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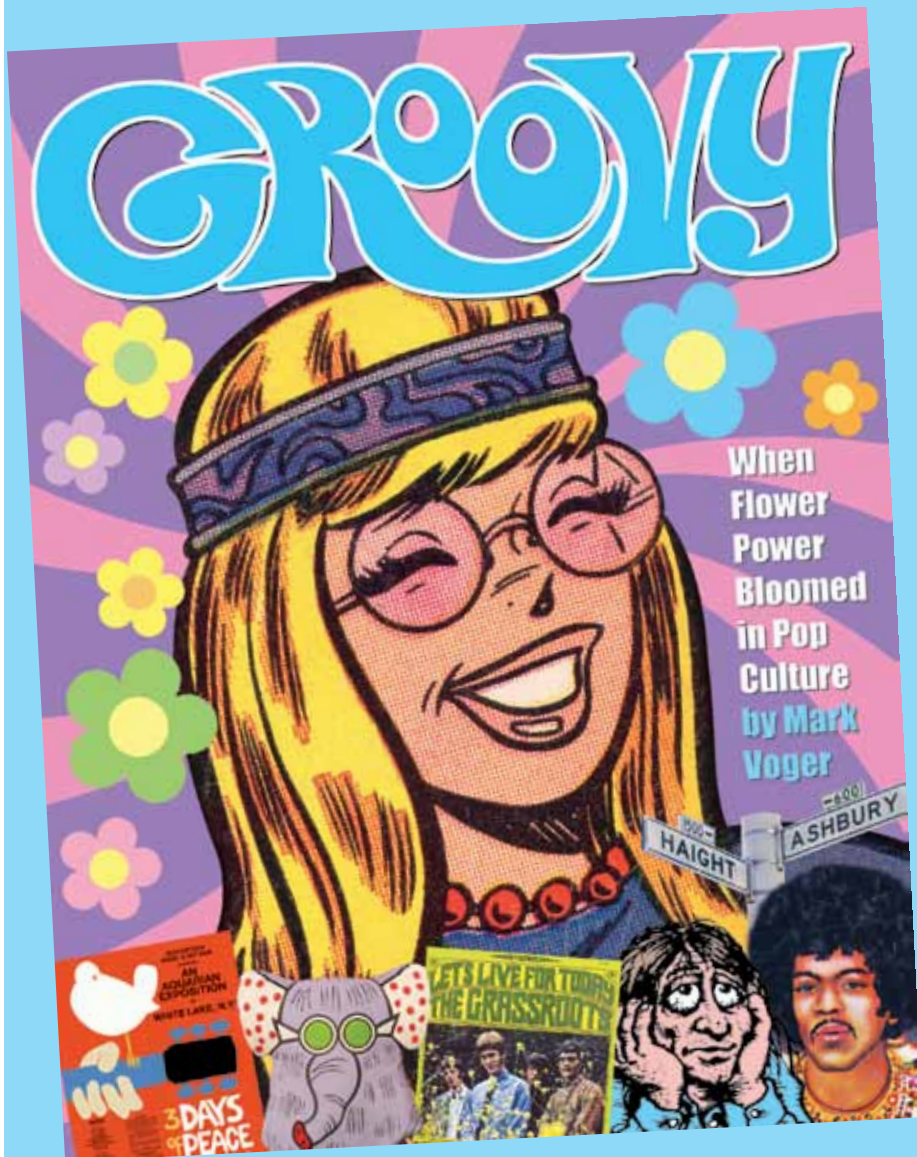
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Cade Martin/CDC

Proper handwashing is an important practice for youngsters and adults alike. Parents can coach on methods that can prevent the spread of illness at home and at school.

Clean hands, good health

The flu virus is most active between December and February, but flu season isn't over yet. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the influenza virus can remain active into spring and as late as May.

Beyond a flu shot, keeping hands clean is the best way to prevent the spread of flu virus as well as the viruses that cause colds and other illness. Frequent hand-washing with soapy water also fights germs and helps prevent the spread of illness.

CDC recommends five steps to clean hands. Always follow these steps to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold). Turn off the tap and apply soap. Using soap to wash hands is more effective than water alone. The surfactants in soap lift soil and microbes from skin. People also tend to scrub hands more thoroughly when using soap, which further removes germs.

2. Lather hands by rubbing them together with soap. Lather the backs of hands, between fingers and under nails. Lathering

and scrubbing hands creates friction, helping lift dirt, grease and microbes from skin. Microbes are present on all hand surfaces, often in high concentration under the nails.

3. Scrub hands at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice from beginning to end.

4. Rinse hands well under clean, running water.

5. Dry your hands using a clean towel, or air dry them.

The CDC advises washing hands in each of the following instances:

- Before, during and after preparing food and before eating
- Before and after caring for a sick person
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the bathroom
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- After handling garbage



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The best coffee begins with a premium blend and good, clean water, which this machine heats to 200 degrees. That's the ideal temperature for brewing the superior-grade coffee its makers had in mind.



The unit has a removable water tank for easy filling. The coffee station shuts off automatically, and once the carafe is removed, a drip-prevention mechanism is activated. A light on the unit indicates when it cleaning is recommended, and the coffee maker disassembles to make that easier. The coffemaker sells for \$174.99 on Amazon.

Win the coffee maker: For your chance to win, email us with your name, address and phone number by April 21. Make "Zojirushi" the subject. You must tell us where you found your copy of At Home New Jersey to win.

Congratulations to our March-April winner! A. Ross of Plainfield wins the Crock-Pot Casserole Crock slow cooker. (May we recommend the taco lasagna recipe from last issue?)

Examining a complex issue

Parents have long advised children to never accept candy from strangers. We must now caution them about accepting candy from strangers — and friends.

We are troubled by the increasing number of edible marijuana products that look like ordinary candy, cookies, caramel popcorn and other treats. In February, a Bergen County girl was sickened and hospitalized when a classmate gave her a marijuana gummy bear with the promise it would stop her from "stressing out." Parents, and potential medical and recreational users, should become familiar with the alphabet soup that describes two major marijuana components being used in marijuana edibles and other products. Products that isolate CBD can have medical benefits — including reduction of anxiety — and won't make a user "high." Still, there can be side effects, and precautions are in order. There are also edibles containing marijuana's psychoactive component, THC, at levels high enough to have brought on psychotic episodes in some users.

With the pending legalization of adult marijuana use, many issues require more research and regulation. As some contemplate profit and enjoyment, we hope to help parents and potential users navigate risks as well as benefits.

Beyond that, as we enter our eighth year of publication, this issue is filled with the recipes and information you've come to expect. As I wrote back in 2012, we hope you'll find lots to like here, and that you'll tell us about it.

Kimberly L. Jackson, Editor@AtHomeNJ.com

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NEW JERSEY

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AT HOME NEW JERSEY

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On the cover: A lovely visitor appreciates zinnias in a local garden. Photo: Kimberly L. Jackson

Pet friendly

Why cats need to have claws

Family Features

All the affection and loving care owners shower upon their cats can feel like wasted energy when the thanks they get looks more like hatred: shredded furniture, carpet and curtains.

It's a normal human response to be angry or frustrated about damage inflicted by cats' scratching, but equally normal is a cat's need to scratch. Cat scratching is a behavior that fulfills both physical and emotional needs. Cats scratch to stretch their bodies, maintain their hunting and climbing skills, groom their claws and mark their territory, showing they're in a safe space.

However, these behaviors cats exhibit to establish a safe living space can be anything but pleasant for their human companions. This can lead frustrated owners to take drastic measures to modify behavior, but those decisions can be risky, especially when it comes to a permanent and potentially harmful practice like declawing.

Many pet owners believe that declawing their cats is a harmless and quick fix for unwanted scratching, similar to trimming one's nails. However, if a declawing procedure were performed on a human being, it would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle.

"Not only does the practice cause pain, it removes an important self-defense tool and the surgery itself poses risks related to anesthesia and infection," said Dr. Valarie V. Tynes, president of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. "All of this can lead to behavioral issues that may be worse than a shredded couch," says Tynes, who also is a licensed veterinarian and veterinary services specialist at Ceva Animal Health, which produces pharmaceuticals and other products related to animal health.

Declawing is an irreversible measure to address a normal behavioral issue in cats. Disruption of natural scratching behavior can cause lasting physiological problems. Declawed cats may be less likely to use a litter box and more likely to bite.

National organizations such as the American Association for Feline Practitioners, have deemed the practice of declawing an ethically controversial procedure that is not medically necessary in most instances. In fact, declawing cats is now illegal in several cities in the United States.

An expert with experience in animal behavior can provide guidance based specifically on your cat's personality and circumstances to help create a custom solution for enduring behavioral challenges.

There are numerous safe and painless alternatives to declawing, including the sidebar's damage-preventing suggestions from pet behavior experts at Ceva Animal Health.



Ceva Animal Health

Preventing damage

1. Routinely trim nails. Regular nail care is an important part of general care and hygiene for your cat. It also can help prevent scratching damage by eliminating sharp, destructive claw tips. Properly trimmed nails are less likely to snag or split, and cats with well-trimmed nails are less likely to resort to scratching as part of self-grooming rituals.

2. Create scratch-friendly zones. It's easier to keep cats from scratching furniture and other things you don't want damaged when you provide areas where they can scratch at will, such as scratching pads and posts. Feliscratch by Feliway is a product clinically proven to prevent destructive scratching by redirecting cats to scratch in desired places. Cats are attracted to this drug-free, naturally derived product and will feel compelled to scratch where it's applied.

3. Reinforce off-limits areas. Cats are highly tactile, so applying textured materials like rough, crinkly aluminum foil or double-sided sticky tape to areas you don't want scratched can be an effective deterrent.

4. Eliminate negative reinforcements. Avoid punishing your cat for undesirable behavior. This includes shouting, spraying with water or swatting your cat. Punishment can increase your cat's stress and anxiety. It can make the problem worse and may even make your cat afraid of you.

Pets and taxes

Even if they're our fur babies, pets can't be claimed as dependents. The IRS does, however, grant certain deductions for pets.

Embrace Pet Insurance has pulled together what could be tax deductions for pet owners.

Business animals: Watchdogs can fall into the category of business animals. While they may be considered pets by their owners, these working dogs often live at a place of business instead of in the owner's home. A cat "employed" for rodent control at a business may also qualify, but consult a trusted tax professional to be sure.

Owners of business animals may be able to deduct expenses like food, veterinary care and training related to the animal's job. Animals that generate income for their owners, such as performing animals, may be part of this category as well. Performing animals can appear in commercials, movies or ads.

Service animal expenses: The category for service animals is broad, as are the potential tax deductions. Service dog expenses are tax deductible as noted in IRS Publication 502. Deductions are available for individuals requiring a guide dog for vision or hearing

Continued on next page

Make a custom scratching post

Giving your cat something to scratch safely is one of the most effective ways to minimize damage to your possessions. Making a scratching post is a quick and easy DIY project.

1. Cut foot-long length of 4-by-4-inch wood and a 1-foot-square piece of plywood. The exact sizes can vary, but these are good starting points that you can adjust up or down, depending on your space.

2. Sand away splinters and rough edges. Paint the plywood base or cover it with fabric to lend aesthetic appeal.

3. Wrap the post tightly with heavy-gauge rope, carpet scraps or both. Secure tightly with glue (a glue gun is a good tool here). Reinforce as needed with a staple gun.

4. Securely attach the post to the base by screwing it in place using a long bolt. Put the finished post in an area of your home where your cat enjoys spending time. A pheromone therapy spray can encourage your cat to use the post.

SaveTheCouches.com has scratching solutions and other alternatives to declawing.



Pexels Photography

Science continues to explore the health benefits of interaction with companion animals.

Animals and our health

Our pets take care of us, too.

Five new research projects focused on the positive effects of human-animal interaction are being funded by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute.

