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A note of friendly warning: The Brits don't shy away from frank language and imagery, as any fan of PBS well knows.

Win the bundle: For a chance to win the DVDs, email Win@AtHomeNJ.com with name, address and phone number by April 24. Make "Mysteries" the subject, and tell us where you found your copy of At Home New Jersey to win.

Congratulations, Jan.-Feb. winners! M. Milonnet, Fanwood, wins Sheelen's \$75 gift card; J. Kim, Berkeley Heights, wins "The Perfect Kitchen;" F. Lombardi, Clark, wins the "Soupology" cookbook.

Family and fusion cooking

It all started with a salty dish of white beans and broccoli rabe at a Philadelphia kosher restaurant with Italian leanings. It was simple, unforgettable, garlicky comfort. My own rendition of it appeared around the winter holidays.

Then it was New Year's Day, when my Louisiana-born mother always said we had to eat black-eyed peas for good luck and "greens for greenbacks" (dollars). In reinforcing this family tradition rooted in Southern culture, I always tell a true story that goes like this: "One New Year's Day I ate greens for lunch at work, then I went outside and found a dollar on the sidewalk." I still remember the long-distance call I made to my mother to laugh about it.

This year, the tradition was adapted. With only canned black-eyed peas on hand (we usually cook frozen), and being out of range from a market that sells the mustard greens I prefer, it occurred to me that pungent broccoli rabe would be a fine stand-in for fierce-flavored mustards. (I share the result on Page 14.)

This is how "fusion" cooking begins. It is a wonderful outgrowth of exposure to other cultures. At certain Italian restaurants, the broccoli rabe has hit all the pleasure points of my mother's best mixed greens (collard, mustard and turnip). In both, the garlic is present — you can smell it — and there's a subtle meatiness.

In planning this issue, we thought about how living in New Jersey presents an opportunity to explore the foods of many cultures, and to learn that we sometimes use the same ingredients in different ways. Various Soul Food staples of the American South — black-eyed peas, collard greens and okra — are cooked in different ways in India, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

As in life, beginning with what we have in common makes it easy to become friends. And when we expand our family traditions to incorporate new experiences, we are enriched with stronger familial and cultural bonds, and the humorous lore of our shared past.

Kimberly L. Jackson, Editor@AtHomeNJ.com

AT HOME NEW JERSEY

THE BEST OF LIFE WHERE YOU LIVE

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On the cover: A garden bed lush with a mass planting of tuberous begonias. © Proven Winners

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Pet friendly

They do know what you mean

By Jan Hoole/TheConversation.com

Anyone who has lived with a dog will know their capacity for learning the meaning of words, even ones you don't want them to know. How many times have you had to spell "walk" or "dinner" in the hope of avoiding an explosion of excitement?

Previous studies have investigated how non-human animals, including sea lions, chimpanzees and rhesus monkeys, learn words. But now a paper published in *Nature* shows some dogs learn the name of a new object after hearing it only four times, an ability previously thought to be confined to humans. The researchers found this ability was not common among all the dogs studied, instead it may be limited to a few "talented" or highly trained individuals.

Easy to replicate

So how can you tell if your own dog is a genius? The study was simple, and easy to replicate at home. Just follow the steps the researchers took to see whether your dog can learn the names of objects as quickly. But don't worry if your dog doesn't have this ability. It might just be down to its breed or previous experience.

The new study involved a collie called Whisky, who knew 59 objects by name, and a Yorkshire terrier called Vicky Nina, who knew 42 toys.

The researchers tested each dog's knowledge of their toys by asking them to bring each toy in turn. Neither the owners nor the experimenters could see the toys, to avoid influencing the dogs' choices.

Once it was established the dogs knew the names of their toys, researchers introduced two new objects, placing each in turn in a group of known toys. In this test, Whisky chose the new toy every time. Vicky Nina fetched the right one in 52.5 percent of trials, which is slightly above chance.

For the next part of the study, the dog was shown a toy, told its name and then allowed to play with it. After four repetitions of the name of two different new toys, the dog was asked to choose one of the two new toys.

No familiar toys were included in this part of the trial, to prevent the dog choosing the right toy by exclusion. (If it knows the name of all other toys, the dog might pick the correct toy because it guesses the unfamiliar word must indicate the unfamiliar toy.)

Both dogs chose the new toy more often than chance would predict, suggesting they were indeed learning the name of a new object very quickly. However, their memory decayed considerably after 10 minutes,



Patricia Alexandre

In several studies, border collies were among dog breeds demonstrating an ability to learn names of toys and many other objects.

and almost completely after one hour. This shows new learning needs more reinforcement if it is to be retained.

The test involving the new toy was also carried out by 20 volunteers with their own dogs, but these dogs didn't show the ability to learn new names after few hearings.

Combination of factors

The authors suggested the difference between the performance of the two dogs in their test and the volunteer dogs means, in order to learn new names quickly, the dog might need to be unusually intelligent or to have a lot of experience in learning names.

It seems likely there are a combination of factors at work in these experiments. It's significant that the breed most commonly used in studies of this type is a border collie, which is purposefully bred to attend to audible commands and is very highly motivated to carry out tasks and to please the handler. Yorkshire terriers also enjoy mental and physical stimulation.

Similar tests have been carried out by other research groups, usually using border collies. In 2004, a dog called Rico was found to know the names of 200 different objects, and in 2011, Chaser learned 1,022

unique objects. Other breeds may simply be less interested in playing with or fetching toys. For example, sight hounds, such as salukis and greyhounds, are primarily bred for hunting or racing, so are generally more difficult to train. They may show no interest in toys, and be considerably less motivated to please the handler.

Both experimental dogs in this study were intensively trained through play and social interaction to pay attention to the names and characteristics of the toys. This might make them more likely to notice the differences between new and familiar toys, and to attend to the verbal cue associated with them.

