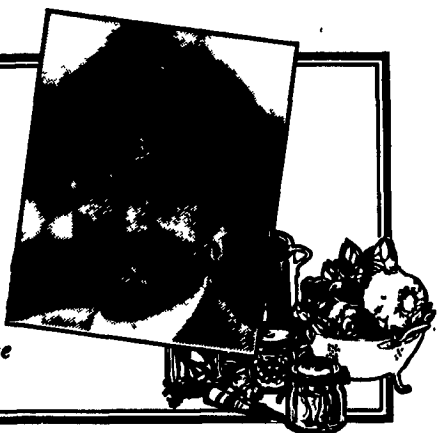


## Consuming Thoughts

by  
Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home  
Economist For Berks Co.



Dieting during and after the Holidays can be difficult, but if you intend to lose weight or at least maintain your current weight, you need to develop a plan now to deal with temptation.

First you need to outline specifically what you want to happen and what positive reinforcements will help you carry out your plan. Next, tell family and friends what you've done, so they can understand and support you.

No matter how committed you are to changing behaviors, you may need some mental preparation to resist when others encourage behavior that defeats your goals. Here are a few suggestions that may enable you to pursue your weight goals:

- No one's feelings should be hurt if you say, "No, thank you,"

firmly and repeatedly, when others try to dissuade you from a plan. Politely explain what you're trying to do and ask for their support and help.

- You don't have to eat a lot to accommodate anyone (this includes your mother, business clients or your host or hostess).

- When you entertain, serve lighter, more healthful low-fat meals. Try some new recipes. This can be a useful step to changing your overall approach to cooking.

- Parties and social occasions built around food are often difficult, but not impossible, to deal with. If it's your party, plan an activity like caroling or ice skating rather than just eating food. When you attend parties where food is everywhere, eat a low-fat salad (such as a fruit salad) before you

go, opt for pretzels or plain crackers to snack on, and chat with others as far away from the food table as possible.

- Learn to handle "put-downs," whether they're inadvertent or conscious. "You'll never be able to stick to that diet" is a common put-down. An effective response can be to communicate feelings honestly, without hostility. Tell them that their remarks are discouraging and that you are working to change your habits and need understanding and support from them.

- In your own kitchen remember to cook leaner, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year. Without making major eating changes, you can cut back on the fat in your diet by careful selection of ingredients and cooking techniques.

For example:

- Season vegetables with lemon juice or herbs instead of butter or margarine.

- Trim visible fat off meat before cooking.

- Use non-stick cookware.

- Extend meat, poultry or fish in main dishes and casseroles by adding low-fat ingredients like

pasta, rice, grains, vegetables and dried beans.

- Use low-fat or nonfat salad dressings.

- Use low-fat cooking methods like baking, broiling, boiling, poaching, roasting and microwav-

ing.

Remember to be positive and upbeat during the holidays. Try to avoid stress and maintain a reasonable schedule of activities that is workable for you and your family.

## Eye Disease Spreading In House Finch Population

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — An eye disease affecting house finches—a species of bird common at backyard feeders—has been found in 10 eastern states.

"The disease is a form of conjunctivitis similar to the eye infection humans can get," says Dr. Margaret Brittingham, associate professor of wildlife resources in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "In finches, this disease can be fatal because it seals the birds' eyelids shut. The birds cannot see to feed, and they starve."

House finches are small, gray birds, about the size of sparrows. The males have raspberry-colored heads. The birds flock to bird feeders in large numbers and trav-

el long distances, which could contribute to the spread of the disease. Although it's not necessary to remove bird feeders, homeowners are encouraged to disinfect them with household bleach about once a week.

"Scientists believe the disease is caused by a mycoplasma, a bacteria without a cell wall," says Brittingham. "Chickens and turkeys also can be infected by this bacteria, which is spread through the air. It's a mystery how the disease is spread among finches."

