



NORTH  
DAKOTA

# FNP News

Family  
Nutrition  
Program

#166

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**NDSU**  
Extension Service  
North Dakota State University

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Questions and answers about . . .

# KITCHEN SaFety

## What's better to use for cleaning your kitchen: sponges or dishcloths?

Sponges can contain millions of bacteria because they provide a warm, moist place for germs to grow. Using a contaminated sponge can contaminate your kitchen. Dishcloths are a better option, but if they're soiled, they also can contaminate your kitchen. Be sure to launder dishcloths in hot water and use a fresh dishcloth daily.



## Is it safe to reheat foods in margarine containers or Styrofoam restaurant "take-out" boxes?

It's not safe to use those containers to reheat leftover foods. They can melt in the microwave and release hazardous chemicals into the food. Use only microwave-safe containers to reheat foods. If you cover materials with plastic wrap, be sure the wrap does not touch the food.

## I found an old food thermometer in a kitchen cupboard. It has silver-colored material in the bulb. Is it safe to use?

That's a "mercury thermometer." It's not safe to use around food. Thermometers with red or blue liquid don't contain mercury and are OK to use around food. If a mercury thermometer breaks, toxic fumes are released and the area is very difficult and expensive to properly clean. Take it to a household hazardous waste collection area.

## A recipe I have says I should use a pastry brush. Can I use a new paint brush?

No, paint brushes are not "food grade" and should not be used in place of pastry brushes.

## What's the best way to clean my vegetable brush?

If you have a dishwasher, and the brush is dishwasher-safe, just run it through a washing cycle. If you don't have a dishwasher, use plenty of hot soapy water and rinse with hot water. You can sanitize brushes by soaking them in a mixture of chlorine bleach and water for a couple of minutes (1 teaspoon bleach per quart of water).

## Is it OK to use plastic trash bags for storing food?

Trash bags are not "food grade" so they should not be used to store food. Chemicals in the trash bags may get into the food.

## Is it OK to reuse plastic cups and utensils if I wash them well?

It's not recommended to reuse one-time-use items. The plastic is not meant to withstand repeated cleaning with hot, soapy water. Many of the containers have covers or edges that are very difficult to properly clean, too.

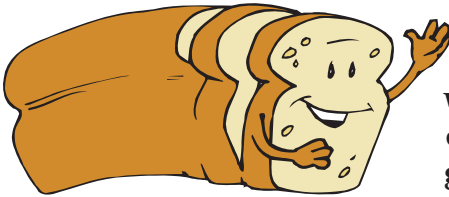


For more information,  
contact your local office of  
the NDSU Extension Service . . .  
listed in the box on the back of this sheet.

## ***I heard that we're supposed to eat more whole grains. How can you tell if you are buying a whole-grain food?***

Be a food package reader. Many cereals and breads are whole-grain foods. Whole grains offer a nutrition bonus because they contain all parts of the wheat kernel. Here are some ways to learn about your grain food choices.

- Read the ingredient list and look for “whole grain” or “whole wheat” or “whole grain oats.”
- Look for the whole-grain seal on food products.
- Look for the health claim on food packages: “diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods that are low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risks of heart disease and certain cancers.”



**Aim for at least three servings of whole grains every day as part of your grain food choices.**

A serving is one slice of whole-grain bread, 1 ounce of whole-grain cereal, ½ cup cooked brown rice/pasta or three to four whole-grain crackers.

## ***Just for fun . . .***

Have you heard of the garlic diet?

You don't lose much weight, but from a distance your friends think you look thinner.

# **TACO SOUP**

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 tsp. chopped garlic
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 15-oz can tomato sauce
- 1 can water
- 1 can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 envelope taco seasoning
- *Optional toppings . . .*  
crushed taco chips, shredded cheese, light sour cream

**Menu Idea:**  
Taco soup,  
carrot sticks,  
fruit and dip,  
low-fat milk

Brown ground beef with garlic and onion. Drain well. Mix together tomato sauce, water, kidney beans, tomatoes and taco seasoning. Add to hamburger mixture. Cook until heated to at least 165 F. If desired, serve with crushed taco chips, shredded cheese and sour cream.

*Makes 6 servings. Without added toppings, each serving has 320 calories, 14 grams fat, 42 grams carbohydrate and 9 grams fiber.*