

## Pre-planning Eases Hectic Schedules

TUNKHANNOCK (Wyoming Co.) - A busy schedule and healthy eating is often difficult to manage, but some pre-planning can help.

When you give someone a job, you may find yourself expecting it to be done to your exact specifications. Don't make that mistake.

Maybe you're used to folding your towels neatly in threes and you like them that way. But

after all, though they aren't folded as neatly, they fit in the closet and are out of the way. Let the persons responsible decide how the job should be done. Don't expect perfection. They're helping in their own way, and their standards will improve over time.

### SHARING THE LOAD

If you're organized and know what you're serving for supper ahead of time, chances are that

others can help you get the meal on the table. If a casserole needs to be put in the oven before you arrive home and if someone is around to do it, let that person know where it is, what to do, and how to do it.

Spend a few minutes in the morning getting the casserole together, so that Johnny can take it off the refrigerator shelf,

remove the cover, put it in the oven, and turn on the oven to 350° at 4:25. This kind of planning works like a charm. It also gives you a chance to serve recipes that take longer to cook.

### WHAT'S FOR SUPPER

Planning your meals for the entire week can be a real time-saver. But it is also an opportunity to plan for our family's nutritional needs. To maintain good health and well-being, it's important to eat a variety of foods to get the right balance of protein, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and energy. Every day we need foods from the following food groups:

Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta: 6 to 11 servings

Meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts: 2 to 3 servings

Fruits: 2 to 4 servings

Vegetables: 3 to 5 servings

Milk, cheese, and milk products: 2 to 3 servings.

Start by planning your suppers and weekend meals to make sure they're well balanced. For variety in your meals, sit down with one of your children and let him or her suggest three or four main-dish favorites for the week. (You may need to dispel the idea that you'll accept expensive suggestions, such as shrimp or live lobster.) Then ask another family member to help the following week. Don't forget to include yourself in the rotation.

Once the main dishes are selected, build the meal around them. Include at least two vegetables and a fruit, in case non of your family had any servings from the fruit and vegetable group for lunch.

You can check your children's school lunch menu to see what they had, but there's no guarantee they ate fruits and vegetables. Checking that menu, however, will help you avoid the discovery, as you sit down to eat, that dinner is what they had for lunch.

A variety of fruits and vegetables ensures that your family's

nutritional requirements will be met. Include one rich source of Vitamin C every day and one of Vitamin A every other day. Vitamin C helps your body resist infections and heal wounds. Vitamin A helps keep you body looking healthy and your skin smooth; it also helps young people grow.

Good sources of Vitamin C are oranges, grapefruit, broccoli, strawberries, and brussels sprouts.

Good sources of Vitamin A are: live, dark leafy greens (spinach), carrots, sweet potatoes, apricots, cantaloupe, watermelon, broccoli, pumpkins, and winter squash.

Once you've included the main dish and the majority of fruits and vegetables needed for the day, the rest is easy. Add a serving or two of bread and a glass of milk.

Add that to a quick-and-easy breakfast of cereal, milk, and a fruit, and you have done as much as you can to provide a well-balanced diet for your family. Nutritious snacks such as fresh fruits and vegetables, peanut butter and crackers, and milk help round out the diet.

Save snacks high in sugar, fat, and salt for special occasions. It's best not to eat them on a daily basis.

### BARBECUED BEEF

(Serves 4)

1 pound lean ground beef  
1 large onion, diced  
2 stalks celery, diced  
1 1/2 cups catsup  
1 tablespoon prepared mustard  
Pepper to taste.

Brown ground beef, onion and celery. Add remaining ingredients. Let simmer on low heat 20 to 30 minutes. Serve on hamburger buns or rolls.

Try this menu for supper: Barbecued Beef on Roll, Sweet Corn, Cole Slaw, milk and Peaches.

This information is from Karen Bracuy, Wyoming County Extension family living agent.

## Softened Water Causes Hard Times For Indoor Plants

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) - If your indoor plants or plants brought in for the winter seem to be faring poorly, a Penn State horticulture expert suggests taking a hard look at softened water as the culprit.

"There isn't any research that tells us which plants can be injured, but plants do have a widely varying tolerance for softened water," says J. Robert Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture, in the College of Agricultural Sciences. "In many cases, water from a mechanical softener has a harmful effect on plant growth."