These new studies, selected from a total of more than 40 research proposals, will examine the influence of pet ownership, pet care-taking or animal-assisted therapy on a wide array of human health conditions. The studies involve a varied group of populations, including older adults, suicidal adolescents and children with pediatric cancer.

"With human-animal interaction research more clearly documenting the impact of the human-animal bond on mental and physical health, it is important to support research on how companion animals can benefit vulnerable and at-risk populations," said Bob Vetere, HABRI president.

"This new group of research projects is particularly exciting as two of the studies will add to existing HABRI research results on the benefits of dog-walking for physical activity and the impact of therapy animal visitation

on the quality of life of pediatric cancer patients. Two studies will look at mental health and preventing suicide among teenagers, a population that is often overlooked."

The institute also is funding research into the effects of therapy dog visitation on elderly patients admitted to an intensive care unit. These patients are at risk for stress that negatively affects mental and physical health. The objective of the study, conducted by Sandy Branson, PhD of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, is to assess the preliminary efficacy of a 10-minute therapy dog visit in reducing biobehavioral stress responses including anxiety and salivary cortisol levels.

Since its founding in 2010, HABRI has funded 26 competitive research projects worldwide, at more than \$2.75 million.

The Human Animal Bond Research Institute maintains the world's largest online library of human-animal bond research, and information that scientifically documents the health benefits of companion animals.

Visit Habri.org for more information.

Pets and taxes *continued*

impairments. These deductions may include expenses incurred for purchase of the animal, training and veterinary care. Pet owners diagnosed with a condition that benefits from the help of a trained therapy animal may also find deductions.

Volunteering expenses: Offering a loving home for abused, neglected and abandoned animals means providing more than just shelter. Families who foster dogs and other animals can incur several expenses each year. Expenses range from food, medications, supplies and even travel costs. Deductions include these expenses, veterinary bills, plus up to 14-cents-per-mile for trips that support the shelter's work.

Volunteers who are raising and/or training service or therapy dogs for an IRS-recognized charity qualify for tax deductions, which can include food, supplies, medications and veterinary care.

Adoption fees to a rescue organization or shelter are not tax deductible. However, donations to a qualifying pet-related rescue or charitable organization may be deductible if no goods or services are received.

Pet-related hobbies: Pet parents who enjoy entering their dog, cat or horse in shows as a hobby may be able to make a deduction under hobby expenses if the pet owner received earnings from it.

Save all receipts throughout the year as proof of any pet-related expenses when these deduction requirements are met.

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A family kitchen in Westfield

A Westfield couple's dream home involved carving space from their backyard for a 310-square-foot kitchen. The addition would make room for lots of storage, two dishwashers and a 13-foot-long island.

"I felt it was important to give them an island that can seat every member of their family," said Paul Barreto, owner of Beautiful Kitchens by Paul.

He worked with the couple to plan the new kitchen and its island that seats seven, including their five children.

Like the kitchen's custom, American-made Wellborn cabinetry, the island is topped with dark titanium granite from Brazil. Paul designed the island with a two-level top. The elevated area is for casual dining, and the lower for food prep.

He also converted the home's original kitchen into an office, with desks built from the same cabinetry used in the kitchen.



Photos by Eugenio Photography

Seating for seven: A two-level island elevates casual dining for a large family. On the opposite side, the island's leather-finished granite steps down to the same height as the other counters, expanding food prep surfaces and making it possible for several family members to cook together comfortably.



Home office: In place of the original kitchen, two computer work stations have custom-built desks that match cabinetry in the new kitchen nearby. Kitchen and office were designed and installed by Beautiful Kitchens by Paul using maple cabinetry from Wellborn Cabinet. Both spaces feature Savannah-style doors and drawer fronts painted in Wellborn's Sandstone Slate, a glazed finish. The desks have the same granite tops as the kitchen but with a smooth, polished surface for writing.



Niche display: At the end of one desk and in the kitchen cabinetry, decorative rope trim accents under-counter storage. The shelves house keepsakes and, in the kitchen, cookbooks and pull-out wicker baskets for produce.



Gorgeous granite: A closer look at the two-level island where the dark titanium granite features fluid grain patterns. In the background, double-doors of the built-in stainless steel refrigerator are framed by cabinetry, including pantry storage and a variety of display spaces with glass shelves and glass cabinet doors.



Clean lines: Beautiful Kitchens by Paul often include a custom range-hood built to complement the cabinetry. Here, his work enhances a tiled backsplash mural above the kitchen's 48-inch range.



Exacting detail: Wainscoting carved to match the cabinet doors surrounds the island, while decorative corbels help support its granite top. On the opposite side, there's room for a convection microwave, several drawers, a recycling center, and pull-out wicker baskets.



Open floor plan: The family-friendly kitchen opens to the living room, and the spaces are united by oak flooring with an inlaid mahogany border. On the opposite end of the kitchen is the conjoined dining room with a table that's also large enough to seat everyone at once.

Beautiful Kitchens by Paul

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Photos: Courtesy Plaid craft products: Ann Ros

Painting on found or purchased rocks is a hobby where the skill level can go from kid craft to fine art. Subjects include uplifting messages, animals, book characters, mandalas and more.

On the rocks: Make a good expression

In a garden bed outside the Fanwood Post office, a small stone, painted purple and adorned with a rhinestone heart bears a simple but important message: Love One Another.

It's a quiet reminder — a Bible verse, a mass, a sermon — boiled down to three words in its creative delivery.

There's a whole movement around painting rocks with inspirational messages and leaving them in public places with the hope that they might provide encouragement to someone at the moment they need it, or simply give a stranger some small reason to chuckle or smile.

Painting on rocks is a practice that has been around, albeit on a larger scale, since those prehistoric cave drawings in Lascaux. In present times, it remains a form of self-expression that communicates and connects, as demonstrated by the rock-painting Facebook groups and the exchanges on assorted craft blogs. The process can be a rainy-day kid project or fine artwork where the petite paintings are sold. At any level, it's a fun, engaging craft hobby that requires only found or purchased stones, acrylic paints, brushes, paint or gel pens and, perhaps, a pencil to etch on an idea beforehand.

To get started, look around your yard for stones in shapes that remind you of something, maybe an animal. Then paint its face. Inspiration abounds online; a few themes to explore:

Meaningful quotations. PlaidOnline.com, the craft supply website, has several projects, including the painted quotes shown above left, and "flip rocks" where a message starts on one side (Life is tough) and ends on the other (So are you).

Storybook characters. In addition to animals and tiny scenes, some rock painters enjoy recreating images from favorite childhood books on larger stones.

Patterns for peace. Painting on a rock can be meditative. Try making mini mandalas or your own intricate designs.

Basic tips: Select relatively smooth rocks with a flat surface. Wash them with soapy water, rinse and let dry. Paint with inexpensive craft brushes. Thin bristles can be used to add dots and details, but gel or paint pens make it easier to write messages. If your hand is steady, there are bottled craft paints with writing tips. Thin stencil tape, sold at craft stores, can help when a precise pattern is the goal. Rocks that will be placed outdoors can be preserved with an acrylic sealer.



Display painted rocks in a garden bed, terrarium or planter pot. Inside, cluster them on mantels or accent tables.



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Too much stuff? Try an estate sale

Pieces of Time began in 1997 as a West Orange antiques store. Over the years, the business has evolved, with owners Amina Lee and Renee Banks selling antique, vintage and newer items through their home content sales and estate liquidation services.

Pieces of Time Estate Sales brings sellers the highest possible price with an eco-friendly goal of finding buyers for unwanted heirlooms, furnishings, decorative accessories, collectibles and other quality items.

"We design a plan to effectuate the most successful sale and removal of personal property from a home," says Lee. The own-

ers remain on site to manage the sale for clients who are moving, downsizing or liquidating an estate. Their professional affiliations include the New Jersey State Society of Auctioneers and the International Society of Appraisers. "Our services are based on years of experience, knowing the market, and research," says Banks.

As collectors themselves, they bring an added level of care, Banks notes. "We understand that it is not always easy to let go of items that have sentimental value, but our compassion can make doing so as easy and painless as possible."

Start counting down to Mother’s Day

Has any mother ever wondered why there are no effective retail prompts to get fathers and children shopping early for Mother’s Day gifts, decorations and treats?

Halloween candy is out at the end of summer, and Christmas decorations start to appear before Thanksgiving, so it’s not too much of a stretch to start talking now about a day to honor the moms who do so much.

The holiday falls on Sunday, May 12 this year, and, mothers, *this* is the year to really claim it and get an early start on making it your own. It’s time for Mother’s Day reform.

The once-a-year amateur breakfast in bed was an endearing gesture when it was served by a 5-year-old, but your teen can do so much better. On Mother’s Day, serving cold cereal with toast should not be an option for your 16-year-old.

And if you’re not the type who finds quiet fulfillment in a sparkling, disinfected sink, it’s time to stop the madness in your husband’s annual Mother’s Day gift of house-keeping appliances.

Ladies, instead of passively hoping Mother’s Day will bring exactly the gifts and gestures you hope for, take an active role to get what you really want. Do as your children do without shame every Christmas: Come up with your own long list of Mother’s Day wishes and present it to your family. Today.

If this will require a get-tough approach, you might visualize yourself as the Clint Eastwood of moms while crafting your “Make My Day” checklist. Of course, you will not shoot to kill (or even to maim) if your family falls short in executing your wishes. The idea is to help them help you have the best Mother’s Day possible.

Consider that on any given day, you might play the role of cook, cleaning lady, laundress, kiddie chauffeur, breadwinner or all of the above and more. What could your family possibly do to repay you? Make your list and encourage them to get started. Some ideas:

The cook is on vacation: Remove yourself from the kitchen for the day and make your family responsible for all meals. They can either take you out, come back with take-out, or cook your requested dishes. Unless you are the only adult present, resist the urge to go in and supervise or coach any cooking. Do check the smoke detector batteries, however, and keep your nose alert for the smell of anything burning. A house fire is not the kind of excitement you want on your day.

Order meals in advance: Think back on all the tasty-looking dishes you’ve seen in magazines and online. Maybe you’ve even clipped or printed some of them. There’s probably at least one among them that your family can easily prepare.

Cleaning coupons: Even if a child doesn’t have access to a lot of cash, let him or her know there’s no excuse to forego a gift. Guilt-provoking tactics are in order here. Remember: you do a LOT for this child, and the child should cheerfully perform his or her household chores. (I know, my own mom had the same delusions about that “cheerfully” part.) Even if the effort is more forced than cheerful, get some mileage out of the day and ensure that cleaning will be done by hands other than your own.

My day, my way: If you need to sleep in or spend a lazy afternoon with a good book, this is the day to do it. On Mother’s Day, you pick the movie and the restaurant. If you like long walks and bike rides, put an active family outing on your list. By then, the weather will be favorable, but if it’s not, the nearest mall is also a good place to get some miles in on foot — especially if you need to point out a few more things you want.

What we found at Tiffany Natural Pharmacy

Gifts for Mom



▲ **Pamper her:** If you can’t send Mom to a day spa, treat her to beauty care at home. Tiffany Natural Pharmacy carries a wide range of options including several facial mask formulations.

▼ **Wine to dine:** This bag is one of several styles long enough to hold most bottles. Insulated, with a corkscrew included, it’s perfect to carry along a vintage that will enhance gatherings with good food and good friends.



◀ **Lovely for lunch:** Is Mom a smart saver who takes lunch to work most days? She’ll be delighted to pack it in a sturdy, insulated bag that’s pretty and strong, just like her. Available in several floral fabrics.

▶ **For dog moms:** We all know some babies have fur. Fill this fun frame, or another available style, to keep favorite moments on display. Cat mom gifts also available.

▶ **Feel-good foam:** The foaming sugar body scrubs in this distinctive line are handmade in the United States by women transitioning out of crisis, including domestic violence-related homelessness.



◀ **Bathing beauties:** Think of these as Mother’s Day stocking stuffers. A few drops of a fine essential oil fill the bathroom with relaxing fragrance. Give her samples in an assortment of aromatherapy mineral bath packs.



