

TAKING TIME



by Rebecca Escott
Extension Home Economist

Do It Today

I got married on October 5. The Saturday dawned with clear, sunny skies. Music wove magic through the air. The wild flowers, carefully arranged, created a touch of simplistic beauty. It was the way I had dreamed.

And yet in the days surrounding my wedding and even in the first few weeks back at the office, I have swallowed a strong dose of reality. Real world pains, real world sorrows. I have also seen an amazing strength in the people who are living this reality.

After experiencing the highs and the lows, the magic and the reality, I began to think and say one thing... "If it's important, do it today. Do it today."

A brief five minutes before my wedding rehearsal was to begin, I received word that my best friend, one of my attendants, was critically injured in an auto accident. She

lay lifelessly in a coma for three weeks and then died. I was reminded how precious time is and how fleeting are the moments that people share together.

Other news came... job losses, emergency surgeries, tumors. And people called me at work. One wanted information on estate planning. She was 69 years old and didn't have an estate plan. She seemed content to wait in hopes that we would plan a daytime workshop series. And I kept saying in my mind, "No, don't wait. Do it today."

Another woman called me desperately looking for help because she expected to run out of heating oil by the afternoon. I felt honest sorrow for her. And yet I thought, had she called several weeks ago, she would have had more options. More people might have found ways to help. But she was in the ninth hour and needed

cash now. What is it in humans that gives us a sometimes false assurance that life will continue as it always has — that we can put off until tomorrow what really should be done today, NOW?

I am not one to advocate spending mindlessly because you might not be able to enjoy it later. I also don't think that a lack of knowing the future should keep us from setting plans in motion for the months and years ahead. We still need to have goals, to have hopes, and to have expectations.

I have those. But I also have renewed incentive to do important things now...to say "I love you", to resolve an argument, to smile at a stranger, to update my retirement and life insurance beneficiaries, to watch sunsets, to sing, to walk in the newly-fallen leaves, to soak up the sights and scents of another autumn.

Tomorrow I may not have those chances.

What important, special things have you been putting off? A conversation or outing with a child? A discussion about life decisions with an aging parent? Saving for a child's college education? Writing a will? Initiating a family reunion? Offering an apology?

Whatever it is, stop procrastinating. Do it today. After all, you've been worrying about it, and you've been feeling guilty about it for some time now. Once done, the satisfaction and relief you gain will be refreshing — as

refreshing as bright sunshine on a crisp November morning, as refreshing as familiar music wafting through an open window.

Do it today. Enjoy the refresh-

ing sense of satisfaction. And believe that tomorrow, with its reality and challenges, will hold in its grasp yet another opportunity for joy.

Ask the "Eggsperts"

Which egg dishes contain 30% calories or less from fat?

The very sound advice to reduce your fat intake to no more than 30% of calories from fat has been widely misinterpreted. This fat "allowance" is meant for the long haul, not for every individual food or combination dish or every meal you eat. You'll find it's quite difficult to get a balanced diet containing all the nutrients you need if you restrict your diet to only those individual foods or dishes that contain 30% or less calories from fat.

Instead, follow the basic rules of variety and moderation. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend 6 or more servings of whole-grain breads, cereals and grain products; 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables; 2 to 3 servings of lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dry beans and peas; 2 servings of low-fat or skim milk and milk products; and fats and sweets in moderation according to your overall calorie needs.

If you follow this pattern and make lean choices within each category, you should have little trouble meeting the "30%" guideline.

For egg dishes, choose recipes that use little to no fat, prepare

them with low-fat or skim milk products, and serve them with lots of fruits, vegetables and grain foods.

Why are eggs smaller today?

Eggs may seem to look smaller today, but they're not. The same USDA size standards have been used for many years and are based on minimum net weight per dozen. For the sizes most often available at the supermarket one dozen eggs weigh at least: Extra Large, 27 ounces; Large, 24 ounces and Medium, 21 ounces.

However, eggs are fresher today than in the past. Their yolks stand up taller and the white is higher and sits more closely around the yolk. This may make your eggs look smaller when you break them out into a pan.

What should I look for when putting eggs in salt water to check their freshness?

Nothing. A freshly laid egg and an older egg might react very similarly. A carefully controlled brine test is sometimes used to judge shell thickness, not freshness, of eggs for hatching purposes. This test has no application to the freshness of table eggs. The best way to judge freshness of eggs is to check the date on the carton. (See How's Your Egg Q?)

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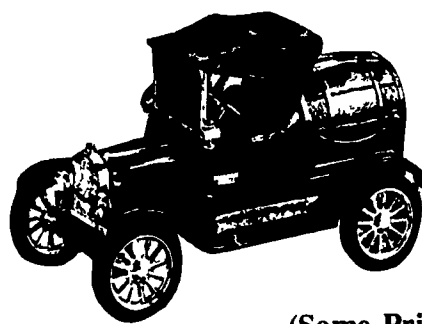
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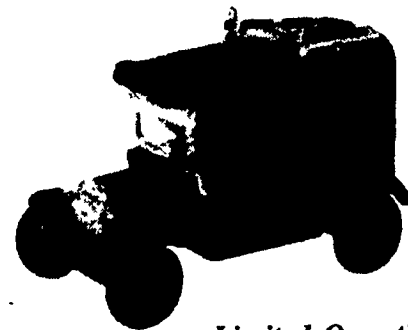
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