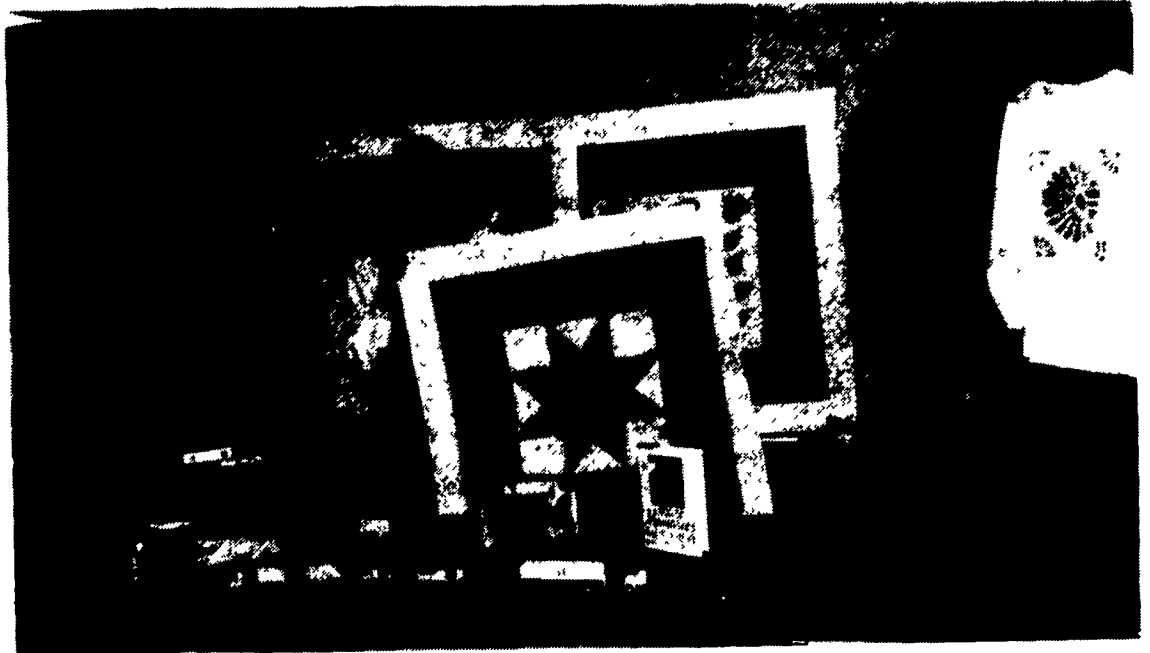


Lancaster 4-H Benefit Auction Set



The Lancaster County eighth annual 4-H benefit auction is scheduled for Saturday, February 5, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Farm and Home Center. Hundreds of items large and small have been donated. Some special items include quilts, Winross trucks, autographed memorabilia, gift certificates, farm toys, household goods, candy and pictures.

All proceeds benefit the more than 4,000 youth ages 8-19 who currently participate in Lancaster County's 4-H youth program. Proceeds are used to help pay for 4-H project books, transportation costs to events, registration fees, and 4-H volunteer leader support. In the photo, Debbie Naumann, 4-H/family living agent shows some of the items that have been donated to support the auction.

For more information about 4-H clubs in your area or to make donations to the auction contact the Lancaster Cooperative Extension office at (717) 394-6851.

Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
Lancaster Extension
Home Economist

The Return Of The Slow Cooker

One form of cooking that has recently regained popularity is slow cooking. Slow cooking became popular in the seventies with the introduction of the electric slow cooker.

Promoted as a no-watch, miracle-type appliance that could cook almost any dish better than any other method, the slow cooker enjoyed instant popularity. It was a disappointment when you discovered the vegetables came out tasting like meat and looking like mush. The claims for effortless, versatile cooking were in a sense unfortunate because they no doubt caused many people to become dissatisfied with the appliance and ban it to the top shelf of the cupboard.

Today's slow cookers have removable linings for easy cleaning and multiple heat settings. Some automatically shift from high to low heat, a nice food-safety feature. Even with these features, slow cookers are best suited for blending flavors in stews and sauces, and breaking down tough meat fibers.

Keep safety in mind when using a slow cooker. The slow cooker does a better job of killing disease-

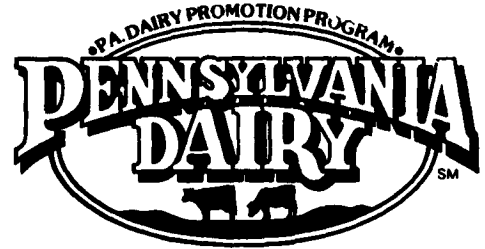
causing microbes than low-temperature cooking in a conventional oven because the heat is direct and is combined with steam in a tightly covered container. Still, take precautions to avoid holding foods in the danger zone (40 to 140 degrees F.) for too long.

To maximize the safety of the slow cooker:

- Make sure everything is clean — a clean cooker, clean utensils, clean work areas and clean hands.
- Thaw meat or poultry in the refrigerator or microwave oven before placing in the slow cooker. If placed in the slow cooker while still frozen, meat may remain in the danger zone for more than three hours.
- Fill the slow cooker no more than two-thirds full. Heat may not adequately penetrate to all parts of the food if the container is too full.
- Keep the lid secure. Since considerable heat is lost when the cover is lifted, remove the lid only to stir food or check for doneness.
- Set the cooker on the highest setting for the first hour of cooking. This high setting speeds the heating process. Then, set the control as directed in the recipe.
- When finished eating, remove leftovers from the slow cooker and refrigerate or freeze. Reheat

leftovers quickly on the range or in the microwave oven, not in the slow heat of the slow cooker.

- If using slow cookers to keep food warm for a party or a buffet, bring the food to a boil on the range and then use the slow cooker to keep it hot.



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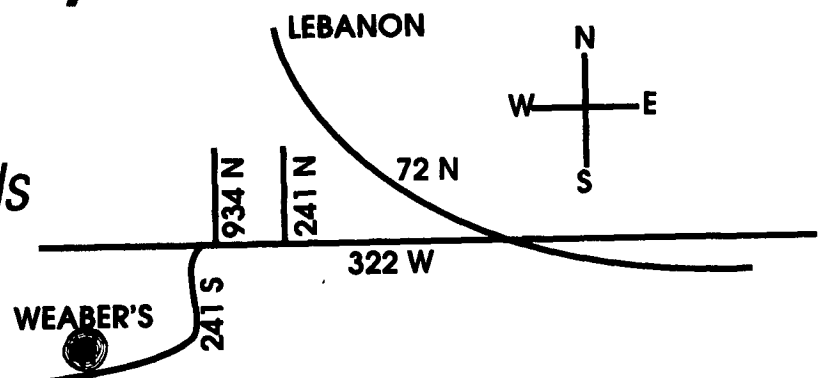
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