Growing a cutting garden from seeds

The gradually warming soil and spring's longer days soon will quietly beckon us to grow our own flowers. A cutting garden can keep vases filled all summer and into the fall.

If you plan well, the cost of a cutting garden can be less than that of a good-size florist's bouquet — especially if you begin your flowers from seed.

In “The Flower Garden: How to Grow Flowers From Seed” (Laurence King Publishing, \$24.99), author Clare Foster and photographer Sabrina Ruber offer a beautifully illustrated guide to nearly 60 flowering plants that can be grown easily from seeds.



If you are enamored with English cottage gardens, Foster, garden editor at the United Kingdom's House & Garden magazine, is an astute advisor on what goes into growing one.

“The Flower Garden” grew from a 2012 project where Foster and Ruber decided to see how many annual flowers they could possibly grow from seed. The co-authors discovered that an enormous and exciting variety were

not only inexpensive to grow in this way, but surprisingly quick and easy as well.

In this lushly illustrated book of flower garden dreams, beginning gardeners will be guided on when to plant. More experienced growers can explore less familiar specimens. The book includes numerous cutting garden candidates.

Cutting gardens may call to mind grand estates, but an abundance of flowers can be produced in a bed that's only 13-by-5 square feet. Foster suggests using four raised beds of this size, if space allows. She gives planting suggestions for each, and readers with less space can pick one or two. One of the suggested beds, to be started in fall, includes biennials (which flower in their second year) such as sweet William, foxglove, wallflower, money plant and poppy. Other beds involve hardy annuals planted early in seed-starting trays or, later, sown directly into the soil from spring to early summer.

Flowers for the vase

Since a cutting garden is more utility than showpiece, it may be best to grow it out back, and even fenced in if hungry deer and rabbits will come to dine. If the garden plan will involve growing vegetables, adding flowers can help attract bees and other essential pollinators, as well as butterflies.

The 208-page hardback book is organized in three parts: choosing flowers, sowing and growing, and using seed-grown plants and flowers. The latter part covers borders, mini meadows, container gardens and cuttings for arrangements. In one project, hazel or willow branches are joined and bent into a rustic arch that can support the flowers and fragrance of climbing sweet pea vines.

The book's annual, perennial and biennial flowers are categorized as fragrant, bold, exotic, edible, bee friendly, fillers and cottage garden favorites.

Some flowers, such as cosmos, can, of course, be purchased as garden center plants, “but you'll discover that the range of colors and varieties is much wider when grown from seed,” Foster notes. To the credit of the authors, nearly every photograph has an associated caption that identifies most of the flowers involved. That's essential information to satisfy plant lust, plan garden plots, and know the flowers that will work well together.



Photos by Sabrina Ruber

Above, the herb dill makes a striking cut flower, mingling in a vase with sweet pea blooms, clary sage and snapdragon. Below left, a bee collects pollen from the tiny blossoms of a verbena flower. Right, a cutting garden blooms profusely with purple agapanthus, easy-to-grow dahlias and cheerful yellow calendula near a hedge in the background.



Sunpatiens vs. impatiens



By David Williams
of Williams Nursery

Sunpatiens, shown with ferns and white Catalina in this container planting, grow larger than regular impatiens, and will grow in areas of sun to shade.

Standard bedding impatiens are still the best choice for extremely shady locations, however, since they will tolerate the most shade. There is some bad news here, though. Growers have been dramatically reducing their quantities of bedding impatiens, and you may find that they sell out very early in the season.

At Williams Nursery, the feedback we have received for Sunpatiens over the years has been spectacular. Sunpatiens are extremely resistant to downy mildew, which sometimes affects impatiens, and they are a great substitute plant, if you are concerned. They

are great plants for garden beds as well as containers.

I've used Sunpatiens in my own garden, and they are stunning. They hold up even on those really hot, sunny days. Years back, I went to the Penn State Trial Gardens to review

their performance compared to New Guinea impatiens, a standard variety. I was surprised how much better the Sunpatiens performed in the exact same conditions as the New Guinea impatiens.

Sunpatiens cost more per plant than the bedding impatiens, but they can be planted two to three times farther apart than regular impatiens. That means less digging for more flowers, and a price difference that's not as great as it might appear.

Meet perennial Stachys 'Hummelo'



This colorful sun-loving plant has been named 2019 Perennial of the year. "Pollinators can't resist the striking midsummer spikes of magenta flowers rising above bright green, trouble-free foliage," notes an announcement about the winner. Since 1990, the Perennial Plant Association has recognized a standout perennial. The plant of the year is always low maintenance with multiple-season interest and relatively resistant to pests and disease. 'Hummelo' was the highest rated Stachys in the Chicago Botanic Garden Evaluation Trials for its strong flower production and winter hardiness. The plant, which is considered deer resistant, pairs well with Asclepias tuberosa, last year's winning perennial. The wiry stems that grow 18 to 24 inches above low mounds of lush foliage make great cut flowers.

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Fresh, frozen or thawed, seafood is always ready to cook

Fish: An easy dish

What do you do when you realize you forgot to thaw the fish you planned to cook for dinner? You could try to thaw it in water ... or you can just cook the frozen fish.

That would be the suggestion from those who promote Alaska Seafood. With their trademarked “Cook It Frozen” techniques, fish is cooked without thawing in a variety of ways, including pan-searing, roasting, poaching, steaming and grilling.

We tested several of the techniques with a variety of economical frozen fish: cod, flounder, haddock and pink salmon.

Thin fillets of frozen flounder steamed beautifully and were a nice complement to the vegetables in our featured one-pan fish dish. We also poached frozen haddock fillets in the highly recommended Maya Kaimal madras curry simmer sauce (available at selected Kings and ShopRite stores). The cooked fish (shown below) was enhanced by the sauce, and leftovers were even better after marinating overnight in the fridge.

Selecting thin frozen fillets and the right type of fish makes a difference. We weren't as pleased with the one-inch-thick cod fillets we cooked in the same sauce.

The only downside of the Cook It Frozen technique related to flavor. With frozen fish, the seasonings can't penetrate, so we sometimes had fish with a bland center.

We tried the frozen method for every fish recipe in this issue. We would not recommend it for the Southwestern salmon dish featured because of the superior flavor when it was cooked with fresh or thawed fish.

With pan-seared salmon, there also was a cooked-from-frozen taste that may be off-putting to those who can detect a difference when frozen hamburger patties are thrown on the grill in a cook-out crisis.

For frozen, thawed or fresh fish, shallow poaching is a great time-saving method. With low heat, it reduces the chance of overcooking fish while making it possible to infuse it with numerous flavors.

Maine chef Barton Seaver, in a SeafoodNutrition.org article, says a steady temperature between 165 and 175 degrees is essential to slowly and evenly cook fish in its poaching liquid.

“It's best to use a digital thermometer to make sure it doesn't get too hot,” he writes. Without a thermometer, you'll know the poaching liquid has hit about 170 degrees when it is just barely moving, he notes.

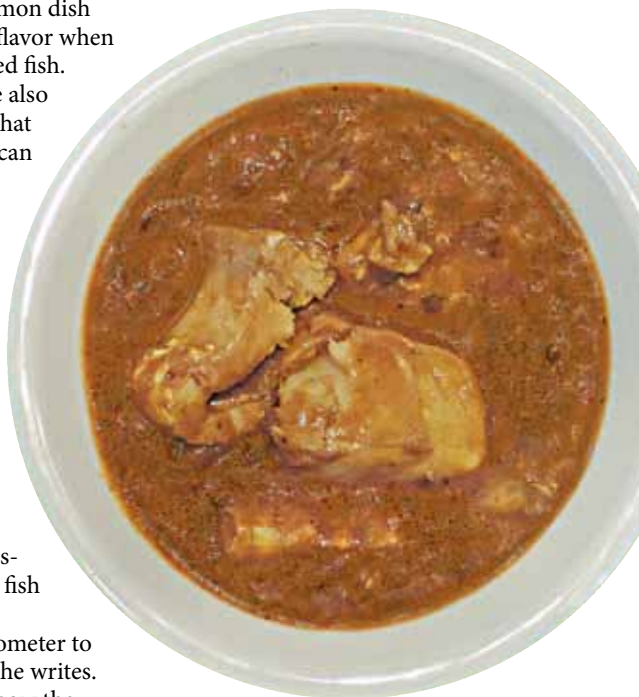
To firm up fish for poaching, Seaver salts it lightly and lets it rest 15 minutes. The fish takes minutes to cook; and is done when it flakes easily and has a creamy internal color.

Traditionally, poaching begins with broth, *cuisson* or *court bouillon*, to which herbs, vegetables, and often wine, are added. Fish also can be poached easily in almost any sauce. And there are many ways to get creative with poaching liquid. How about adding lemongrass, shallots, garlic and ginger?

In recipes at WildAlaskaSeafood.com, various types of fish are poached in chai tea, craft beer or sake. Once the cooked fish has been removed, the poaching liquid can be boiled down for a flavorful reduction sauce.

“Techniques like poaching and steaming deliver the pure flavor of the fish,” says Ben Pollinger, owner and executive chef of The Hill restaurant in Bergen County. He shares a wealth of fish wisdom in his 2014 cookbook “School of Fish” (Gallery Books, \$35). One recipe has swordfish poached in olive oil, using a thermometer to stay at 170 degrees.

“Poaching in olive oil produces an incredibly moist, tender texture. Unlike deep-frying, you're cooking at a very low temperature. No crust develops, so you end up with the delicious natural flavor of the fish.”



At Home New Jersey

Frozen haddock was poached successfully in a store-bought curry simmer sauce.



Salmon with Southwestern bean stew

(4 servings)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 tablespoon cumin seeds, ground | 1 small poblano chile, seeded and chopped (about 1/2 cup) |
| 1 tablespoon coriander seeds, crushed | 14.5-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained |
| 1/4 teaspoon salt | 15-ounce can low-sodium black beans, drained |
| 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper | 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro |
| 1-pound salmon fillet | 2 scallions, chopped |
| 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided | Juice of 1 lime |
| 1/4 cup chopped onion | |
| 2 cloves garlic, chopped | |
| Chili flakes, to taste | |

1. Mix together cumin, coriander, salt and pepper. Rub a tablespoon of spice mixture evenly into the fish and refrigerate.