Although their training was not formal, it was nevertheless positive reinforcement training, a powerful method for teaching animals and humans.

It's quite possible to teach all dogs to perform tasks, including learning the names of objects. But the degree to which they're willing and able to learn and to carry out the task is regulated by breed and the level of motivation the individual dog possesses.

If your pet is an Afghan hound or a Saint Bernard, you should not expect it to be interested in spending hours fetching toys. If, on the other hand, you have a border

collie or a poodle, their abilities may only be limited by your imagination and your dedication to playing with them.

Jan Hoole, PhD, is program director for biology at Keele University in England.

Teach your pup

On March 11 at 1 p.m., certified dog behavior consultant Karen Fazio will discuss how dogs process and respond to our verbal and nonverbal cues. Her hour-long course "How to Speak Dog: Communicating More Effectively with Your Domesticated Dog" is among Rutgers Pet Care School online courses. Fazio (TheDogSuperNanny.com) will share ways to reinforce desired behaviors and stop undesirable ones.

On March 18 from 1 to 2 p.m., Fazio will present "Case Studies in Canine Fear and Aggression," and discuss ways to manage growling, barking, snarling, lunging, snapping, biting and other aggressive behavior most often rooted in fear. The fee is \$35 for each course. See Rutgers online courses and register early at www.cpe.Rutgers.edu.



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Noo Shimizu

A spray cleaner is made from fresh orange peels and water by author Yumiko Sekine.

Living with less

“Simplicity at Home” might be summed up as living with fewer, more beautiful things, and making intensive use of one’s resources. In her book of that title (Chronicle Books, \$27.50), Yumiko Sekine, founder of the housewares and clothing company Fog Linen Work, looks at how old linen sheets can be recycled, or how a tired dress is refreshed when dyed a new color.

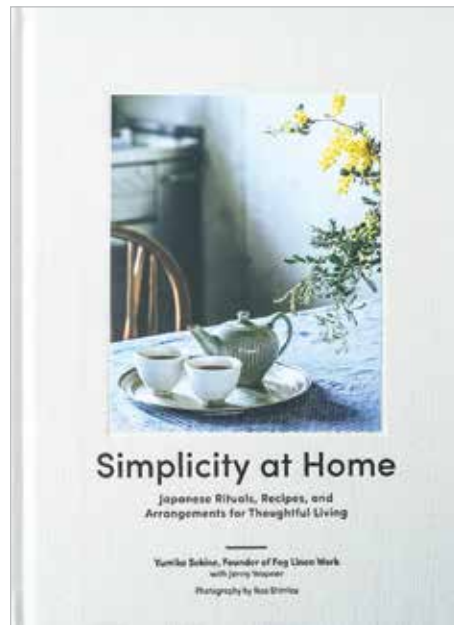
Her suggestions are divided by season, and focus mostly on ideas to set up and keep up a home. She discusses her first exposure to very expensive linen sheets from Ireland. She bought them at 25 years old after having read of a man in Italy who washed out his bed linens every morning so he’d sleep on fresh sheets each night.

“I thought that sounded like the most luxurious life, and I wanted to try it myself,” she writes. After more than 25 years, she says she still has those sheets. They’ve been recycled into curtains, with remaining strips woven into a table runner. “There are endless uses for beautiful fabric that has outlived its intended use,” she writes.

Many Americans would likely have trouble with the cultural shift that would be required to live in a home with bare concrete walls or broken ceramic tableware with obvious mending lines. The book includes instructions to make such repairs. It is the art of *kintsugi* (appreciating imperfection).

Perhaps more accessible are Sekine’s recipes (okra, kabocha squash and edamame tempura with the dipping sauce *somen*), or her discussion of Japanese bathing rituals, and guidance to plant an outdoor oasis.

Among the book’s numerous projects are



carving one’s own wooden spoons, serving forks and spatulas. It’s easier to mix her bath salts, make a Christmas wreath or grow plants from produce scraps and seeds.

In the section on *oosouji*, (cleaning and letting go unwanted things) she makes a spray cleaner from fragrant orange peels.

Here’s how: To a saucepan, add 1/2 cup of water for the peel of each orange. Boil and then simmer 15 minutes. Transfer to a spray bottle once cool. Use within a month.

Orange peels have an oil called limonene, which she says can cut through grease and condition wood surfaces. The malic acid of apple peels also makes them efficient cleaning agents, Sekine says.

It’s in the pocket



Eugenio Piazza

In bathrooms, pocket doors make room for dreams. A traditional door would have bumped into the double vanity cabinet in this renovation by Heavy J Construction.



Heavy J Construction

Repeat clients requested a barn-style door between the kitchen and a new bedroom in their Springfield home. It was customized as a locking privacy door.



Photos courtesy Johnson Hardware

Many door styles can be installed to slide into a wall, attractively conserving floor space. Above right, the framework for a pocket door that separates kitchen from home office.

Sliding doors save space beautifully

The doors that give us privacy and quiet typically require 12 to 14 square feet of floor space to swing open. In a bathroom, that could interfere with the placement of a larger shower enclosure, a spa tub or that double vanity cabinet.

Enter pocket doors, a space-saving alternative that can be installed to slide open into an existing wall.

Pocket doors are similar to the popular barn-style doors that slide along a wall-mounted track to open and close. With pocket doors, the hardware they slide along is inside a wall, and the open door can be fully concealed within.

Like traditional doors, pocket doors can be solid wood, metal or other materials. Some are outfitted with glass panels that let in light, and they can resemble chic French

doors, rustic paneled doors, or even Japanese *shoji* screens.

“It’s a regular slab door, and you can get any style or thickness you want,” says Joseph Augis, owner of Heavy J Construction in Linden. He has built custom pocket-door designs, including a system where double doors with leaded glass panels are flanked by built-in shelving.

