

Strong families have members who give of themselves

During the holiday season, people often believe that the only gift they can give is something expensive or store bought. It is not necessary to spend money to give someone a meaningful gift. A handmade gift or a promise to babysit once a month can be more meaningful than a gift you buy. Remember, the best gifts come from the

heart.

Here are some holiday gifts to make:

- * Use your hobby skills, such as painting or woodworking, to make unique holiday gifts.
- * Give a package of coupons redeemable for chores you'll do during the year: wash the car, clean the garage, cut the grass,

vacuum the house, iron the clothes. There are many chores to choose from!

* Write a letter to each family member. Include things you appreciate about that person, fun memories shared together, and shared jokes. Type the letters, make covers for them, and wrap them as gifts. They'll still be treasured when

store-bought gifts are long forgotten.

* Put together a photograph album with pictures of family activities from year to year. This is an ideal gift for a grandparent or a grown child who has left home.

Suggested family activities:

1. Address and mail holiday greeting cards.

2. Work together on gift ideas.

3. Visit a friend or a relative who lives alone or in a nursing home.

4. Adopt a family through your church or other local organization. As a family, shop, wrap and deliver gifts for them. (LJ)



Magazine telephone scams

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when you receive a telephone sales presentation regarding magazines.

- Ask callers for their name, and the name, address and phone number of the company they represent.

- Ask what the total cost of the subscription package will be. Then determine if this is a "bargain" price.

- Ask that a written copy of the sales terms and cancellation

provisions be mailed to you before you agree to buy anything.

- Don't give your bank account or credit card number over the phone for "verification" or "computer purposes". You may later find you have been charged for magazine subscriptions you did not agree to purchase.

If you receive a bill for magazines you did not order, or

if your bank account has been debited or your credit card charged for magazines you did not agree to purchase, contact:

The Office of Attorney General Don Stenberg
Consumer Protection Division
2115 State Capitol Building
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 441-2682
Consumer Protection Line
1-800-727-6432 (GB)



Life's little luxuries for 100 calories or less

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Or, might we adopt the viewpoint of the person who described the "Fats, Oils & Sweets" grouping as "the star on the top of the holiday tree."

Let's think about the star on the holiday tree. It's selected with care. It complements the other decorations. It's often the most costly ornament and the quantity is limited.

View your foods from the tip of the Pyramid like that star. Select them wisely and fit them into your overall dietary plan. Then enjoy them as you enjoy the twinkle of the star from the top of your tree.

Little luxuries

Here are nine sample pleasure-filled indulgences found in a tour of local stores—all at 100 calories or less. Have fun coming up with your own list of little luxuries!

1. Tangerine-flavored olive oil, 3/4 tablespoon = 90 calories,

10.5 grams fat

2. Blackberry salad dressing, 2 tablespoons = 100 calories, 7 grams fat

3. Spiced cranberry raspberry gourmet preserves, 1 tablespoon = 50 calories, 0 grams fat

4. Hazelnut spread, 1 tablespoon = 80 calories, 4.5 grams fat

5. Amaretto truffle Swiss milk chocolate bar, 2 blocks = 100 calories, 7.6 grams fat

6. Premium hot chocolate mix, 3 tablespoons = 90 calories, 1.5 grams fat

7. Apple cinnamon gourmet syrup, 2 tablespoons = 90 calories, 0 grams fat

8. Smokey mozzarella bread spread, 1 tablespoon = 100 calories, 11 grams fat

9. Double chocolate crisps cookies, 1 cookie = 90 calories, 5 grams fat

Picking your pleasures



Gift ideas defend against bacteria

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and up.

- **Cutting boards.** For the safety-minded chef, buy two or more cutting boards—one for raw meats, poultry and seafood; another for ready-to-eat foods and raw fruits and veggies.

"Raw meat foods can contaminate other ready-to-eat or raw foods when you use the same cutting board for both," Larson says. "To avoid this, use separate cutting boards. Some specialty shops now offer different color cutting boards in a variety of sizes. We recommend you use plastic, rather than wood, cutting boards and that you sanitize them after use with a solution of one teaspoon bleach mixed with one quart water." Cost: \$2 and up.