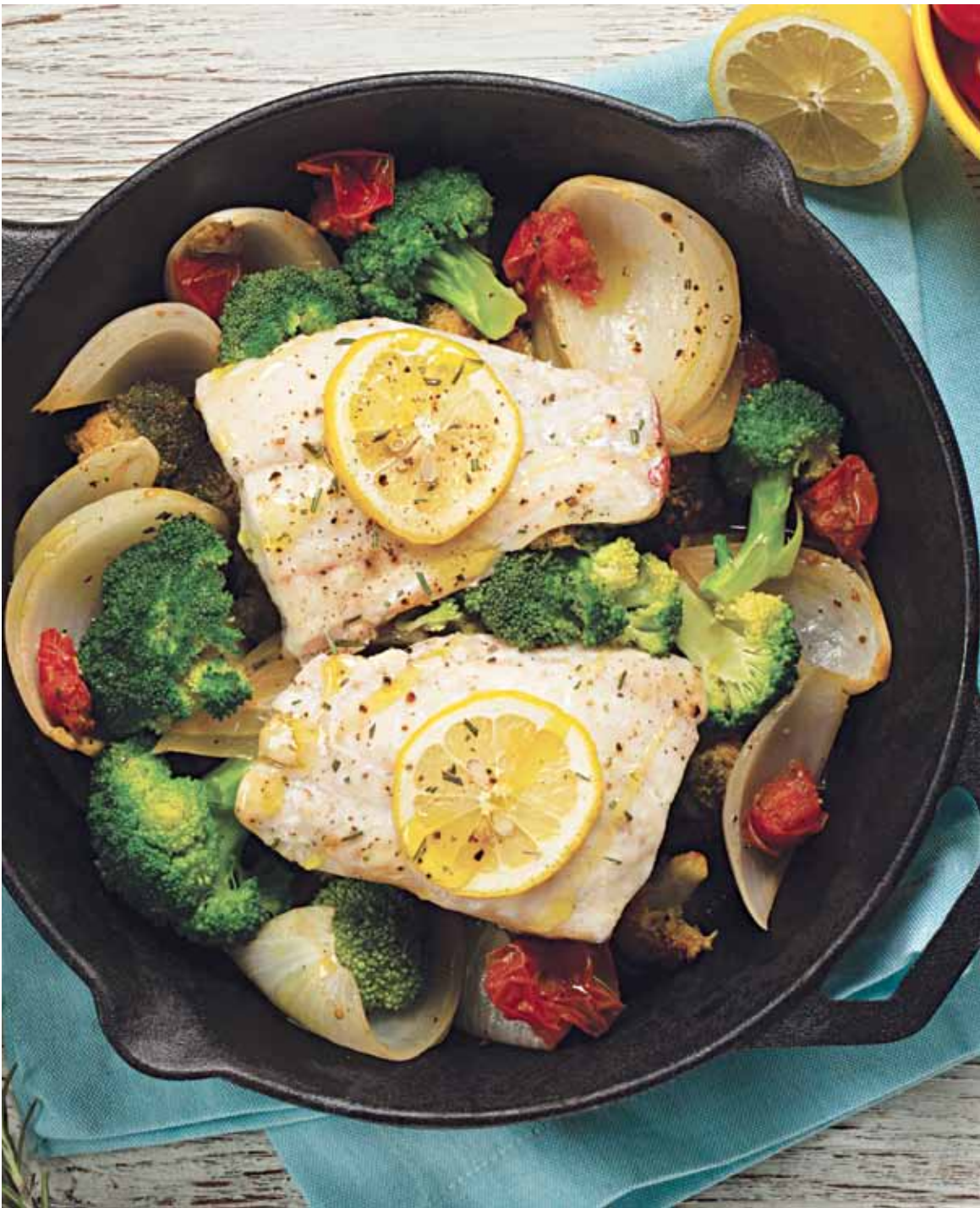
2. Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Add onions and garlic, cook 3 minutes. Stir in chili flakes, poblano and remaining spice mix. Cook until aromatic. Increase heat to high and stir in tomatoes and their juice. Add black beans with 1 cup of water. Simmer 10 minutes. Stir in cilantro, scallions and lime juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook 2 minutes until heated through.

3. Heat remaining tablespoon of oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add fish, skin side up. Cook 2 to 5 minutes on each side, depending on thickness. To serve, divide bean stew between four serving bowls and top each with a portion of the salmon.

Tester's note: Freshly ground whole cumin and coriander seeds will deliver more flavor, but 2 teaspoons of spices that were purchased ground may be used instead.

Nutrition information (per serving): 386 calories; 15g fat (2g saturated); 62mg cholesterol; 342mg sodium; 32g carbs; 11g fiber; 4g sugars; 33g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy Seafood Nutrition Partnership; SeafoodNutrition.org



One-pan flounder and veggie meal

(4 servings)

2 tablespoons canola oil
1/4 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1 medium onion, quartered
2 cups broccoli florets
1 lemon (half sliced, and half juiced)
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper, to taste
1 pound frozen flounder fillets
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Fresh rosemary sprigs or other herbs (optional)

In a large pan, heat canola oil at medium temperature for about a minute. Place all vegetables in pan. Cook 5 minutes, uncovered. Drizzle with lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Place fish on top of vegetables. Place two lemon slices on each frozen fillet. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover pan and cook on medium heat for 5 to 10

minutes, depending on thickness of fish. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with rosemary sprigs, if desired.

Tester's note: The thin flounder fillets used in testing this recipe were salted frozen, and had an agreeable flavor when combined with the lemony sauteed vegetables. To use fresh or thawed flounder, adjust cooking time accordingly. Unfrozen, thin flounder fillets should cook in less than 5 minutes. Try mixing up the veggies to include or swap in chopped zucchini, thin carrot slices, mushrooms, bell peppers, snow peas and other favorites in place of the broccoli and tomatoes. Try adding garlic, or using shallots or scallions in place of the onions.

Nutrition information (per serving): 311 calories; 22g fat (3g saturated); 54mg cholesterol; 253mg sodium; 6g carbs; 2g fiber; 2g sugars; 23g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy Seafood Nutrition Partnership; SeafoodNutrition.org



Seafood Nutrition Partnership

Mustard-baked fish is cooked on a sheet pan with sliced zucchini.

Fatty fish is best for health

According to research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, eating seafood 2 to 3 times per week can improve brain, eye and heart health. As an important source of the healthy fats known as omega-3 fatty acids, seafood provides essential nutrients.

While fish in general is a source of high-quality protein, “fatty” or “oily” fish with the highest amounts of omega-3 fatty acids are packed with the most heart, brain, eye and overall health benefits. Fish with the highest omega-3s usually has a firmer texture, a richer flavor and deeper color. Some shellfish also are rich in omega-3s.

Studies have shown that these fatty acids can reduce the risk of heart disease, depression, arthritis and dementia. The human brain is nearly 60 percent fat, and omega-3 fatty acids are among crucial molecules that determine its ability to perform.

The American Heart Association suggests an intake of 250 to 500 milligrams of omega-3s per day. For those with coronary heart disease, the recommendation is 1,000 milligrams per day.

Seafood with more than 1,000 mg of omega-3s per 4-ounce portion include Atlantic, Chinook and Coho salmon; swordfish; bluefish (sablefish); trout; sardines; anchovies; farm-raised cobia; herring; Atlantic mackerel (often found at Asian markets); and Pacific oysters.

Mustard-glazed fish bake

(4 servings)

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard	1/2 teaspoon ground rosemary
1 tablespoon mayonnaise	1 pound oily fish such as trout, salmon, sablefish or mackerel
2 small zucchinis, sliced	Salt and pepper (optional)
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided	

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. In a small bowl, blend mustard and mayonnaise. In a large bowl, toss zucchini with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and rosemary.

2. Lightly coat sheet pan with remaining olive oil. Season fish with salt and pepper, if desired. Place fish on pan and brush with the mustard mixture.

3. Place zucchini on pan with fish, season with salt and pepper. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, depending on fish.

Nutrition information (per serving): 231 calories; 14g fat (2g saturated); 67mg cholesterol; 131mg sodium; 2g carbs; 1g fiber; 1g sugars; 24g protein

— Recipe courtesy Seafood Nutrition Partnership; more recipes at SeafoodNutrition.org



Courtesy CanolaInfo.org

Coated with canola oil, frozen fish can be pan-fried without thawing. Seasoning, such as cumin, thyme, paprika and lemon pepper, is added after the first few minutes of cooking.

Cooking frozen fish

It's an incredible kitchen breakthrough that so many types of frozen seafood can be successfully cooked without thawing, using a variety of methods. We've tested the following cooking methods developed for seafood from Alaska. The many recipes at WildAlaskaSeafood.com give instructions for cooking thawed, fresh or frozen fish. Their "Cook It Frozen" recipes save time using fish right from the freezer. The first step in every case is to rinse the fish under cold water to remove the ice glaze, and then pat dry with a paper towel.

Dry cooking methods

An essential step for all dry methods is to brush both sides of the rinsed frozen fish with an oil that has a high smoke point such as olive, canola, peanut or safflower. Avoid butter, sunflower or corn oil, as they burn at high heat. For best results with frozen fish, cook 4 minutes before adding butter or seasoning. Only very thick fish will need to be flipped during cooking. To test doneness, insert a fork into thickest part of fish to check color. The fish also should flake easily.

Pan-searing: Heat a heavy nonstick skillet or stove-top grill pan over medium-high heat. Place rinsed and oiled frozen fish in heated pan, skin side up. Cook, uncovered, 3 to 4 minutes, until browned. Turn fish and sprinkle with seasoning. Cover tightly, reduce heat to medium. Cook 6 to 8 more minutes. Remove fish from heat when opaque throughout. Finish thick portions in a 400-degree oven using an ovenproof pan.

Oven-roasting: Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place rinsed and oiled frozen fish on an oil spray-coated pan or cooking parchment-lined baking sheet. Cook 12 to 15 minutes, seasoning as desired after 4 minutes. Flip only very thick portions. Remove from heat as soon as fish is opaque throughout.

Broiling: Heat broiler to 450 degrees. Place rinsed and oiled frozen fish on an oil sprayed broiling pan. Cook 12 to 15 minutes. Season after 4 minutes. Remove from heat when fish is opaque throughout.

Grilling: Heat grill to 400 degrees. Tear an 18-inch-wide sheet of foil so it is 4-inches longer than the fish. Oil spray the dull side of foil. Place rinsed and oiled frozen fish on foil, skin side down. Bring foil sides together. Fold over several times to seal; roll up ends to form a packet. Place packet on grill, seam

side down. Cook 8 to 10 minutes. Remove packet from grill, open and add seasoning. Crimp foil loosely to close. Return to grill, seam side up. Cook 8 to 10 more minutes, depending on thickness and the level of doneness. Remove from heat as soon as fish is opaque throughout.



Courtesy Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

Steam fish over stock, wine, tea, lagers or even whiskey to infuse with delicate flavor.

Wet cooking methods

Poaching: Add water or braising liquid (this can be broth, tea, wine, beer, sake, chai tea or other liquid) to a large pan and simmer. Turn off heat and add rinsed frozen fish to the liquid, skin side down. Return heat to the gentlest simmer. Do not boil. Once simmering, cover pan tightly. Cook 4 to 5 minutes. Turn off heat. Let seafood rest 5 minutes. Remove from heat when fish is opaque throughout.

Steaming: Bring about 1-inch of water or seasoned liquid to a boil. Line steamer with lettuce, onion, herbs or citrus (without covering all the holes) to keep fish from sticking. Add rinsed frozen fish to steamer, cover loosely. Return liquid to boil; steam fish 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from heat as soon as seafood is opaque throughout.



Out of Africa: Try chermoula, a marinade of Morocco and the Maghreb region. In a food processor, pulse until nearly smooth 2 cloves garlic, minced; 2 teaspoons ground cumin; 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika; 1/2 cup olive oil; 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice; 1 packed cup cilantro leaves; 1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley; 1/2 teaspoon each salt and ground pepper. Use to marinate up to 2 pounds of Alaska rockfish or other firm white fish for at least 10 minutes. *Courtesy Alaska Seafood*



Green goodness: In a blender, process until smooth 2 ounces fresh herbs such as chives, chervil or dill; 2 ounces zesty or bitter greens such as watercress, sorrel, arugula or dandelion; 1 ounce spinach leaves; 1 cup toasted California walnuts; 3/4 cup buttermilk; 1/2 cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt; 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard; 2 teaspoons walnut oil or olive oil; 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper. It's perfect for pan-seared trout. *Courtesy Walnuts.org*



Salad days: Greens and cooked grain make a new meal of leftover salmon. Here, spinach is topped with salmon, quinoa and olives. Try a homemade Dijon vinaigrette: In a bowl, whisk together 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar, 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil and a 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard. Use a tablespoon per serving, toss and sprinkle with fresh dill. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper. *Photo courtesy International Olive Commission*

Enjoy good meals from a toaster oven

When you find a toaster oven with a heat-circulating convection system and an interior that can easily fit a frozen pizza, it is certainly more oven than toaster.

With this in mind, chef Linda Stephen has compiled the “150 Best Toaster Oven Recipes” (Robert Rose, \$19.95).



Despite its convenient countertop placement, this is a small appliance that can really cook, says Stephen. It can make meals for four. It can roast vegetables and broil steaks. It can bake cakes, pies and bread.

“Not only convenient for students, singles, young couples, empty-nesters and retirees, the toaster oven is also ideal for families,” writes Stephen, who is said to cook 90 percent of her meals in one.