For that project, in Springfield, it was cost-effective to build a new wall in front of the original. The addition took only 3 inches of space along the wall’s length, Augis said.

“Usually, we open up a regular wall, and everything gets sheetrocked in,” he said. That was the case when he installed a pocket door to close off a laundry room in Mountainside, and, in Harding Township, to preserve as

much square footage as possible in a bathroom renovation.

“It can range from \$2,000 to \$3,000 to put in a pocket door with all the framing,” Augis says. Finding wiring or ductwork inside a wall would push a project to the more costly end, he said. “It all depends on what we have to do.”

The typical wall cavity is about 5 inches wide, and a pocket door can slide into that space to enclose a linen closet or a water closet, which houses a toilet, and sometimes a sink, in a small alcove within a luxurious bathroom.

In open-floor-plan homes, larger pocket doors are being installed as an option to temporarily enclose private space.

Call Heavy J Construction for your installation estimate. See the image gallery of ideas at JohnsonHardware.com.

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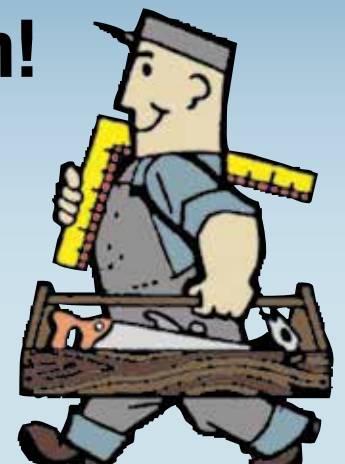
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Begonias: Spillers, fillers, thrillers



Basket beauties: There are begonias for nearly every planting situation, from terrariums to window sills to garden beds or container gardens. “Bertinii” is among begonias that flower on pendulous stems. Like many tuberous begonias, this easy-to-grow hybrid prefers partial shade, and is among types that can be started early indoors from its tubers.



Tuberous tumblers: Names like “Falls” and “Cascade” are clues that a begonia is a trailing type. *Cascade odorosa* begonias offer rose-like double blooms with the bonus of fragrance. Some types have both upright and pendulous flowers on the same plant. In many colors, masses of them are stunning when spilling over large vessels. In containers, keep in mind that many begonias won’t thrive if crowding prevents sufficient airflow. To start begonias from tubers, get guidance at Lakewood-based Longfield-Gardens.com.



Nursery plants: Waterfall Encato series begonias (available at Williams Nursery) grow 12 to 18 inches tall with bell-shaped, single blooms in white, red, pink or orange, blooming late spring through early fall. Types with downward-facing blooms, including Bonfire, BossaNova, Bertinii, Santa Cruz and other *begonia boliviensis* plants, are best for hanging baskets and tall or elevated planters. Many hybrid begonias descend from species plants native to mountains and cliffs in Bolivia and elsewhere in tropical South America. Among desired characteristics, begonias are bred to tolerate a range of sun or shade.



New hybrid: Attract compliments, butterflies and hummingbirds with ‘Funky’ begonia’s showy pink, radiant orange or red blooms. Shown on our cover, it’s a shade-loving cross that includes *begonia boliviensis*. Plants are available from ProvenWinners.com.

Begonias as houseplants

Houseplants can be graceful decorative objects or living air enhancers that bring in the outdoors, collector's items or quiet but colorful friends.

Within the begonia family, there are numerous shade-loving specimens that can live happily indoors all year, or be brought in for protection over winter. Their exuberant leaf patterns, colors, shapes and textures have captivated plant collectors as well as the casual nursery shopper.

Many foliage-forward types are cane begonias, which have tough stems that resemble bamboo, and rhizomatous types. The wide range of rhizomatous begonias can have more substantial flowers than other indoor types.

Most of plants shown are Rex begonias in the Jurassic series, and many are available at Williams Nursery in Westfield. (More houseplants sold at WilliamsNursery.com).



'Red Splash'



'Green Streak'



'Silver Swirl'



Photos courtesy Proven Winners

Indoor-outdoor: Flanking the tall Pegasus begonia (a gryphon or cane type) is the lush Polka Dot Plant at left. In the card catalog drawers is Creeping Wire Vine. Like the begonia, these plants can grow well in lower-light indoor conditions, making them adaptable as houseplants.



David Williams, fourth generation

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Varieties

Begonias are among the world's most exciting plants. They grow and flower in shady places, and many are happy indoors and outdoors. They range from a few inches tall to more than 2 feet high. There are types for hanging baskets, window boxes, huge planters and garden beds. Some have leaves so gorgeous they compete with flowers. And when Bambi goes browsing, he's likely to pass on the begonias.

"The range of begonia flowers, foliage colors and sizes is incredibly diverse and spectacular," according to the American Begonia Society. "Begoniaceae is one of the largest flowering plant families with about 1,500 different species and hundreds of hybrids." Increasingly, hybrids are bred for greater sun tolerance, longer bloom season, and more options in flower and leaf shapes, colors and sizes.

Experienced gardeners grow begonias from tiny seeds, from tubers or from cuttings, depending on the species. Glossy-leaved wax begonias are a bedding favorite, and the impressive flowers of upright and trailing tuberous varieties can resemble roses, camelias or smaller flowers.

A begonia for every pot

For those new to begonia growing, David Williams of Williams Nursery suggests sturdy, full-flowered plants from the Dragon Wing series, which he has previously selected for municipal planters around Westfield.

These high-performance plants, named for their leaf shape, can grow up to 18 inches tall with showy, summer-blooming clusters of pink, red or white flowers.

"The Dragon Wing begonia seems to have become extremely popular because it is so versatile," Williams says. "It doesn't matter if it's in sun or shade. It can dry out or be too wet. I've tried changing to a different variety, been disappointed and then gone back to them."

