

Kid's Got Spring Fever?

UNIVERSITY PARK, (CENTRE CO.) Jim Van Horn, family life specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, suggests some fun—and inexpensive—activities for children in the springtime.

Ages 2-3

•**Visit a farm.** A lot of things happen on farms in the spring. Plan to show your child the field work and animals, particularly baby ones. Look at the farm equipment.

•**Watch the road repair crew.** Spring is a good time to watch crews repair winter damage. Children love trucks, bulldozers and cement mixers. You also might visit a construction site.

•**A "made-myself" salad.** Your child can design a salad portrait using a peach half for the body, a half of a hard-cooked egg for the head, shredded cheese for the hair, etc.

•**Force leaves and flowers.** Put a branch that is just beginning to bud, such as forsythia, pussy willow or a fruit tree, in water. Pussy willows that root can be planted outside.

•**Act out nursery rhymes and stories.** One person can recite a nursery rhyme while another acts it out. An easy one is "Jack Be Nimble." Try acting out a rhyme for your child to guess. Good plays include "The Three Bears" and "Three Billy Goats Gruff."

•**Family stories.** Tell your children stories from early babyhood. They also will love to hear about what they did that day, or things that have happened to them or the rest of the family. If they have stories to tell, write them down and share them with the others.

•**Play dough.** Mix one cup flour, a half cup of salt, a half cup of oil and enough water to make dough. Add food coloring to the water or two tablespoons of dry tempera to the flour.

•**Make Mother's and Father's Day cards.** It's never too soon to encourage your children to do special things for the family. Write on the card the messages they give you.

Ages 4-6

•**Learn signs.** If your children get lost, they will feel and be safer if they recognize familiar signs. Point out signs as you walk or drive. Talk about their shapes and colors. Draw signs or cut them from magazines and paste them on paper to take along.

•**Grocery shop.** Let your children help make a store list. They can gather nonbreakable items that they know by the pictures, like cereal or crackers. They can choose a vegetable, fruit or bread. They also can help put food on the checkout counter and hand the cashier any coupons.

•**Make cottage cheese.** Heat one cup of milk to boiling, add two tablespoons of lemon juice and stir. Strain to separate the curds and whey.

•**Cheese tasting party.** Use different cheeses, such as mozzarella, brick, cheddar and Edam. Compare color, taste and appearances: "Swiss cheese has holes, cheddar is orange."

•**Animal babies.** Watch of calves, lambs, foals or chicks as you drive. Visit a zoo. Look at a book with pictures, such as "Animal Babies." Cut baby ani-

mals from magazines and make a scrapbook. You can print the name of the animal on the page.

•**Grow a garden in an eggshell.** Save washed eggshells that have been broken in half. Prick the bottoms with a long needle. Stand them in an egg carton (lined with foil or cardboard). Add a little coarse sand or pebbles to each shell, than add soil to a half inch from the top. Plant two or three seeds, then place your garden in a sunny window. Water daily. When the weather warms, you can plant the shell and all outside.

•**My very own place.** It may be only a drawer in a chest, but all children should have a private place to store their treasures. Make and decorate a box together for special things.

Ages 7-8

•**Plan a family night.** Your children will enjoy a turn planning a family night with games that they suggest. Ideas include charades, a puppet show, dancing to records and reading stories.

•**"Great Moments" family scrapbook.** Give each "great moment" plenty of room for expression. Great moments might be the time you were trapped during the "big blizzard," or your child's first day of school. You might start the book during a family vacation.

•**Visit a jug farm dairy store.** Some farms process and bottle milk. Check ahead to see if and when you might tour the barns, watch the cows get milked and watch the milk being bottled. Follow the process from calf to heifer to milk cow to milking to bottling, and -- if possible -- the making of ice cream. An ice cream treat might be a special ending.

•**Visit the lumber yard or hardware store.** Explain the various nuts and bolts. Watch a key get made. If the store cuts glass or planes wood, watch the workers. Watch paint being mixed and let your child take home color samples. Look at the tools and let your child help decide which one to buy. At home, your child can help use the new tool or play with the paint samples or other things you got at the store.

•**Tadpoles.** Listen to a marsh or pond in early spring. If you hear frogs, walk gently into the water with a jar and wading boots. Frog eggs are found in masses, like strings of pearl, or floating clumps. Scoop them into the jar with some pond plants. Feed them a little corn meal daily. Add water when needed. Return them to the same pond when they become large.

•**Grow an American flag.** Design a flag garden in a sunny area about 28 by 36 inches. Draw the flag on dug-up earth with sticks or clothespins and string. Plant blue petunias for the star area and red and white petunias for the stripes. The strings help keep colors separated.

•**Tie dye paper.** Pour a half-cup of warm water into several plastic containers. Add five or more drops of food coloring. Fold tissue paper or paper towels and dip the corners into the dye. Unfold the paper and let it dry. Refold it another way and dip into another color, etc.

Nose Separates 'Ahhh' From 'Ugghh'

SAN FRANCISCO — Distinguishing the difference between the aroma of pepperoni pizza and boiling cabbage is not as simple as it seems for everyone.