Despite their expanding size, heating a toaster ovens is still more energy-efficient than heating the regular oven, she notes. “Why turn on the big oven when the toaster oven will do the same task?”

Stephens, who previously operated a cooking school, draws from her culinary experiences to offer no-fuss recipes like chicken fingers and tuna melts as well as unexpected dishes like garlic shrimp with broccoli or mushrooms, chili, beef stew, chicken tetrazzini, rice pilaf and several pasta dishes — options that would ordinarily require pots and pans.

Recipes include appetizers and full meat, fish, poultry and vegetarian meals. There are also breads, treats and snacks.

Vegetable bean chili

(3 servings)

2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 small zucchini, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 19-oz can stewed tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
1 cup rinsed drained canned black beans or chickpeas
1 cup tomato juice or tomato sauce
1-1/2 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
1/2 teaspoon salt, optional
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1. In an 8-cup shallow baking dish, combine garlic, onion, celery, zucchini, red pepper, tomatoes, corn, beans, tomato juice, chili powder, oregano, salt and pepper.

2. Bake, covered, in preheated 400-degree toaster oven for 35 minutes. Remove cover, stir and bake 20 minutes, or until celery and zucchini are tender and chili is bubbling.

Tester's notes: Use reduced-sodium canned goods to lower sodium in this recipe. Try Mexican oregano, available from Savory Spice Shop in Westfield, which has several chili and dry adobo blends to customize this dish.

Nutrition information (per serving): 233 calories,



1g fat (0g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 802mg sodium, 49g carbs, 11g fiber, 14g sugars, 11g protein

— From “150 Best Toaster Oven Recipes” by Linda Stephen © 2018; Reprinted with permission. www.RobertRose.ca

Roasted fish fillets with crumb topping

(4 servings)

3/4 cup bread crumbs
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil, dill or parsley
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
4 fish fillets (salmon, halibut, haddock or grouper) about 1-inch thick and 6 ounces each
4 lemon wedges

1. In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs, basil, oil, garlic and lemon zest.

2. Place fillets in a single layer on lightly greased oven pan. Press crumb mixture onto fillets.

3. In preheated 425-degree toaster oven, bake 12 to 15 minutes, or until fish is opaque and flakes easily when tested with a fork. Garnish with lemon wedges.

Tester's notes: To substitute dried herbs, use 1 tablespoon. Season fish lightly with salt, if desired, before adding bread crumb topping. This recipe works with the “Cook it Frozen technique.” Follow roasting instructions on Page 14. Apply topping after 4 minutes and bake 10 to 12



more minutes until done, as instructed.

Nutrition information (per halibut serving): 295 calories, 8g fat (1g saturated), 54mg cholesterol, 239mg sodium, 15g carbs, 1g fiber, 1g sugars, 38g protein

— From “150 Best Toaster Oven Recipes” by Linda Stephen © 2018; Reprinted with permission. www.RobertRose.ca

Peach Melba cobbler

(6 servings)

4 cups fresh or frozen unsweetened sliced peaches
2 cups fresh or frozen unsweetened raspberries
1/4 cup granulated sugar
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
For topping
1 cup all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
1 teaspoon baking powder
Pinch of salt
1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, cut in pieces
1/2 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

1. Thaw frozen fruit just enough to separate pieces. In a large bowl, toss together fruit, 1/2 cup sugar and 3 tablespoons flour. Spoon into an 8-inch square baking dish.

2. In a large bowl, combine 1 cup flour, 3 tablespoons sugar, baking powder and salt. Cut in butter, using a pastry blender or two knives, until mixture is in tiny bits.

3. In a small bowl, combine milk and vanilla. Add to dry ingredients and mix with a fork just until mixture comes together in a loose dough. Drop by spoonfuls over fruit. Sprinkle with remaining tablespoon of sugar.

4. Bake in preheated 375-degree toaster



oven 35 to 40 minutes, or until fruit is bubbling at edges and topping is cooked (gently lift center of topping to make sure dough is cooked underneath).

Tester's notes: Blueberries can be used in place of raspberries. This recipe produces a crumble topping. For a Southern-style topping, increase milk to 1 cup. A little lemon zest or spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger or allspice can be tossed with the fruit before topping.

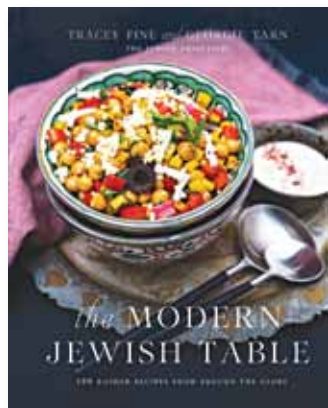
Nutrition information (per serving): 297 calories, 9g fat (5g saturated), 22mg cholesterol, 10mg sodium, 52g carbs, 5g fiber, 28g sugars, 5g protein

— Adapted from “150 Best Toaster Oven Recipes” by Linda Stephen © 2018; Reprinted with permission.

Now, here's a cookbook with chutzpah

Tracey Fine and Georgie Tarn are “The Jewish Princesses,” a cookbook-writing duo self-described as “the sassy British housewives of Jewish cooking.”

With such a title, their most recent cookbook, “The Modern Jewish Table” (Skyhorse Publishing, \$24.99) is a volume that blends recipes with humor that constantly references their “addiction” to finery and designer brands.



These North Londoners have reimagined familiar fare and dishes from around the globe to suit their kosher lifestyles.

They include commentary at the start of each section, and “reach out to all cultures,” defining the potentially unfamiliar Yiddish terms the use in “princess pink” boxes that pepper the book.

Among “fusion” recipes, a gefelte fish mixture is poached and sliced, taking on sushi-like presentation. Another gefelte mix is pressed into balls and fried for “street food” fish bites.

Their empanadas are filled with sweet potato, eggplant and kabanos, a dry Polish sausage. Among soups, the Vietnamese pho is vegetarian, and there's a full “Veg Out” chapter.

Desserts are prominent in this 220-page volume, with four separate sections — one general, one for cakes, one for “tiny treats” and another for “couture chocolate.”

Exploiting strong photography, a stunning, tall buttermilk cake with mascarpone frosting gains more height with a mound of salted popcorn on top. Creative and so much fun.

Some recipes could use more precise guidance, however.

‘Cohen-tucky’ baked chicken

(6 servings)

- 1 chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons garlic paste
- 1-1/4 cups fine matzo meal
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried sage
- 1 packed tablespoon flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 4 tablespoons olive oil

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Season chicken pieces well with salt and pepper.
2. In a shallow bowl, whisk eggs with garlic.
3. In flat dish, mix matzo meal, paprika, sage and parsley.
4. Dip each chicken piece in the egg mixture and then roll in the matzo mixture to coat. Repeat the process to give each piece a thicker coating.

5. Place chicken pieces on a flat, parchment paper-lined baking tray. Season again with salt and pepper. Bake about an hour, until the coating is golden and the chicken is cooked through. Larger chickens may take longer to cook. Use a pastry brush to coat chicken pieces in olive oil. Bake 5 more minutes.

Tester's note: To make garlic paste, mince garlic and use the side of a large knife to mash into a paste. This recipe can be adapted for use with chicken breast cutlets for quicker-cooking chicken fingers.



Nutrition information (per serving): 439 calories, 32g fat (8g saturated), 195mg cholesterol, 479mg sodium, 20g carbs, 1g fiber, 0g sugars, 16g protein

— Adapted from “The Modern Jewish Table” by Tracey Fine and Georgie Tarn, (Skyhorse Publishing, \$24.99)



Picnic-friendly baked salmon cakes

(6 servings)

- 20 ounces canned red salmon, drained, skinned and boned
- 1 large onion, grated
- 2 scallions finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- Juice and zest of one lime
- 1 packed tablespoon cilantro leaves, finely chopped

- 2 tablespoons gluten-free flour or matzo meal
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Mix all ingredients to incorporate well. For a professional look, use a 1/2-inch ring mold (or use wet hands) to form fish cakes, using a heaping tablespoon of the mixture for each cake. Place cakes on a parchment

paper-lined baking sheet. Bake 15 to 20 minutes in batches, as needed.

Nutrition information (per serving): 191 calories, 6g fat (1g saturated), 100mg cholesterol, 544mg sodium, 6g carbs, 1g fiber, 1g sugars, 28g protein

— Adapted from “The Modern Jewish Table” by Tracey Fine and Georgie Tarn, (Skyhorse Publishing, \$24.99)

Mixed messages

Unscramble this text from the Talmud on good table practices. Solution on AtHomeNJ.com.



Neo owh tesa wolysl
sielv nolg.



A spice blend from Yemen

With growing interest in North African cuisines, expect to also learn more about ingredients and spices from the other side of the Red Sea. Food explorers should seek out hawajj, an enticingly fragrant spice blend of Yemen. One producer is Clifton-based Pereg, a purveyor of gourmet ingredients that include grains and spices. There are typically two types of hawajj (pronounced ha-WHY-age), one for meat or vegetable soups and stews, and another for coffee or tea that's also used in desserts. Pereg offers both. While components of the brand's hawajj are not revealed, the blend traditionally includes ground coriander, cumin, black pepper, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and turmeric. Pereg recommends its hawajj as a dry rub for grilled chicken. The brand's coffee blend includes ginger, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom.

KITCHEN EXPLORER

Chopped: The story of picadillo

Picadillo appears in numerous incarnations as a dish of many cultures, and it's one that any cook can make his or her own.

With roots in Spain, there's a version in many countries that have come under Spanish influence. Spend hours with recipes from Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Mexico, Costa Rica or the Dominican Republic, and you can pick ingredients that appeal to you.

The name picadillo (pronounced peek-a-Dee-oh) derives from the Spanish verb *picar*, which means to chop or mince. Accordingly, dishes called picadillo can include any variety of chopped ingredients. In Andalusia, it's more likely to be a potato and canned tuna salad. There's also a soup with diced ham.

For vegan picadillo, look to Costa Rica's *picadillo de chayote*, made with the fist-shaped green chayote squash, and often without meat. But in much of Latin America, picadillo starts with beef, pork or a combination, flavored by sautéed onions, garlic and green peppers before adding tomatoes. Passionately debated is what should be included or left out (cloves?). Olives frequently appear, and sometimes capers, carrots, green peas, raisins or hot chiles. This highly adaptable dish can be served on rice, with tortillas or as an empanada filling. The consistency ranges from a drier hash to a thick stew to soupy.

Turkey picadillo

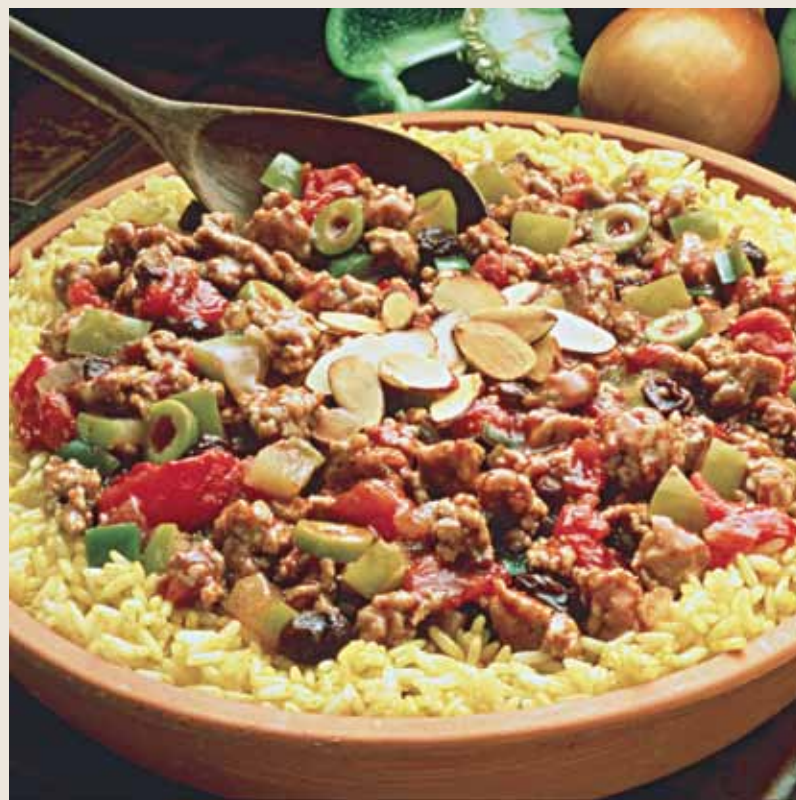
(6 servings)

1 pound ground turkey
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
14.5-ounce can stewed tomatoes
1/4 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup pimiento stuffed olives, thinly sliced
3 cups hot cooked brown rice
1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted

In large skillet, over medium-high heat, sauté turkey, onion, green pepper and garlic until turkey is no longer pink. Stir in sugar, cinnamon, cumin, cloves, tomatoes, apple, raisins and olives. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 to 20 minutes. Serve over cooked rice and top with toasted almonds.