Still, he notes Dragon Wings can be overused — especially with so many other begonias to try. Williams Nursery will carry nearly 200 types of begonias, including many that are grown primarily as houseplants.

"You can also grow them outside in containers and bring them in for the winter. They have always been popular, but with the houseplant craze, they are becoming more popular indoors for a larger group of people," Williams says.

For flower lovers, tuberous begonias offer a mind-boggling variety of options. Some have been crossed with wax begonias to tolerate more sun and to flower in cooler temperatures. (Tuberous begonias usually bloom in summer.)

The ideal place to grow most? "If you have a porch that gets morning sun, that would be great," Williams says.

"Then it is protected from the late afternoon sun, which is the hottest of the day." Another good spot is in the shade of trees, where plants get filtered light. Getting the right balance of sun and shade is the challenge. "The more sun, the better the flowers," he says. "But sometimes the foliage can scorch a little with too much sun." His tip for sunnier spots: "If you use a type with darker foliage, they can tolerate more direct sun." Or try a hybrid bred to take sun.

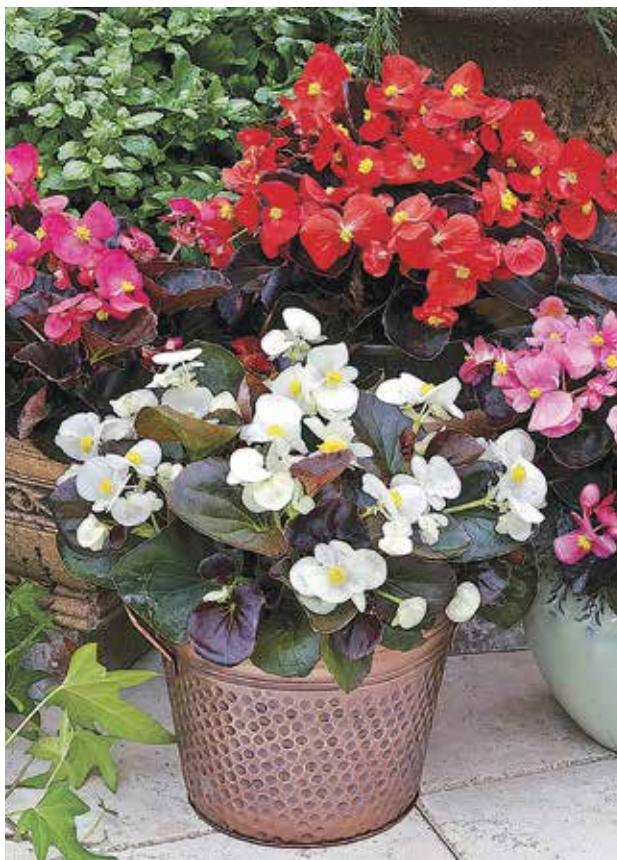
Beyond that, it's a matter of deciding which begonias to grow. "The height range is typically 10 to 15 inches, but there are some compact types and some larger types," Williams says. "Some of the begonias do well mixed in with other plants." For those who use the "fillers, spillers and thrillers" rule for container garden, he likes the begonia 'Pegasus' as a taller central "thriller," or as a houseplant.

Whatever begonia you choose, Williams has a final tip: "Just make sure you don't overwater." It's easier to kill a begonia with too much water than with too little. In pots, water only after the top inch of soil has dried out.



Courtesy Proven Winners

Garden favorite: Nonstop (tuberous) begonias have flowers in many colors, and sizes from 2 to 8 inches in diameter, with green or bronze leaves. The 'Fire' mix shown is among begonias with contrasting picotee or "lace" edges. Look for 'Rose Petticoat' (white blooms with pink edges) among Nonstop begonias at Williams Nursery or ProvenWinners.com.



Courtesy Syngenta Flowers

Bada Bing Bada Boom series: These wax (semperflorens) begonias bloom profusely from spring to fall in containers and shady or sunny beds. With pink, rose, scarlet and white flowers, plants in the Bada Bing group have shiny rounded green leaves. Bada Boom plants set flower colors against bronze foliage. Either would be perfect for Tony Soprano's place in North Caldwell or any other Jersey garden. With mounded growth up to 10 inches high and 8 inches wide, they're among begonia seeds available this season at SpringhillGardenSeeds.com. Tiny begonia seeds are often coated for easier handling, and must be started early indoors. While the "pelleted" seeds are simply pressed into soil, germination improves with bottom heat, light and covers for humidity. Flowers in 90 to 120 days.



Courtesy Ball Horticultural Company

Big begonias: The Whopper series begonia is a heat- and sun-tolerant wax begonia hybrid (*benariensis*) that can grow up to 3 feet tall, to make a stronger statement in garden beds and containers. Red, pink or rose-colored flower clusters can be up to 3 inches in diameter, with green or bronze leaves. Available in season at Williams Nursery.



Courtesy Ball Horticultural Company

The right mix: Reiger or *hiemalis* begonias are a hybrid mix of wax and tuberous begonias, which gives these varieties a full crown of upright double flowers. In garden beds and containers, they play the "filler" role. Some varieties thrive in cooler temperatures, and are sold as indoor florals or early-season gift plants. Outdoors, the Solenia collection is a variety that can take more heat and direct sunlight.

Sauce is a dinner starter

Many of us keep jars of marinara on hand to heat and toss with spaghetti for an easy home-cooked dinner.

But jar sauce is a pantry essential that can do so much more. Heat it up, add a cup of chicken stock and a variety of frozen vegetables for a quick soup. Mix it with rice and ground beef, turkey or chicken as a filling for hollowed out zucchini "boats," or stuffed peppers, or cabbage roll ups.

Pour a few jars of pasta sauce into the slow cooker and let simmer with a beef chuck roast for tasty and tender meat.