- **Paper towels and holder.** Using soiled cloth kitchen towels can spread harmful bacteria to otherwise clean cooking surfaces and utensils. To avoid this, use paper towels once and throw away. "Paper towels and holders are a good choice for gifts," Larson says. Cost: \$2 for plastic towel holders to \$30 or more for carved wooden holders. Paper towels cost about \$1 per roll.

- **Hand soap and holder.** Washing your hands frequently before and during food preparation is the best and easiest way to prevent foodborne illness. "To remind home chefs to wash their hands, buy a decorative liquid soap container or bar soap holder and fill with your choice

of soaps." Cost: \$2 each and up for plastic containers; \$5 and up for ceramic holders; \$1 and up for soap.

- **Other thermometers.** It's a good idea to check temps in the refrigerator and freezer periodically. Refrigerator temps should be 40 degrees or less and freezer temps should be zero degrees or less. You can buy these specialty thermometers at hardware and kitchen furnishings shops. Cost \$3 and up.

Adapted with permission from "Top 10 Gift Ideas Defend Against Bacteria," The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, The Division of Food Safety, Madison, WI. (AH)

cranking up for the holiday season sometime around Halloween, children wait and wait for the holidays to arrive. Then, when the last gift is unwrapped, suddenly it's all over. Robinson and Staeheli suggest postponing important family traditions until a week or so before the holiday. They also suggest saving a few for the week after the main event. For example, consider hosting a potluck dinner for family and friends a week after the holiday.

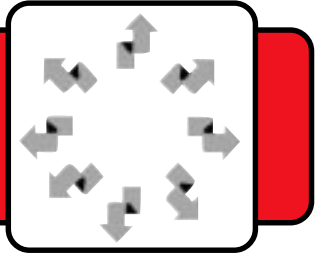
4. Strong family traditions. Traditions are important to children because they give them comfort and security. They help children understand how the season will unfold, and they bring back happy memories of

past holidays together. Robinson and Staeheli say that most families have more traditions than they realize and that even simple traditions will do. They advise asking your children which activities mean the most to them. Then, be sure to do them every year.

Give your children these four gifts and you'll give yourself a lovely present as well. You'll spend more time doing the things that really matter and less frenzied time at the mall and the toy store.

Adapted from the National Network for Child Care—NNCC. Part of CYFERNET, the National Extension Service Children Youth and Family Educational Research Network. (LJ)

Miscellaneous



Houseplant problems

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over fertilization. Older leaves are slower to respond, as are leaves in which yellowing is advanced. Leaves and succulent shoots become limp or wilted, usually recovering when water is supplied. This may be evidence of water shortage or over abundance of water followed by the development of root rot. Over fertilization also can cause wilting.

To control wilting: check drainage, look for root rot, check for conditions promoting unusually rapid loss of water, alter watering schedule.

Proper care of your houseplants will insure that you will be able to enjoy your plants for years to come. (MJM)

Holiday safety

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tree material as a coarse mulch over dormant perennials or as a haven for wildlife in a nature area. Holiday greenery used for decoration should also be watched very carefully for signs of drying. Evergreen boughs and wreaths can dry in just a few days. A cigarette ash or match could start a fire very easily in one of these center pieces. Blow out candles in these center pieces

after the meal is over and never leave an unattended candle burning.

When decorating landscape trees and the exterior of the house, be careful. Make sure you have a sturdy ladder and someone to help hold the ladder when you are stringing lights in high places. Please have a safe holiday season. (MJM)

Recycling is for the birds

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variety of feeders and a special section on building feeders and houses from recycled materials.

In addition, the extension office has available many of the University of Nebraska NebGuides and in-house fact sheets on enhancing wildlife that you can pick up for free (up to ten different guides). These same free materials are available via the internet by using our Environment and Natural Resources website at <http://www.lanco.unl.edu/enviro>



What children want during the holidays

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