

Well Preserved

The Well Preserved news column is prepared by Lancaster County Cooperative Extension. It includes food preservation information and questions.

Thawing Foods

If all the proper steps to freeze foods safely are used and then it is defrosted at temperatures that foster bacteria growth, hours of work will be in vain. Freezing temperatures will prevent the growth of bacteria; they do not kill the bacteria. When the food temperature rises above 40F, bacteria can grow at levels to cause food borne illness.

Grabbing a package of meat or chicken and thawing it fast in hot water or taking food out of the freezer and letting it on the counter to thaw all day while you are at work are not safe practices. According to the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, foods should never be thawed or even stored on the counter, or defrosted in hot water. Food left unrefrigerated is not at a safe temperature. Even though the center of the package may still be frozen as it thaws on the counter, the outer layer of the food is in the "Danger Zone", between 40 and 140 F temperatures at which bacteria multiply rapidly.

"When defrosting frozen foods, it is best to plan ahead and thaw food in the refrigerator where food will remain at a safe, constant temperature at 40F or below.

The safe ways to defrost food is in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave oven.

Refrigerator thawing requires planning ahead because of the lengthy time involved. A large frozen item like a turkey requires at least a day (24 hours) for every 5 pounds of weight. Even a pound of ground meat or boneless chicken breasts requires a full day to thaw.

Take these variable into account when thawing foods in the refrigerator: Some areas of the refrigerator may keep the food colder than other areas. Food placed in the coldest part will require longer defrosting time. Food takes longer to thaw in a refrigerator set at 35 F than one set at 40 F. Ground meat and poul-



try thawed in the refrigerator should remain useable for an additional day or two before cooking; red meat will remain useable for an additional three days.

Cold water thawing is faster than using the refrigerator, but requires more attention. The food must be in a leak-proof package or plastic bag. If the bag leaks, bacteria from the air or surrounding environment could be introduced into the food. Also, meat tissue can also absorb water like a sponge resulting in a watery product. The bag should be submerged in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes so it continues to thaw. Small packages of meat or poultry, about a pound, may defrost in an hour or less. A 3- to 4-pound package may take 2 to 3 hours to thaw. For whole turkeys, estimate about 30 minutes per pound. If thawed completely, the food must be cooked immediately. Foods thawed by the cold water method should be cooked before refreezing.

When food is defrosted in the microwave oven, plan to cook it immediately after thawing because some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during the defrosting process. Holding partially cooked food is not recommended because any bacteria present would not have been destroyed and may have reached ideal temperatures for bacteria to grow. Foods thawed in the microwave should be cooked before refreezing.

If you have food preservation questions, a home economist is available to answer questions on Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., call (717) 394-6851 or write Penn State Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County, 1383 Arcadia Rd. Rm.1, Lancaster, PA 17601.



Pictured at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, from left, are Mrs. Rockingham County Fair, Linda Shifflett; Junior Miss Rockingham County Fair, Hannah Armentrout and Senior Miss Rockingham County Fair, and Heather Edwards. At Roanoke in January, Edwards, will enter the Miss Virginia Association of Fairs Scholarship Pageant with her platform of working with disabled children.

Disabled Children Is Platform For Miss Rockingham County Fair Queen

GAY BROWNLEE
Virginia Corespondent

HARRISONBURG, Va. — Heather Edwards, 19, Senior Miss Rockingham County Fair, has a heart for disabled children. That is why the topic of disabled children was her platform for the Miss Rockingham County Fair Pageant, where six young women competed for the honor.

She titled her platform "Look Their Way," in relation to the Peer Tutor Program at the Spotswood High School, where throughout her junior and senior years, she devoted several hours a day to tutoring disabled children.

With Edwards, the royal line of Rockingham County Fair queens was represented in Hannah Armentrout, Junior Miss

Rockingham County Fair, and Linda Shifflett, Mrs. Rockingham County Fair. The trio worked with a strong commitment greeting fairgoers with bright, sunny smiles.

On Aug. 3 in the big exhibit hall, they and the other contestants had been judged during interviews, evening gown, and casual wear competitions. They had to speak briefly on an issue that was meaningful to themselves.

Like the three musketeers they attended various scheduled events together, especially all the livestock shows. They granted interviews to the broadcast media and showed gracious hospitality to thousands of visitors. That was the real test of their sincerity, ability, and fair knowledge.

Edwards said the duties were demanding, but fun. "We were always fashionably late," she said, grinning.

The young woman had not realized the extent of hard work and dedication required to hold a county fair, but seeing it unfold day by day was an eye-opening experience that doubled her appreciation for the organizers, workers, and record keepers.

When asked her reasons for participating, Edwards said: "I wanted to have a good experience for my own self-confidence."

Besides the gifts of a crown, trophy, and sash, her cash award was \$500 and she has a commitment at Roanoke in January 2004 to participate in the Miss Virginia Association of Fairs Scholarship Pageant.

Edwards is employed at the Cloud Nine Day Spa after graduating in 2003 from the Virginia School of Massage.

"I want to incorporate massage therapy and disabled children," she said. "The sense of touch (to disabled children) is so important."

With this goal in mind at the fair, she encountered a number of

disabled citizens and to their delight, interacted with them comfortably.

Hannah Armentrout wanted to participate in the junior division to have a better opportunity to learn what really goes on at the fair. She was interested to see what past queens have done, she said.

The 14-year old daughter of Kent and Karen Armentrout, Linville, said although she has always been involved with the fair, particularly with her dad's vegetable exhibits, by being a junior miss, she learned so much more about the event than she knew earlier.

The cash award for junior miss was \$100.

Linda Shifflett, Bridgewater, the wife of Jay Shifflett and mother of four children, has always been a supporter of the fair. After six days she, too came away with a broader appreciation for behind-the-scenes activities that visitors who just come for a good time, seldom if ever, see.

Shifflett reported the Mrs. Rockingham Fair competition had 11 contestants. One question she was asked to answer had to do with qualities that are most valuable to a marriage. She named, "honesty and dependability."

She believes firmly that a husband and wife must be "true friends together."

Her older children were credited for their tremendous support during the week-long fair. Otherwise, spending every day at the fair would not have been easy.

"My older children helped with the younger ones," she said.

The children are Drew, 14; Kali, 13; Coale, 6; and Torie, 3.

Judges for the pageant were Garry Viar, Lynchburg; Valerie Lucas, Shenandoah; Kimberly Bright, Harrisonburg; Stanford Moats, Waynesboro; and Sam Perkins, Staunton.



The King family farm includes a chicken house, left, that Neal's dad continues to operate.

Kings Farm: Where The Blacktop Ends

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music and recently competed in Lancaster County's 4-H talent show.

Since they live on a dairy farm, it seems natural for the King children to show dairy animals. Their dad is considering it very carefully.

He said, "I've always kept a closed herd. I don't like taking animals out and bringing them back (which exposes the herd to

viruses)."

Although the Kings aren't big vacation people, when they do go away on vacation, they tend to visit other farming operations.

Mary Lou said, "On our anniversary, we visited some big farms in the western part of the state, and participated in a Monsanto bus tour to visit Michigan farms."

Some women are appalled that an anniversary celebration would be work-related, but Mary Lou

said, "I enjoy seeing how other farm families live. It's a chance to get ideas on how to improve our farm."

Even the best-laid plans don't always turn out as expected. This week, it started raining again when their hay was ready to bale.

"Part of farming is taking the good with the bad," Mary Lou said. "We are blessed to be able to farm. We give God the credit — we couldn't be successful without him."