While marinara is seasoned for Italian dishes, those with milder flavor can go in other directions with ease. With cumin and canned beans, make it chili. Or leave out the beans and crack eggs into the simmering sauce for shakshuka. Cook with sliced andouille sausage, pan-seared chicken thighs and creole seasoning for jambalaya.

If you use store-bought marinara for baked pasta dishes, such as the ravioli-based lasagna, below, make the meal more filling and nutritious and by adding fresh or frozen vegetables, as suggested.

Lazy beef and ravioli lasagna

(6 servings)

- 1-1/2 pounds 93% lean ground beef
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 24-ounce jar marinara or pasta sauce
- 20 to 25 ounces refrigerated or frozen cheese ravioli
- 1 cup shredded Italian cheese blend

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Heat large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add beef and garlic; cook 8 to 10 minutes, breaking into 3/4-inch crumbles and stirring occasionally. Remove from skillet with slotted spoon; pour off drippings and return beef to skillet.

2. Stir in salt, nutmeg and pepper; mix well. Stir in pasta sauce and 1-3/4 cup water; bring to a boil. Cook 1 to 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3. Coat 13-by-9-inch glass baking dish with cooking spray. Layer half the ravioli, half the beef mixture and half the cheese.

Repeat with remaining ravioli and beef mixture. Reserve remaining cheese. Cover dish with aluminum foil and bake 15 minutes (20 minutes if using frozen ravioli). Uncover, sprinkle with cheese and bake 15 to 20 minutes uncovered, until sauce is bubbly and pasta is tender. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

Tester's note: This dish is meant to be easy, but if you have time to grate one zucchini, dice a red or green bell pepper or chop an onion, add them to the pan with the ground beef and garlic. Or just add frozen chopped broccoli to the first layer of ravioli and beef. Reduce added water to 1-1/2 cups, and enjoy lasagna with more flavor, nutrients and fiber.

Nutrition information (per serving): 407 calories, 18g fat (8g saturated), 100mg cholesterol, 509mg sodium, 30g carbs, 0g fiber, 13g sugars, 33g protein

— *Recipe, photo courtesy Beef Checkoff. More at BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com.*



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Prince's is always growing

Beyond the Jersey tomatoes, herbs and other crops harvested from their field at 1123 Mountain Ave., Prince's Farm Stand is growing. There are new products and more events planned at the Mountainside market, as spring brings early-blooming plants for anyone craving the cheerful color of garden-grown flowers.

The farm store's retail space has grown to make room for more produce and packaged foods on tables, shelves and in refrigerator and freezer units. Nearly every product also can be purchased for local delivery at PrincesFarmStand.com.

For updates on events, follow Prince's on social media. Previous workshops have featured master gardeners. "Pop-up" days bring in area food artisans and crafts people who talk with customers about their process, often offering samples to help promote their creations.

"It's awesome to support local people doing things that fit so well into a farm stand," says Heather Prince Murphy. She mentions the organic teas and herbal salts one company makes from Mendham-grown plants. Even with products from outside New Jersey, the focus is on foods from the earth, she says. "It's the fruit of our land. That's what keeps us going."



Four new sauces from Prince's private label are made for farm stand pastas, including ravioli (shrimp and scallops, braised beef, Maine lobster and others).

Coming together

Flavors from around the globe unite in delicious friendships

When people from different parts of the world live in any one place, culinary cross-pollination often occurs with exploration of new ingredients and cooking techniques. Sometimes the blending comes with a need to substitute something new in the absence of something familiar. Whatever the cause, such exploration allows a world of flavors to mingle in creative ways that allow us to expand our experiences and appetites.

“Bubble and squeak fritters,” for example, could also be called “colcannon boxty,” a literal mash up of two Irish dishes. Inspired by the pan-cooked leftovers of British Bubble and Squeak, the fritters bring together colcannon’s mashed potatoes and cabbage in the shape of the potato pancakes known as boxty. Topped with sour cream, they also could be “Irish latkes,” says Anita Schecter, who discusses on her own website, HungryCoupleNYC.com, the recipe she created for IdahoPotato.com.



Asian mushroom salsa for tacos

(4 servings)

1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 pound shiitake mushrooms, sliced (about 3 cups)
2 large shallots, sliced into rings
1 teaspoon McCormick chipotle chile
2 tablespoons sliced green onion
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1 tablespoon unseasoned rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon McCormick sesame seeds
1/4 teaspoon McCormick Sicilian sea salt

1. Heat oil in large skillet on high heat.

Add mushrooms; cook and stir 4 minutes or until golden brown. Add shallots and chipotle chile; cook and stir 3 minutes or until shallots begin to brown.

2. Spoon mixture into a bowl. Add remaining ingredients; toss lightly. Serve on Asian steak tacos, as shown (recipe at McCormick.com). Also enjoy it as a relish.

Nutrition information (per serving): 83 calories, 7g fat (1g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 148mg sodium, 5g carbs, 1g fiber, 0g sugars, 1g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy McCormick



‘Bubble and squeak’ fritters

(10 fritters)

2 large Idaho baking potatoes, peeled and quartered
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
2 cups shredded cabbage
1/2 cup shredded carrots
2 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 large egg, lightly beaten
Oil for pan frying (about 1/4 cup)
Sour cream (optional)
Arugula (optional)

1. Add potatoes to a large pot of boiling water. Cook 15 minutes or until tender. Drain potatoes, add a tablespoon of the butter and mash.

2. Add remaining butter to a large skillet with cabbage and carrots. Sauté about 5 minutes or until softened. Add to mashed potatoes with cheese and flour. Season with salt and pepper, then add egg and

mix until thoroughly combined.