Some people have a heightened sense of smell and can be overwhelmed by aromas. And some suffer from smell blindness, a condition appropriately called "anosmia," that could make the cabbage smell like a four-star restaurant.

But, who is who? In the commercial world, how do you distinguish between those with perfect sniff pitch and those with none? Cornell University food chemists are finding out by standardizing the spectrum of smell.

Jane Friedrich, Cornell doctoral candidate in food chemistry, is developing sniff standards in the laboratory of Terry Acree, a Cornell professor of food science, at the university's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y. "Let's say you smell an essence oil like jasmine, which is a pure smell. Your ability to smell that jasmine is based on a small combination of olfactory receptor proteins.

Those proteins produce a pattern your brain would recognize," she says. But even for finite aromas like jasmine, people smell it in different ways.

One reason for the large variation associated with olfactory acuity is due to a phenomenon called "specific anosmia," said Friedrich. Simply, this is smell blindness, or insensitivity to the odor of a chemical or group of chemicals in people with otherwise normal olfactory sensitivity. Specific anosmia poses a challenge to researchers because it can distort data in sensory research labs.

Friedrich noted a classic example of this sensory-test problem from a study performed at the Western Regional Research Laboratory in Albany, Calif., more than 30 years ago. Test subjects sniffed isobutyric acid, which smells like dirty socks or an unclean goat to most people. But there were two testers who sensed the isobutyric acid had a "very pleasant fruity odor - like apples."

Experiment: later revealed that the wayward individuals had a specific anosmia to isobutyric acid, and the fruity smell they detected were the byproducts and impurities usually found in commercial samples of the acid.

"If a company wants to make pine cleaner for bathrooms and inadvertently uses a person on

the smell panel with an anosmic sense of smell, that person may barely perceive the alpha pinen (the active chemical responsible for the smell). This means that the rest of the consumers will think it smells too piney," said Friedrich. "That's a problem."

Using a selective and sensitive bioassay for smells based on gas chromatography olfactometry, called CharmAnalysis™, Friedrich and Acree have investigated the compounds responsible for specific anosmia. The researchers now are attempting to correlate sensitivity to the chemicals to the olfactory receptor genetics. In short, people can now be tested and categorized for their valuable acumen by

sniffing a broad, standard aroma set - in a few whiffs. The set will allow laboratories easily to screen out individuals with specific anosmia.

Friedrich used standard tests to sort out her original testing subjects. She screened 10 people, with each testing period taking about 3 weeks, or 30 weeks of testing in total. Friedrich and Acree believe that they can now accurately place people in three categories: hyperosmic (very sensitive), hyposmic (the baseline category) and anosmic.

"This will help other researchers conduct analyses," said Friedrich. "Our goal eventually is to get the testing down to three sniffs."

Notes To Dad

Jan Scholl

Penn State Extension

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the kitchen and the various tools and what they are used for?

Wish you had some guide to assemble a kitchen or, better, put together a kitchen that takes little storage space and that can be moved, for example, to a summer place or used in case of evacuation?

The Portable Kitchen Assembly Guide can help you assemble over 40 kitchen gadgets and put them together in a small area in your home or car. The items are packed in dish pans, which when unpacked can be used as a make-shift sink.

Assembled, your portable kitchen could include: an apron, baking sheet, biscuit cutter, bottle opener, bread knife, can opener, chef knife, colander, cooling rack, cutting board, timer, detergent, dish cloth and towels, dish pans, scrubbing pad, dry ingredient scoop, egg timer, foil and plastic wrap, funnel, grater, hair cover, jar opener, kitchen scissors, ladle, loaf pan, potato masher, measuring cups and spoons, mixing bowl, muffin tin, paper towels, paring knife, pastry blender and brush, pie server, place setting, pot holders, potato peeler, rolling pin, scrapers, slotted spoon, spatula, strainer or sieve, tongs, trash bags, vegetable brush, wax paper, wire whisk and wooden spoons.

Your young children can learn to identify kitchen tools and what they are used for as the bulletin contains pictures and explanations.

This Cooperative Extension guide can be purchased for \$1 (shipping and handling) from

the Publications Distribution Center, Ag Administration Building, University Park, PA 16801.

Summer time is also a time to step-up food safety practices.

Pay attention to how long you leave food out on the table. Cooked food should not go without refrigeration for longer than two hours. So clear the table and take care of food before clearing the dirty dishes.

Wash hands often and carefully. Your youngster can help you by singing the alphabet song while scrubbing carefully under hands and nails. Help your child develop this practice by making sure he or she scrubs carefully before eating meals and snacks.

Pay attention to cross-contamination issues: putting cooked meat back on a dish that contained the raw meat, turning on the spigot with dirty hands and turning off the same spigot with clean hands, and using a dirty meat knife or cutting board to cut vegetables. These are all hazardous practices and ones that we don't always think about when it happens.

Also, really try to keep counters and work surfaces as clean as possible. You don't need to use an antibacterial product, just good old hot soap, water and a little elbow grease followed by a rinse. If you do use a cleaning substance, make sure it is used and put away right away so that little hands don't come in contact with them. Keep locks latched on cleaning product cupboards.

Using these tips and the portable kitchen can help you as the summer nears. It is good to be prepared!

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