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# THIS 'N THAT

Williams County Extension Homemakers & Friends Newsletter  
Family & Community Education

DECEMBER 2010



## TIDBITS

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December is flying– I started writing this at the beginning of the month. I got busy and am just getting back to it!

Heather, Williams Co. FNP agent, and I have been teaching nutrition classes at Hagan School. We taught a series of “Food, Fun and Reading” to grades K-2 and are now teaching a series of “Banking on Strong Bones” to grades 3 & 4. This spring we will teach “On the Moove” to grades 5 & 6. These are great classes and we are having so much fun with the kids. We tried to get some other elementary schools in Williston interested, but they said no... Classroom teachers have so many things to fit into their curriculum that it is hard to add things. Maybe next year.

As a child one of my favorite gifts-that I looked forward to every year– was a box of Candy Cane Cookies . My Aunt Clara gave me a shirt box filled with them every year. Each cookie perfect and layered in tissue paper. Not long before she went into a nursing home years ago she gave me her recipe card with a handwritten note on the back. I do love these cookies and maybe I love them a little bit more because they remind me of her. I am sharing this recipe with you inside.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2011!

*Mary*

12/18 & 19	The Nutcracker Old Armory Sat 7pm & Sun 3pm Dance Fever Performing Arts Studio
12/19	2nd Sunday at the James Christmas Extravaganza with Area Churches Performing 3:00pm
12/25	Merry Christmas—office closed
1/1/11	Happy New Year– office closed
1/13	Relay for Life Team Information Meeting 7pm Williston Community Library
1/21	Soups On 11am—2pm James Memorial Homemade soups and breads, desserts and beverage for \$7.00

## CANDY CANE COOKIES

Preheat oven to 375°

**Mix together thoroughly:**

- 1 c. soft shortening (half butter)
- 1 C. sifted confectioners sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 tsp. almond extract
- 1 tsp. vanilla

**Sift together**                      2 1/2 c. sifted GOLD MEDAL flour

**And stir in:**                      1 tsp. salt

**Divide** dough into halves.

**Blend** into one half..... 1/2 tsp. red food coloring

**Roll** 1 tsp. of each color dough into a strip about 4 inches long. Place strips side by side, press lightly together and twist like rope. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Curve top down to form handle of cane. Bake about 9 minutes at 375°. Remove with spatula from cookie sheet **while warm** and sprinkle with a mixture of 1/2 cup crushed peppermint candy (candy cane) and 1/2 cup sugar. (I put these together in the food processor to crush the candy canes.)

Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

*\*HINT- Make one complete cookie at a time or the dough becomes to dry to twist.*

*(I have seen similar recipes baked at 350°)*



It is interesting to note how many foods bring back fond childhood memories.

## HOLIDAY HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS CONT'D FROM PAGE 3

- Handle and prepare food safely.

As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.

- Eat healthy, and be active.

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.



## HOLIDAY HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS

The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend the following to give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others.

- Wash your hands often.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.

- Stay warm.

Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing.

- Manage stress.

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and overspending. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook.

- Travel safely.

Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age.

- Get check-ups and vaccinations.

Exams and screenings can help find problems before they start. They can also help find problems early, when the chances for treatment and cure are better. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

- Watch the kids.

Children are at high risk for injuries that can lead to death or disability. Keep a watchful eye on your kids when they're eating and playing. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Make sure toys are used properly.

- Prevent injuries.

Injuries can occur anywhere and some often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Wear a bicycle helmet to help prevent head injuries.

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test them once a month, and replace batteries twice a year.



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a time to pay  
special attention  
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## IT'S SLOW COOKER SEASON

For some reason I always use my slow cooker more during the winter months. I'm not sure why, since it makes sense to use it during the warmer months to keep the house cool...

The following is taken from *Prairie Fare* by Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist

Slow cookers were introduced in the early 1970s, and many sizes, shapes and brands of slow cookers now are available. The capacities vary from 2 cups to more than 7 quarts. Many of the brands have several heat settings.

How much do you know about slow cookers and their use? Try this quiz.

True or false: Using a slow cooker uses less electricity than an oven.

True or false: The low cooking temperature allows less expensive cuts of meat to tenderize.

True or false: You should fill the slow cooker no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full because cooking too little or too much food in the slow cooker can affect cooking time and quality.

True or false: Always thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator before cooking in the slow cooker to help ensure complete cooking.

True or false: Keep the lid in place at all times because removing the lid slows cooking time.

True or false: If you are not home during the entire slow-cooking process and the power goes out for an undetermined length of time, throw away the food even if it looks done.

All of these statements are true. While we may think of slow cookers more often during fall and winter months, slow cookers are handy all year long.

Slow cookers allow one-step preparation. You can place all the ingredients in the slow cooker and allow them to cook all day while you are gone. Most slow cookers operate at temperatures between 170 and 280 degrees. The long, slow cooking time tenderizes the meat and allows for less shrinkage.

Be sure to thaw meat or poultry before placing it in the slow cooker because slow cookers may take several hours to reach bacteria-killing temperatures. Cut large chunks of meat into smaller pieces to ensure thorough cooking.

Here's an easy slow cooker recipe to enjoy with corn muffins or baked corn chips.

### Slow Cooker Taco Soup

1 pound ground beef

1 onion, chopped

1 (16-ounce) can chili beans, with liquid

1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, with liquid

1 (15-ounce) can whole-kernel corn, with liquid

1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce

2 c. water

2 (14.5-ounce) cans peeled and diced tomatoes

1 (4-ounce) can diced green chili peppers

1 package taco seasoning mix



In a medium skillet, cook the ground beef until browned over medium heat. Drain thoroughly. Place the ground beef, onion, chili beans, kidney beans, corn, tomato sauce, water, diced tomatoes, green chili peppers and taco seasoning mix in a slow cooker. Mix to blend, and cook on low setting for eight hours.