3. Heat a thin layer of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Measure 1/3-cup portions onto skillet and gently flatten to make fritters. Fry in batches, about 5 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Fritters also can be baked on a non-stick pan in a 425-degree oven for 10 to 12 minutes on each side. If desired, serve with sour cream and top with arugula as shown.

Tester’s note: Potatoes are essential, but try adding grated onion to cook with the cabbage and carrots, or mix things up by using grated zucchini instead of cabbage.

Nutrition information (per fritter): 158 calories, 10g fat (4g saturated), 31mg cholesterol, 127mg sodium, 14g carbs, 2g fiber, 2g sugars, 4g protein

— Recipe, photo by Anita Schecter for Idaho Potato Commission; more at IdahoPotato.com

Berberere chicken flatbread

(8 servings)

1 pound boneless skinless chicken thighs
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons McCormick berbere seasoning, divided
 Cooking oil spray
 Two large flatbreads or pizza crusts (see note)
 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded and divided
 4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
 12 grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
 1 large poblano pepper, thinly sliced
 2 cups thinly sliced red onion
 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees. Place chicken in a large bowl with oil and 1 tablespoon berbere seasoning; toss to coat.
2. Grill chicken (or use a grill pan) over medium heat about 5 minutes per side, until cooked through (165-degree internal temperature). Let cool slightly; cut into bite-size pieces.
3. Spritz large baking sheet(s) with oil spray. Add flatbreads and use half the mozzarella to top each. Evenly add feta, chicken, tomatoes (cut side up), poblano and red onion. Sprinkle with remaining berbere. Top with remaining mozzarella. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Sprinkle with chopped cilantro before serving.

Tester's note: Lavash, a flat bread of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkey, is a great choice here. Its thickness and flavor can vary, so try a few brands (at selected ShopRite stores, and Fanwood Larder, 44B South Martine Ave.).

Nutrition information (per serving): 336 calories, 16g fat (8g saturated), 83mg cholesterol, 681mg sodium, 21g carbs, 2g fiber, 7g sugars, 32g protein

— Adapted recipe, photo courtesy McCormick



Tasty spice: Berebere (bur-bare-ray) is the main seasoning of Ethiopia. It can be a wet paste or a dry spice blend, and is the key flavor in the chicken stew *Doro Wat*. While “berbere” derives from the Amharic word for “pepper,” McCormick’s version (found at ShopRite stores) is a tame, tasty mix. Try it in chili, or sprinkle on ground meat for an enticing sausage. To blend your own for our recipe, use 1 tablespoon paprika, 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon each cinnamon and ground ginger, 1/4 teaspoon each cayenne pepper, salt, ground cardamom, allspice and coriander.



Chicken and shrimp salad

(4 servings)

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut in large dice
 1/2 pound large shelled, deveined raw shrimp
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 Cilantro dressing (ingredients follow)
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
 4 cups thinly sliced Napa cabbage
 1/4 cup peanuts
 Optional additions: Grated carrots, matchstick-cut radishes, diced red bell pepper or thinly sliced scallion greens

1. Season chicken and shrimp with salt. Set aside.
2. Cilantro dressing: In small bowl, blend 1 teaspoon grated **lime peel**, 2 tablespoons **fresh lime juice**, 1 tablespoon **honey** (raw preferred), 1-1/2 teaspoons grated **fresh ginger** and 1 teaspoon **fish sauce**. Stir in 1/3 cup minced **cilantro**.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat; add chicken, garlic and red pepper. Cook and stir 2 minutes. Add shrimp; cook and stir 4 to 7 minutes, until chicken is no longer pink in center and shrimp is opaque. Remove from heat.
4. In a large bowl, toss chicken and shrimp with cabbage and dressing to coat. Divide into four serving bowls; top each with a tablespoon of peanuts.

Nutrition information (per serving): 400 calories, 15g fat (3g saturated), 200mg cholesterol, 976mg sodium, 8g carbs, 2g fiber, 6g sugars, 62g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy North American Olive Oil Association

Trying Thai: Peanuts, fish sauce, fresh ginger, lime and Napa cabbage are familiar ingredients of Thai cuisine. This salad can be an easy gateway to discover the flavors in Thai red, green or Massaman curries and other dishes beyond *Pad Thai*. Thai fish sauce and curry pastes are sold at most supermarkets, and once-hard-to-find fresh ingredients such as lemongrass (Green Olive Market, South Plainfield) and galangal (Asian Food Market, Piscataway) appear more often.

Fusion is blending favorite flavors

In her 2014 cookbook “Ikaria,” celebrity chef Diane Kochilas includes three recipes for black-eyed peas, which she says are among the most popular legumes on this Greek island known for the longevity of its residents. In notes for a dish where black-eyed peas mix with smoked herring, red onions and collards, she writes that beans are a source of iron the body can’t easily absorb without the help of vitamin C, which is rich in greens. “It isn’t by accident that so many bean and greens combinations exist in the ‘poor man’s’ diet of Ikaria.”

In many soul-food restaurants, black-eyed peas cooked with onions and smoked pork or turkey will similarly share a plate with collards. The fusion recipe below is a vegetarian take that blends African-American tradition into an Italian dish of cannellini beans and broccoli rabe. It’s an easy, delicious meal for those who adore garlic.

In research for an unrelated article, I came across the easy Greek pantry pie known as *alevropita*. It amazed me that this wonderful “flour pie” of Zagoria can be made with water, eggs, salt and feta cheese.

To understand, I watched a dozen videos in Greek, and felt a connection when I saw grandmothers adding butter or oil to the pan before heating it in the oven. It’s the same way I was taught to bake cornbread; the batter meets a sizzling pan to develop a crisp crust. I translated numerous recipes, finding at least one that used *tsipouro*, a strong Greek grape brandy. Another added *kefalogyri*, the salty aged cheese that’s fried to make the Greek-festival favorite, *saganaki*.