Nutrition information (per serving): 302 calories, 11g fat (2g saturated), 60mg cholesterol, 469mg sodium, 35g carbs, 4g fiber, 8g sugars, 18g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy National Turkey Federation



Chipotle beef picadillo

(6 servings)

2 tablespoons pure olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green or red pepper, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 pound extra-lean ground beef
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
1/3 cup dark or golden raisins
1 tablespoon drained capers
1/2 cup green olives with pimiento
1 to 2 tablespoons chopped chipotle chilies in adobo sauce
3 cups hot cooked rice

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and pepper. Cook 3 minutes. Stir in garlic. Add beef, oregano, cumin and salt. Cook, stirring, 4 to 5 more minutes, until meat is no longer pink. Stir in remaining ingredients except rice. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and cook 5 minutes. Remove lid and cook 5 minutes more to blend flavors. Serve over rice.

Nutrition information (per serving): 301 calories, 14g fat (4g saturated), 66mg cholesterol, 734mg sodium, 23g carbs, 3g fiber, 10g sugars, 24g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy North American Olive Oil Association

Spicy picadillo olive triangles

(8 triangles)

12 ounces lean ground beef or turkey
1/4 teaspoon salt
1-1/2 tablespoons minced jalapeno peppers
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1/2 cup sliced California ripe (black) olives
1/2 cup canned chopped tomatoes, strained
1/3 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
17-ounce package frozen puffed pastry dough, thawed
1 large egg, beaten

1. In a large pan over medium-high heat, brown ground meat with salt. Stir in peppers and garlic, cook an additional 2 minutes. Stir in olives, tomatoes, raisins, cilantro and vinegar. Remove from heat.

2. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Roll out pastry dough into two 10-inch squares. Cut each square into quarters to create eight equal squares. Brush each pastry square with beaten egg, then top with approximately 1/2 cup of beef mixture. Fold in half into triangular shapes, lifting one corner of the dough over the filling and stretching gently to completely enclose. Using fork tines, crimp edges to tightly seal each pastry.



3. Place pastries on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake 15 to 20 minutes.

Testers note: Delicious with chipotle chiles in adobo in place of jalapeno.

Nutrition information (per triangle): 446 calories, 29g fat (7g saturated), 60mg cholesterol, 500mg sodium, 34g carbs, 2g fiber, 5g sugars, 13g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy California Olive Committee. More at CalOlive.org.

Cooking with Ireland's first lady of food

Darina Allen has frequently been called the Julia Child of Ireland.

Her Ballymaloe Cookery School, opened in 1983, is a destination for serious cooks, food travelers and culture seekers from around the globe. Allen founded the school on the grounds of a 100-acre organic farm near the Ballymaloe House, a hotel and restaurant her parents started in 1964, based on her mother Myrtle's early and enduring farm-to-table cooking methods.

Allen is credited with elevating Ireland's culinary profile, celebrating its produce, cheeses, sea-foods and other ingredients.

"Seriously Delicious" was first published 30 years ago to accompany what was then Allen's fledgling TV cooking

show of the same name. It was a record-breaking success, selling more than 115,000 copies in its first year of publication.

"The Classic Collection" features 100 re-published and updated recipes. With several recipes the Ballymaloe restaurant included, this is a cookbook that fully exploits the dairy products fortified by Ireland's emerald-green pastures. Butter, cheese, milk or cream appear in nearly every recipe. A traditional Irish salad has cream dressing, and the bacon in an avocado salad is fried in clarified butter. Allen does offer olive oil as an alternative to butter in some cases, and rich dairy is offset by vegetables in soups, salads and stews.

The featured fish pie is named for a local fishing village, and Allen says she varies its seafood ingredients based on the catch. Omit mussels if they are not available, she advises.



Ballycotton fish pie

(8 servings)

2-1/2 pounds cod, haddock, hake, grey sea mullet fillets, or a mixture
4 tablespoons salted butter, divided
2-1/2 cups whole milk
4 ounces cooked and peeled small shrimp
4 ounces cooked shelled mussels, optional
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
4 to 6 ounces Irish Cheddar cheese, shredded, or 4 ounces grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley
1 cup fresh white bread crumbs
3-1/4 cups fluffy mashed potato
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Skin fish and cut in portions. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper. Grease a sauté pan with 1 tablespoon of the butter, lay fish pieces in it. Cover with milk, bring to a boil, then simmer until the fish has changed color, 4 to 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, remove fish to round a baking dish. Scatter shrimp and mussels (if using) on top. Reserve the milk.

2. In a saucepan, melt 1 tablespoon of the butter and sprinkle flour over it. Shake pan to distribute evenly. Cook for 2 minutes over low heat. Whisk in reserved milk and bring to boil, whisking until thickened to a light coating consistency. Stir in mustard, two-thirds of the cheese and parsley. Season with salt and pepper.

3. In a skillet, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter and stir in bread crumbs. Remove from the heat immediately and let cool.

4. Pour sauce over seafood. Pipe fluffy



mashed potato in swirls on top. (Mashed potatoes also may be formed into soft balls and spooned atop the filling.) Mix remaining cheese with crumbs and sprinkle over pie. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until heated through and the top is golden brown and crispy.

Nutrition information (per haddock serving): 640 calories, 39g fat (22g saturated), 204mg cholesterol, 814mg sodium, 29g carbs, 3g fiber, 5g sugars, 43g protein

— Adapted from "Simply Delicious" by Darina Allen (Kyle Books, \$27.99)



Ballymaloe coffee ice cream

(6 servings)

2 large organic egg yolks
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 teaspoons instant coffee granules
16 ounces heavy cream, softly whipped

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk egg yolks until light and fluffy.

2. In a small, heavy-bottom saucepan, combine sugar and 1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons cold water. Stir over low heat until sugar is completely dissolved. Increase heat and boil until syrup reaches "thread" stage, about 225 to 235 degrees. (It will look thick and syrupy, and when a metal spoon is dipped in, the last drops of syrup will form thin threads.)

3. Pour boiling syrup in a steady stream into egg yolks, whisking continuously with a wire whisk. Continue to whisk until mixture fluffs into a thick, creamy mousse that will hold a figure eight. Stir in extract.

4. In a small bowl, mix instant coffee with 3/4 teaspoon boiling water. Add some of the mousse to coffee paste, then fold coffee mixture into remaining mousse. Carefully fold in 2-1/2 cups of whipped cream. Pour into a stainless steel or plastic bowl, cover and freeze. To serve, scoop ice cream into bowls and top with sauce.

Irish coffee sauce: In a heavy-bottom saucepan, combine 3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar with 1/3 cup water. Stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves and water comes to a boil.

Remove spoon and do not stir again until the syrup turns a pale golden color. Then add 1 cup strong coffee or espresso and return to the heat to dissolve. Let cool and add 1 tablespoon Irish whiskey. Sauce keeps brilliantly up to 3 months without being refrigerated.

Tester's note: Measure out all ingredients before starting. Keep a small pot of water boiling hot to fully dissolve instant coffee.

Nutrition information (per serving, without topping): 291 calories, 27g fat (17g saturated), 165mg cholesterol, 29mg sodium, 11g carbs, 0g fiber, 8g sugars, 2g protein

— From "Simply Delicious" by Darina Allen (Kyle Books, \$27.99); reprinting authorized.

HOME THEATER

Watchin' o' the green for St. Pat's



'Brooklyn' (2015)

In John Crowley's "Brooklyn," Eilis (Saoirse Ronan) is an unassuming girl from tight-knit Enniscorthy who emigrates to America in the 1950s. Life is not exactly terrible in Enniscorthy, but there is financial pain and a dearth of opportunity.

She leaves behind a mother (Jane Brennan) who seems distraught but unable to express it, and a sister (Fiona Glasscott) who, though heartbroken, knows this is the right move.

The voyage is a brutal one; she learns a bitter lesson not to eat when rough seas are predicted. Eilis lands in Brooklyn, and little by little becomes Americanized — *somewhat*, anyway. She meets an attentive Italian boy (Emory Cohen) who attends Irish dances because, well, he likes Irish girls.

Eilis' new life in America moves bumpily along, until one day, her old life in Ireland comes calling. "Brooklyn" feels simultaneously like an epic about Irish emigration, and a small story about a young woman facing tough life choices.



'Shake Hands With the Devil' (1959)

In his third-to-last movie before retiring from the screen, James Cagney recaptures the old fire in Michael Anderson's "Shake Hands With the Devil," a tale of the Irish resistance set in 1921 Dublin based on a novel by Rearden Conner.

Don Murray co-stars as the American son of Irish-born parents who returns to Ireland to study surgery under Cagney. Meanwhile, England has enlisted the iron-fisted Black and Tans to keep order, resulting in much bloodshed. Murray has no intention to join the Irish Republican Army, but is drawn into the conflict. After a nighttime skirmish, he learns that Cagney is an unlikely commandant of the IRA.

Cagney's portrayal is nuanced in that he initially seems level-headed and heroic, but as events unfold, a darker, more complex figure emerges. The star seems right at home during some intense shootouts, and his affected Irish brogue is only occasionally betrayed by his Lower East Side rat-a-tat.



'The Luck of the Irish' (1948)

When an impatient American journalist (Tyrone Power) is stranded in an Irish village, he comes across a strange old gent (Cecil Kellaway) cobbling a shoe beneath a waterfall — he *must* be a leprechaun, say the locals — in Henry Koster's romantic fantasy "The Luck of the Irish." Power also meets the fetching young daughter (Anne Baxter) of an innkeeper.

Back in America, Power is hired as a publicist by a wealthy, manipulative publisher (Lee J. Cobb) who decides to run for office. This arrangement is just fine with Cobb's daughter (Jayne Meadows), who has dug her well-manicured nails into Power. Marriage to Meadows, and servitude to her father, seems like the path Power has resigned himself to — that is, until a new manservant shows up on Power's doorstep. Yep, it's Kellaway, who denies ever having met Power in Ireland.

"The Luck of the Irish" is good, old, cliché-ridden fluff — the kind that makes our relations in the old country cringe.



'Knute Rockne All American' (1940)

Long a staple of St. Pat's Day viewing, Lloyd Bacon's "Knute Rockne All American" has a Norwegian as its title character.

Pat O'Brien wears a false nose as the legendary coach who guided Notre Dame to three national championships. The film opens as Rockne's father (John Qualen) moves the family from Norway to Chicago, where young Knute (Johnny Sheffield) falls in love with the American game of football.

Rockne is older than the average student at Notre Dame, where he studies chemistry and becomes captain of the football team. He chooses football over chemistry as his life's calling, with the blessing of his wizened dean (Donald Crisp).

As Notre Dame's coach, Rockne spots raw talent in the person of George Gipp (Ronald Reagan). Yep, this is the movie in which — spoiler alert — Reagan delivers the death-bed line, "Win just one for the Gipper." The nickname "the Gipper" followed Reagan all the way to the White House.