Nuss explains that hard water contains large amounts of calcium and magnesium, which are plant nutrients. However, these minerals reduce the lathering effectiveness of soap when clothing or other items are washed. "The minerals in hard water often combine with soap to form the ring you see in bathtubs or wash bowls," he says.

Many homeowners soften their water by using a filtration system to exchange the calcium and magnesium in the water for sodium, creating a softer water that allows soap to function better.

"Sodium is used by plants only in very small amounts," Nuss says. "Over long period of time, sodium becomes toxic to plants."

Nuss says excess sodium will damage the soil quality around the plant's root system by breaking down the soil structure, thus reducing drainage. Nuss says

savvy plant lovers can save their plants by using several care methods.

- Leaching. By using rain-water or unsoftened water to water your plants, high levels of sodium can be leached out of the soil.

- Elevation. By placing your plant on gravel or a similar material, a reservoir is formed to collect water passing through the soil. "Never allow plants to stand in softened water," Nuss warns.

- Repotting. Fresh potting soil will provide a new environment for the roots, free of excess salts.

Other water additives used by municipal water systems, chlorine and fluorine, also can harm some plants. Nuss says they are trace elements that are needed in very small amounts to keep plants healthy. "In excess, like sodium, they can be toxic," he says.

Chlorine generally presents less of a headache for houseplants, Nuss explains. "Chlorine can be eliminated from water by heating, aeration or by filling watering containers and letting them stand overnight before watering the plants."

Fluorine can adversely affect plants at concentrations as low as .1 part per million. In some municipal water supplies, 10 times that amount is added to prevent tooth decay. A top indicator of fluoride content is the spider plant, or Chlorophytum, which will show spotted leaves

or burned tips," Nuss says.

Houseplant gardeners can deter the effects of fluorine by adding two teaspoons of limestone per six-inch pot of soil. The addition of lime raises the pH of the soil and combines with fluoride in a form that plants cannot use, according to Nuss.

## Craft Show

FLEMINGTON, N.J. - The sixth annual Breath of Spring Craft Show is being held on Saturday, March 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Hunterdon County Extension Center on Route 31 North in Flemington. Admission is \$1. This show is made up of excellent crafters, and much more.

There will be hands-on crafts for the children to make and a visit from the Easter Bunny. Also available will be a variety of spring plants, baked goods, and a delicious lunch menu. This event benefits the NJ State 4-H Association.

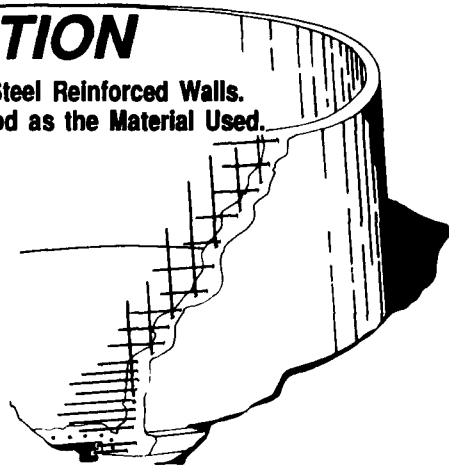
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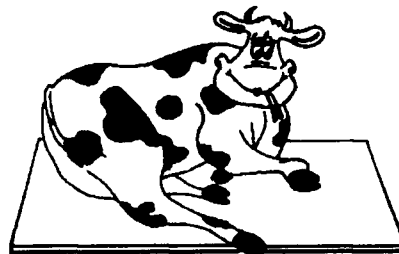
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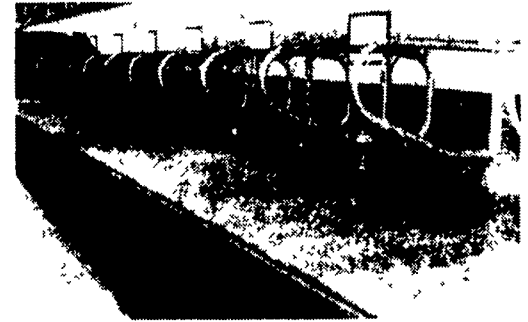
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