Pies we made with yogurt did rise higher, but the height was lost as the dense custard cooled. We preferred our plain-water version, finished with briny Kalamata olives.

— Kimberly L. Jackson



Black-eyed peas and broccoli rabe

(4 servings)

1 bunch broccoli rabe (about 1 pound)
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
2 large garlic cloves, minced
4 cups cooked black-eyed peas
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black or cayenne pepper
2 cups cooked quinoa or brown rice

1. Trim and discard damaged ends from broccoli rabe. Place leafy stems in a large pot of boiling water. Stir to wilt fully, about a minute. Strain greens into a large colander. As they cool, use kitchen shears to snip through greens and stems, making shorter cuts on stems.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large stock pot over high heat. Stir in strained greens and minced garlic; cook 1 minute.

Stir in cooked peas with salt and pepper. Cover pot with lid, turn off heat and let sit 15 minutes. Drizzle with remaining oil before serving with quinoa or brown rice.

Tester’s note: Broccoli rabe (*rapini* in Italian) is blanched to eliminate bitterness. With quick cooking, the greens hold their color — no need to cool in ice water. For canned beans, use three 15.5-ounce cans. (We recommend the unseasoned, additive-free store brand from Wegmans.) To reduce sodium, use frozen black-eyed peas. (Sold at ShopRite stores.)

Nutrition information (per serving): 563 calories, 15g fat (2g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 625mg sodium, 83g carbs, 22g fiber, 2g sugars, 32g protein

— At Home New Jersey test kitchen



Savory feta and olive pie

(4 servings)

1 teaspoon olive oil
1/2 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 large eggs
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 ounces feta cheese
12 pitted Kalamata olives

1. Add olive oil and butter to a 10-inch cast iron skillet (see notes). Place skillet in cold oven and heat oven to 400 degrees.

2. As oven heats, whisk eggs with 1 cup of water in a large bowl. Add flour and salt; whisk to a smooth batter. Let batter rest. Grate feta (about 1 cup) and slice olives. Stir half the feta into batter.

3. Wearing oven mitts, remove skillet from oven. Swirl to coat bottom cooking surface. Scrape batter into skillet. (At ideal heat, it will sizzle.) Evenly scatter remaining feta, then olives over batter.

4. Bake 25 to 30 minutes on bottom oven rack, until top is dry, browned and

separated from pan at the sides. Let cool (and deflate) 15 minutes before cutting.

Tester’s notes: Based on Greek *alevropita*, this “pie” should have a moist but firm center, enriched by the feta. Grate a block of feta for better flavor and to avoid the additives in pre-crumbled feta. Milk can be used in place of the water, and some cooks add chopped meats or vegetables to the batter. Instead of cast iron, a pan large enough to keep batter no more than a half-inch high can be used. (If batter is too high, it won’t cook properly.) If you are easily distracted, do not risk a fire by forgetting the oiled pan. It’s safer to heat a dry pan, and then add oil and butter to it. While often baked in a round pan, the pie is usually cut into squares, as shown.

Nutrition information (per serving): 267 calories, 13g fat (7g saturated), 122mg cholesterol, 615mg sodium, 26g carbs, 1g fiber, 1g sugars, 11g protein

— At Home New Jersey test kitchen

Lentils give a lot

A pot of well-flavored lentils can be a kitchen time saver many times over. Enjoy a bowlful. Scatter them on a salad. Spread some over a tortilla with salsa and a little cheese for a quick veggie burrito.

In their dried form, lentils are among few pulses (which include beans, field peas and chickpeas) that don't need a soak before cooking. Rinse a cupful of lentils and simmer them in a pot with twice as much water. They'll be cooked in about 20 minutes. Split red lentils, often used in curries, will cook even faster. Add a half cup to a pot of soup, and they'll cook down to an incredible, invisible, nutrition-boosting thickener.

In the burrito recipe at Canolanfo.org, firm-cooked lentils are sauteed in canola oil with onion, green bell pepper and garlic, then seasoned with chili powder and cumin in a tomato-paste sauce.

Lentils are an inexpensive source of plant protein. They are a more slowly di-

gested complex carbohydrate and high in fiber. A half cup of cooked whole green lentils has 140 calories, less than a gram of fat, zero cholesterol, 23 grams of carbohydrate, 9 grams of fiber, and 12 grams of protein. Now put *that* in your chocolate chip cookies. (There's a recipe.) Lentils also deliver minerals, and nutrients such as potassium, folate, iron and manganese.

Dry lentils will keep up to a year in a dry, dark, cool location. Store in their package or in an air-tight container. Once cooked, lentils can be refrigerated for a week. Freeze them whole or pureed in airtight containers to use within three months. There are numerous possibilities.

Find lots of ideas to cook and bake with lentils at Lentils.org, which includes 30-minute recipes as well as vegetarian and gluten-free options.

Find more recipes to help fill plates with produce at FruitsAndVeggies.org, where fruits and veggies are always stars.



Courtesy Canolanfo.org

Meat won't be missed when saucy lentils are topped with sour cream and cheddar to be rolled in tortillas for quick, easy vegetarian burritos. Recipe at Canolanfo.org.



At Home New Jersey photos

In the weeks before Easter, Dreyer Farms offers a selection of seasonal arrangements.

Visit Dreyer Farms

One of the happiest signs of spring is area nurseries and farm stores dressed with the jubilant color of hanging flower baskets and rows of early-bloomers, cozy in their flats.

For anyone driving or walking along Springfield Avenue in Cranford, Dreyer Farms always presents a lovely visual. The grounds and outdoor tables are filled with a changing selection of nursery plants, shrubs and trees when the farm store's doors roll open for the season (March 15).

