to meet the needs and abilities of your helpers. When first starting, it's best to avoid using cookware that would be expensive to replace. Use plastic or stainless steel bowls and measuring cups instead of glass. You might also consider using an enclosed manual chopper for nuts/fruits/veggies etc. instead of sharp knives.

Besides safety, the other important thing to initiate is a fun and enjoyable time for your children. Who knows, you may be encouraging the next Emeril or Rachel Ray!



*Blessed is the Season
That Engages the
Whole World
in a Conspiracy
of LOVE*

—Hamilton Wright Mabie