'The Fighting 69th' (1940)

The story of a colorful Irish regiment in the U.S. Army during World War I, William Keighley's "The Fighting 69th" is one of a group of jingoistic war movies released as America's avoidance of the growing war in Europe was hotly debated. ("Sergeant York" is another famous example.)

James Cagney stars as Jerry Plunkett, a wise guy who joins the 69th for the wrong reasons; he dreams of returning home "covered in medals," but rejects the camaraderie and discipline of the 69th. Pat O'Brien plays Father Francis P. Duffy, who believes in Plunkett even as every man in the regiment turns against him, including the no-nonsense captain (George Brent) and the blustery sergeant (Alan Hale).

Comic relief is provided by Sammy Cohen as Mischa Moskowitz, who puts on an Irish accent and calls himself Mike Murphy to join the 69th. Jeffrey Lynn plays Joyce Kilmer, the New Brunswick poet and 69th member who died in battle.



'Irish Luck' (1939)

Howard Bretherton's comedy-mystery "Irish Luck" is one in a series of films starring diminutive Frankie Darro as a boisterous youth with a penchant for getting into hot water, and comic Mantan Moreland as his jittery wingman.

Darro plays Buzzy O'Brien, a hotel bellhop who has taken up amateur sleuthing in the hopes of becoming a detective.

When a murder occurs at the hotel, Buzzy learns that the No. 1 suspect — a young woman in a floral dress named Kitty (Sheila Darcy) — is innocent, and sets out to clear her.

Buzzy smuggles Kitty home to his mother (Lillian Elliott), who is initially standoffish. But once she learns that Kitty's surname is Monahan, Mrs. O'Brien welcomes Kitty and likewise casts doubt on the accusation. Coos Mrs. O'Brien in her bog-thick brogue: "The murder? With a name like Monahan? Well, then, she must have some good reason."

— Mark Voger, MarkVoger.com

House work

For more than 4 million Americans, at least half their week involves working from home, and that number is rising.

“Working from home is a way of life for many Americans, and home office furnishings are evolving to support the needs of this modern workforce,” says Jackie Hirschhaut, spokeswoman for the American Home Furnishings Alliance.

According to a 2016 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, 60 percent of U.S. companies offer employees some sort of telecommuting opportunity — a three-fold increase from 1996. Home also is the primary workplace for millions of Americans who run small businesses.

U.S. furniture makers are now producing home office furnishings attractive enough to suit any room, and with exciting new innovations from standing desks to heated chairs.

“There is no reason to monopolize the family’s kitchen table or to cram your work into a re-purposed student desk,” Hirschhaut says, discussing the increasing number of furnishings that make it easier to stay organized and on task.

Multifunctional desks are designed for modern electronics, offering integrated cord management. But these next-generation work areas go beyond integrated USB ports and charging stations to feature ergonomic controls that also make work easier on the body. Adjustable and programmable height settings facilitate a comfortable sit-to-stand work area.

Many manufacturers offer bookcases, credenzas, accent tables, file storage and media consoles that coordinate with work desks. The range of styles includes classic designs as well as those with chic combinations of wood, acrylic, glass and metal. This variety allows home office pieces to be integrated into any living space while also offering design continuity in the increasingly popular open-floor-plan home.



Fully outfitted: The Oxford home office collection from Gat Creek includes a corner desk with an electric lift that rises its top from 28 to 47 inches to allow seated or standing use. Each piece is made to order in West Virginia from solid Appalachian hardwood and shipped fully assembled. Available in nine finishes, the collection includes other desks, bookcases and cabinets.



Neutral color schemes support concentration and focus, typically needed in home offices.

Paint and the home office

When decorating a home office it’s a good idea to avoid brighter, more distracting paint colors, advises Andrea Magno, Benjamin Moore’s color and design expert.

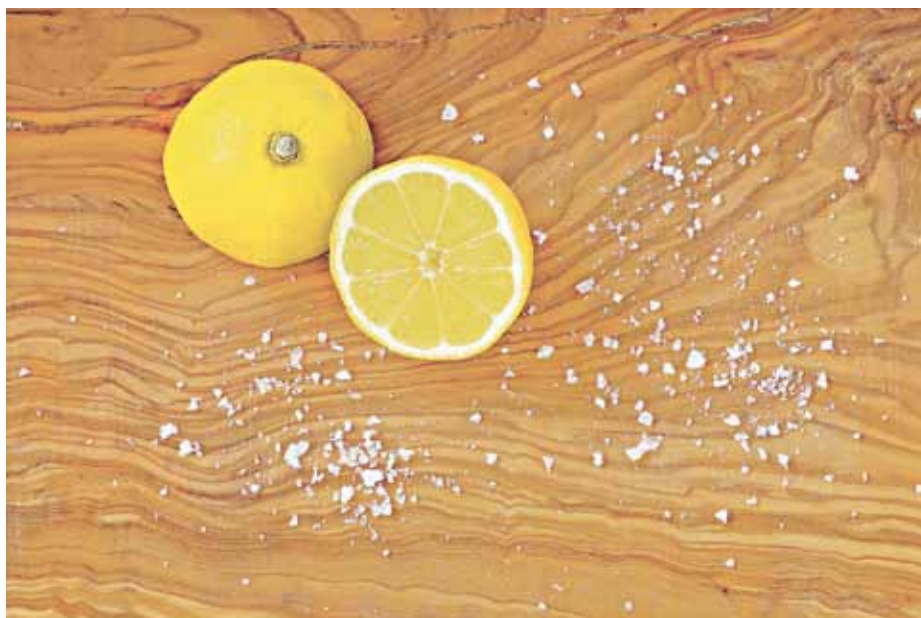
While our response to color is subjective, using neutrals, blues and greens will create a backdrop for pin boards, shelving and art without being too loud for a space where concentration is crucial, she says. “Matte or eggshell finishes will give a soft, low-sheen that works very well in an office,” she says. “If you have built-in bookcases, this is an

opportunity to use a higher sheen,” she says. Add personality by using a different color on shelves or other architectural details, such as molding, or on an accent wall. Then use the same color in art and decorative accessories.

Proper lighting is another essential design feature that is often overlooked for home offices. To ensure lighting is functional while visually complementing a selected wall color, Magno suggests using a balance of desktop task lighting and ambient lighting, which includes the overhead fixtures and floor lamps.



Asian details add high style to function in Fine Furniture Design’s leather-top Prosperity desk.



Deirdre Rooney

Lemons have many uses in natural cleaning. With salt, they can disinfect a cutting board.

Treading lightly on Earth

'Natural Home Cleaning'

(Hardie Grant, \$19.99)

Numerous authors have given us recipes to mix natural home cleaning products, but none quite like Fern Green.

Her book "Natural Home Cleaning" gives us strong visuals along with the more than 100 eco-friendly cleaning blends. Green is a food stylist in the U.K., and the book has an appetizing aesthetic for this image-driven age. Her formulations cover bathroom, kitchen, bedroom and other household areas, cleaning without strong chemicals.

Essential oils give fragrance to laundry tablets, fizzing toilet cleaners and the solution for jar-stored towel wipes.

We learned about binchotan charcoal sticks here. Green suggests the slender rods of this wood charcoal used in Japanese grilling to absorb odors from the air and fridge, moisture from walls and basements, and impurities from drinking water.

One challenge: Recipes list ingredients in ounces rather than the easier to manage teaspoons, tablespoons and cups.



'Waste Not'

(Rhoads, Hardie Grant, \$24.99)

There was a time when Erin Rhoads would not have thought twice about shrink-wrapped vegetables, take-out containers, disposable single-serve coffee cups, or what happens to all those obsolete electronic devices.

Things changed when she learned about sea birds who mistake discarded plastics for food, consume them and feed them to their young. This would be the start of a journey that has led to Rhoads becoming a prominent advocate and practitioner of zero-waste living.

While she makes her own cosmetics and avoids the "fast fashion" of cheaply made, throw-away clothing, her advice to readers is gentle and without judgment. With her guidance, making a difference starts with awareness and taking the first small steps to reduce waste at home and in life.

Every year, the average household produces enough garbage to fill a three-bedroom house. Included are hundreds of dollars worth of food and an ever-increasing amount of plastic that takes centuries to break down, often ending up in oceans and our food chain.

Rhoads has written about her successes and failures since 2013 on her blog, The Rogue Ginger, a colloquial reference to her red hair. The book, printed with soy-based inks on sustainable and recyclable paper, covers helpful practices and getting started, with a focus on waste generated from food and kitchen, cleaning, beauty, entertaining and events.



ABOUT THE HOUSE

Seal up to protect home

Bricks crumbling in basement

Q. Six years ago we purchased a "walk in" condo. The building is about 100 years old. It was converted into eight condos

25+ years ago.

This is the basement condo with an inside entrance and an entrance from the outside.

In the first few months, we noticed crumbling of the brick on the wall facing what would be front yard and would technically be underground. After



HENRI DE MARNE

putting in a dehumidifier the crumbling stopped. Other brick walls in other parts of the condo, both painted and unpainted, were not crumbling. We are now looking to sell the condo and need to do something about the wall. Is there a way to patch the wall so it would not crumble in the future?

A. The damage your photos show is caused by moisture. It sounds as if the grade outside this wall facing the front yard may be too flat or negative (slanting toward the building), which allows moisture to collect and seep into that wall.

The wall's waterproofing, if any was attempted, has not successfully kept out the moisture. The bricks have absorbed the moisture, which caused disintegration of the bricks, the mortar and the face coating that was applied over the bricks.

For a longer-lasting repair, but not an absolute cure that would require expensive exterior repairs, correct any grade deficiencies in order for the soil to dry. This will require raising the grade to direct water away from the foundation, and encouraging a healthy stand of grass to draw moisture out of the ground.

A mason should be able to scrape off the bricks, perform the necessary tuck-pointing and face repairs of the damaged bricks and apply a coating to match the existing. Hopefully, there will be no need to replace bricks that are too badly damaged.

Caulking around fireplace

Q. The cold weather over the past winter caused a great draft from the space between the brick fireplace and the abutting wood. The wood is part of the shelving. What would you recommend as a caulk or filler to stop this draft?

A. I assume that the crack is rather narrow and not too deep — only as deep as the thickness of the siding.

For a successful and lasting caulked joint, first make sure that both of the opposite surfaces are clean and free of loose material. You may need to use an old toothbrush to do this.

Then, very carefully, insert a backer rod, making sure that you do not break its skin. Select one of the right size to fit the crack, no bigger or smaller. Push the backer rod gently into the crack with a wooden stick, but only as deep as the width of the crack.

The purpose of the backer rod is to ensure that the caulking bead will adhere only to the opposite surfaces of the crack. It should not adhere to any material in the bottom of the crack, as the caulking compound should be allowed to stretch and compress without interference.

Use a polyurethane caulking compound and apply it to the crack, but don't overfill the crack. When done, tool the bead of caulking with a gloved finger dampened with water. The end result should be a bead that is slightly concave.

You should be able to buy a backer rod and polyurethane caulking in specialty masonry stores, and in large box stores in their masonry department.

I have used Sikaflex-1a for decades and consider it from experience to be the best polyurethane caulking/sealant compound. As far as I remember, it was the only product of this type available in the 1950s. Since then, other brands have been on the market, and I have tried a few, but I have always returned to Sikaflex-1a.

Some stores may carry essentially the same product with a slightly different name, such as Sikaflex Compound. You can also order from A. H. Harris, which is online at ahharris.com.

Pest control and energy-efficiency

Q. We want to bring in a seamless vapor barrier on the ground and up the foundation wall of our crawlspace where it meets closed cell spray foam. Spray foam is to be installed from the wall base to and including the sill plates and band joists. Termite companies want to keep the sill and band open while energy efficiency wants it closed. What would you recommend?