Brittingham is tracking the progression of the infection in individual birds. She asks people with feeders to keep a close watch on birds and to notify her if they see any finches or other bird species with crusted eyes. "It's important to learn as quickly as possible how this disease affects bird populations," she says.

Brittingham can be reached at (814) 863-8442.

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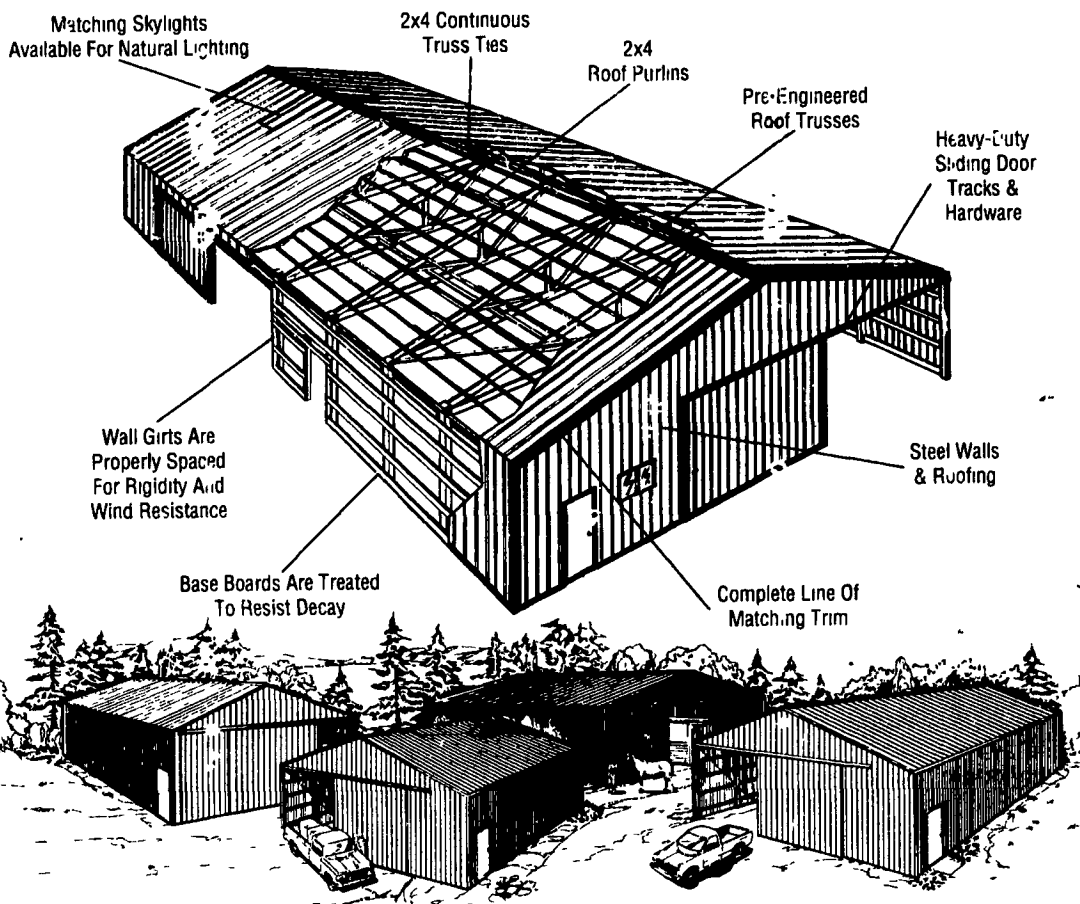
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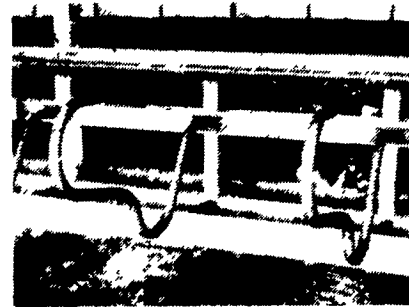
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