A. I would contact a local, family-owned pest control operator (as opposed to a national franchise), and ask them to treat with borate the sill and band joists, and whatever else they deem appropriate. This should eliminate any concerns about insect infestation. Then proceed as recommended by the energy efficiency specialists.

For more than 40 years, Henri de Marne has shared his expertise on residential construction, repairs and remodeling with readers of his nationally syndicated column. Contact the author and learn more at HenriDeMarne.com.



Getty Images

Your doctor is an important partner in staying healthy and active. Research is in order to select the best match.

Picking a doctor to sustain good health

A recent survey commissioned by the American Board of Medical Specialties found that four out of five people ranked board certification as an important factor when selecting a doctor, second only to whether the doctor is covered by their insurance.

Choosing a new doctor is an important decision that nearly everyone must make at one time or another, whether it relates to a move or the need to find a specialist after being diagnosed with a condition such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer.

When selecting a physician, you want to know the doctor is qualified so that you and your family will receive the best care. Board-certified doctors hold themselves to a higher standard and have demonstrated their knowledge and expertise in their specialty.

“Choosing a doctor is one of the most important decisions you’ll make regarding your health,” said Richard E. Hawkins, MD, president and chief executive officer, American Board of Medical Specialties (a not-for-profit organization overseeing physician certification in the United States). “Today’s patients have a greater expectation for quality. Board-certified physicians offer people confidence that their doctor has the specialized knowledge, skills and clinical judgment to provide the high-quality care they expect and deserve.”

Board certification is a recognized assessment system for specialty and sub-specialty expertise in medical, surgical and hospital disciplines. To be board certified, doctors successfully complete extensive training and assessment beyond that of their non-board certified peers.

Not all doctors are board certified. Board certification is voluntary, and more than 880,000 doctors in the United States are ABMS board certified in 40 specialties and 87 sub-specialties.

A simple search tool at CertificationMatters.org allows you to check if your doctor, or one you are considering, is board certified. This ABMS website includes information about how doctors earn board certification as well as its importance to quality care. Additional resources include links to prominent health care and consumer advocacy organizations.

When weed is not dope

Medical marijuana use is growing by as many as 100 patients a day, according to the New Jersey Department of Health. Adult recreational use is expected to be legalized once state legislators agree on how to tax and regulate it.

But not everyone who uses cannabis-derived products or their extracted compounds does so to get high. Plants classified as cannabis — the botanical name for marijuana, hemp and related species — can contain hundreds of distinct compounds, including phytonutrients and essential fatty acids.

Tetrahydrocannabinol, abbreviated as THC, is the element that stigmatizes marijuana. THC is the psychoactive agent responsible for the “lifted” feeling associated with marijuana use. However, another isolated compound — cannabidiol, or CBD — has no mood-altering effects. This extract is being used for pain, insomnia, muscle disorders, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions.

Last June, the FDA approved the CBD-based pharmaceutical Epidiolex, making it legal to prescribe in the treatment of two potentially fatal forms of childhood epilepsy. It is the first cannabis-derived drug to be FDA approved.

In November, Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation that allows licensed growing of industrial hemp, a cannabis plant that can be a source of CBD while containing negligible amounts of THC. The legislation establishes an agricultural pilot to be administered in partnership with Rutgers University “to study and promote the cultivation of industrial hemp to the maximum extent permitted by federal law.”

Industrial hemp also is grown for its fibers, which can be a source of paper, fabrics, biodegradable plastics and construction materials. Hemp seeds are consumed as a source of protein, Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, and other nutrients.

Any cannabis plant legally grown under New Jersey’s new hemp program cannot contain more than .03 percent THC.

“That is what makes it not an illegal drug,” says Brian Pinto, owner and head pharmacist at Tiffany Natural Pharmacy in Westfield. “If you have more than that percentage, you are dealing with an illegal drug.”

Pinto researched makers of several CBD products, which include oils, creams, salves and capsules. He settled on one brand, which customers find useful for a variety of conditions, including pain and itching associated with shingles. The company also makes CBD products for dogs, cats and horses.

Those who are interested in CBD formulations should talk with their doctor and pharmacist to determine if CBD

What is CBD?



It won’t get you “high”: CBD, short for cannabidiol, is among hundreds of compounds in cannabis plants, which include marijuana as well as the hemp plants whose fibers are used for textiles. CBD has been extracted for use in products that help with pain, inflammation, anxiety and other conditions, as an alternative to smoking marijuana or ingesting it in other forms.

would benefit them, Pinto advises. Supplements purchased from a pharmacy come with guidance from pharmacists who can advise on potential interactions with prescription medications. Reported side effects of CBD use have included drowsiness, dry mouth, low blood pressure, light headedness and decreased appetite.

With CBD products now sold through various sources, Pinto cautions that the FDA has been testing their content and finding that many don’t contain the CBD levels stated on their packaging. The products stocked at Tiffany Natural Pharmacy are batch-tested by independent laboratories to ensure accurate potency and consistency.

Keep out of reach of children

Sometimes a gummy bear is more than just candy.

In states where cannabis edibles are legal for medical or recreational use, it’s no wonder that keeping such products out of the hands of children is among regulatory challenges.

Edible cannabis products include cookies, chocolates, marshmallow-coated cereal snacks and a variety of gummy-type candies — all sweet forms attractive to children.

The Washington state Liquor and Cannabis Board was the first to require a warning label to identify cannabis-laced products. In an effort to prevent consumption by children, the label reads “Not For Kids” with a red hand signaling “STOP” and a 24-hour Poison Control hotline number.

In anticipation of more widespread legalization of marijuana use, “smokeless” cannabis products are on the rise. “The world of marijuana edibles is full of near-limitless possibilities,” one site proclaims. A bottled alcohol-free cocktail promises a quick, long-lasting buzz. Powdered extracts make



Gummy candies and snacks containing cannabis can represent dangerous temptation for the unsuspecting.

it possible to add marijuana to any food or beverage.

Legal cannabis edibles are typically required to be labeled with their CBD or THC content in milligrams, but laws vary among states. There still are risks associated with varying THC potency, and a potential for negative psychological effects among those unaccustomed to higher doses.

ASK DR. BARB

How to have the marijuana talk with teens

Dear Dr. Barb,

I am concerned about the prospect of legalized marijuana. Throughout my young life, I avoided it because it was considered a “gateway drug” that could lead to stronger drugs. I’m told that marijuana is not addictive, but I know people who seem to need to smoke it every day. I have never tried it, but I have actually had people tell me that marijuana can have health benefits. My concern is that legal weed will encourage younger people to try it and use it as a form of escape instead of dealing with their problems. I know some people use it for physical pain, but my concern is those who will use it to dull the emotional pain that signals a need to get psychological help or make life changes. Am I just a square who is out of touch with recent science? I would appreciate your insights on ways to talk with my children about a substance that was previously illegal now entering the mainstream.

Dear Reader,

I definitely understand your concerns about legalization of marijuana for recreational use by adults. Marijuana is now more potent than it was decades ago, and there are high-risk derivatives being made for use with the popular vaping devices.

The chemical changes in today’s marijuana pose serious risks to adolescent development. There is evidence that regular marijuana use during teen years can potentially damage cognitive processing and memory functions, resulting in a lower IQ.

Research has shown that teens around the age of 16 who start smoking marijuana daily can become dependent on it by age 18. Currently, the risk of addiction is one in ten for adult users; however, for teens, the risk rises to one in six. Moreover, withdrawal from routine marijuana use can cause bouts of depression, anxiety, insomnia and loss of appetite.

In general, current research shows that teens and young adults are more suscep-

tible to the negative effects of drug use. The adolescent brain is not fully developed. The prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls reasoning and impulses, does not fully mature until the age of 25, and for some even later. Due to this unevenness in brain development, many adolescents and young adults can be prone to poor planning and faulty judgment. As a result, they are more likely to engage in impulsive behaviors like experimenting with drugs and alcohol.

In his forthcoming book, “Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness and Violence,” former New York Times reporter Alex Berenson notes that mental illness is rising nationally with the sharpest increase among people ages 18 to 25, who also are the most likely to use marijuana.

Individuals with mental health concerns have higher rates of substance abuse because they tend to use drugs to distract from emotional distress instead of learning how to cope in healthier and safer ways. When they turn to marijuana, they are likely using a drug that is much more potent, with selective breeding and more advanced cultivation techniques.

In the 70s and 80s, marijuana was considered a relatively weak drug. At that time, the content of THC, a chemical compound responsible for marijuana’s psychological effects, was generally less than 5 percent. Marijuana now sold at legal dispensaries often has a THC content of 25 percent, and many people use extracts that are pure THC, according to Berenson. Added to these are high potency forms such as “dabs” or “wax,” where THC is highly concentrated.

With more potent marijuana and products containing high levels of THC, there has been a recent dramatic rise in psychosis and psychotic reactions in both medicinal and recreational use. Psychosis is a disorder characterized by abnormal mental content such as delusions, hallucinations and severe paranoia, as well as inappropriate mood, agitation and poor impulse control. Some reported cases

have required anti-psychotic medication with weeks in a psychiatric unit.

Benefits that some may receive from THC are often outweighed by physical risks. In a rapidly changing industry that still has players who won’t abide by laws and regulations, marijuana and its derivatives can include unknown components that present added risks.

Research from the Journal of the American Heart Association suggests that regular marijuana use can contribute to the possibility of a heart attack, including heart rhythm disorders and stroke even in young people who have no other cardiac risk factors.

While medical benefits are being discovered in certain compounds extracted from marijuana, more research is necessary. In the meantime, it is important to address concerns about marijuana use with teens because even occasional use can lead to risky behavior.

Conveying anger or panic, or using scare tactics and lecturing will result in their tuning you out and shutting down. On the other hand, by calmly showing open-mindedness and curiosity, a child interested in marijuana is less likely to feel judged or condemned.

There is a lot of misinformation online and among peers who encourage drug use. Approaching a conversation in this way, you can help your child learn to question sources and seek out factual information.

Your teen might say that marijuana is no big deal, as they only use it once in a while, or that you should be happy that they are not drinking alcohol. In a calm and curious way, you could say, “I am interested in knowing why you think weed is safer than alcohol.”

Showing respectful interest in his or her thought processes will help your child to be less defensive and feel safer opening up to you. Questions like these also will get them to think about their future and their priorities.

Of course, in some cases, it will be necessary to establish rules and consequences. Do not just assume children know you don’t want them to use illegal drugs or alcohol. Teens,



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and some young adults, do not deal well with gray areas, and when they are offered drugs or alcohol, they can become confused, especially when vulnerable to peer pressure.

Deep down, your child actually may want rules and to know that you care about his or her safety. Putting the rules in a written contract is a great way to make sure your child clearly understands the limits and any consequences that will follow. No one wants to be a mean parent, but the bottom line is that setting limits is about keeping kids safe.

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Make a plan to live the life of your dreams

By Diane Lang

Spring is the perfect time to reboot and take actions that help us move toward our goals. Here are nine ideas to help.

1. Take your time. Don’t try to do it all at once. Baby steps keep us moving forward without feeling overwhelmed.

2. Narrow it down. Start with one or two goals and give them your full attention. With too many goals, you spread yourself thin, become frustrated or feel like giving up. Make sure you have a realistic time frame

to accomplish your goals and give yourself enough time to accomplish them.

3. Write your goals down. Doing so makes us more likely to accomplish them. Share your goals with others who believe in you, and your chances go up even more.

4. Make an action plan. After writing out your goals, list at least two steps that can help you get there. These are the actions that push us in the right direction.

5. Ask why. What’s the reason you want to accomplish these goals? Staying focused on your “why” will keep you motivated when

you feel like giving up.

6. Re-evaluate your dreams. Every few months, ask yourself if your goals and action steps seem realistic. If you’ve accomplished them, start on new ones.

7. Find inspiration. Who is living your dream? Follow them on social media, read their books, listen to their podcasts and learn from them.

8. Take risks. With your action plan, think of risks you can take on a regular basis. When we take risks or step outside our comfort zone we can grow.

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