Inside, there's a wide selection of fine foods, local dairy, meats and breads. The farm kitchen prepares a daily menu of salads, sandwiches, meals and baked goods. Soon, bins will be full of produce in season.

Sign-ups have started for the 27-week farm shares program, which begins in May with six choices. For 2021, they've added an every-other-week option and a 9-week trial. Join the 33-week Farm Club to get pre-paid Dreyer Farms gift cards that support New Jersey farming. Members who pay in full before April 15 (or join the Farm Club) can pick their own summer tomatoes, flowers and herbs on certain days.

Get details at DreyerFarms.com, and sign up for their weekly email with growing tips, recipes and news of events, offers and what's cooking in the farm kitchen.



Growing now: Violas and pansies are early season annuals that can survive frost while flowering profusely. Need help knowing what to plant this year? The team at Dreyer Farms can help you decide which plants are best for your landscape, a flower bed or vegetable garden. Just take along a photo of the space and tell them how much sun each planting location receives.

Beyond plain ol' tuna sandwiches

If it's canned tuna, make it albacore, only in sandwiches.

That might be the sort of snobbery Susan Sampson says she encountered when she began work on a canned fish cookbook. For Sampson, albacore from a can is also right for fish tacos or seafood summer rolls. And chunk light tuna can make great burgers, croquettes, mac and cheese, stir fries, pot pie and even a tasty tetrazzini.

With 100 recipes in "Tinned Fish Pantry" (Robert Rose, \$19.95), she defies the notion that canned fish is something to stock in large quantities while prepping for a civil emergency, or to endure in some down-on-your-luck dish.

Sampson has developed recipes using packed tuna, salmon, crab, anchovies, sardines and clams. They're in appetizers, soups, salads, casseroles, curries, pies, pasta and grain dishes.



The key to cooking with canned seafood is to treat it as a different species from fresh fish with different flavors and textures, she says. "Don't try to turn it into something it's not."

Sampson worked three decades as a newspaper journalist, and she includes fascinating fish facts. A canned sardine might be a juvenile pilchard, herring or sprat, for example. She

explains that "sardine" is a marketing term, derived from the Mediterranean island of Sardinia, a place where immature soft-boned, oily, saltwater fish were packed in cans.

With anchovies, cooks might imagine being in a rustic kitchen in Italy's Piedmont region, simmering the fish to dissolve in extra-virgin olive oil, then adding minced garlic to make buttery *bagna cauda* dip for crusty bread and steamed veggies. Elsewhere, Sampson's spin on the Vietnamese soup *pho* has canned salmon. Canned crab adds a "C" to her BLT. She scrambles it with eggs, and taps it for Crab Louis, a salad with spicy mayo, tomato and egg.

Classics round out an imaginative recipe collection with a tuna casserole update, New England and Manhattan clam chowders, two Caesar salads, and 10 takes on tuna sandwiches (including tuna melts and the *pan bagnat* shown).

"Fresh seafood is dandy," Sampson writes, "but canned seafood is ready when you are."



Pan Bagnat

(6 servings)

12-ounce baguette
Olive dressing (recipe follows)
2 cans tuna in olive oil (oil reserved), broken into flakes
3 grape tomatoes, thinly sliced
Pinch of salt
2-inch length of English cucumber, peeled, thinly sliced, patted dry
2 large hard-cooked eggs, sliced
1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion
2 artichoke hearts (canned or thawed frozen) patted dry and thinly sliced
1/4 small red bell pepper, thinly sliced
6 small Boston lettuce leaves

1. Dressing: Blend olive oil from tuna with **extra virgin olive oil** to make 1/4 cup. Add to blender with 12 **pitted black olives**; 1 tablespoon each **white wine vinegar** and rinsed, drained **capers**; 1 teaspoon each **anchovy paste** and **parsley leaves**; 1/2 teaspoon **Dijon mustard**; and 1/4 teaspoon **freshly ground black pepper**.

2. Cut baguette in half lengthwise. Remove enough bread from the center of each half to make room for sandwich filling. Lay bottom half, cut side up, on a long sheet of plastic wrap.

3. Smear half the dressing over cut side of bottom layer. Add tuna and tomatoes. Sprinkle lightly with salt. Layer on cucumber, eggs, onion, artichokes, red pepper and lettuce. Smear remaining dressing over cut side of top baguette. Place on top of filled baguette and press down lightly. Wrap tightly in the plastic. Refrigerate 30 minutes before serving. To serve, cut on the diagonal into 4 to 6 sections.

Nutrition information (per serving): 480 calories, 9g fat (2g saturated), 114mg cholesterol, 624mg sodium, 78g carbs, 10g fiber, 14g sugars, 29g protein

— From "Tinned Fish Pantry Cookbook" by Susan Sampson; www.RobertRose.ca



Get a grip!

Sometimes it's difficult to get a good grip on a bottle or jar cap. Here are two tips that can make opening easier. First, grab a thick rubber band and stretch it over the cap or lid, doubling it if necessary.

Why it works: The rubber will give you a tighter grip on the cap or lid, and stop it from sliding in your hand. That will make caps and lids easier to twist off.

The next tip is only for metal lids. Wedge a bottle opener under the lid as you would with the cap on a beer or soda bottle. Lift up until you hear the "pop" that signals that the jar's air-tight factory seal has been broken. With this release, the metal lid should now screw off with ease.



Nutrition made easy and delicious

Celebrity nutritionist Ellie Krieger says her recipes consistently aim to make it easier for people to cook and eat well.

“As a food lover and dietitian, I’m always looking for that amazing balance between health and taste,” says the James Beard Award-winning cookbook author. She has partnered with the United Dairy Industry of Michigan to showcase easy recipes using milk from her latest cookbook, “Whole in One.”

Milk is commonly viewed as a versatile staple to have on-hand for cooking, and a nutritious beverage for families with essential nutrients, such as calcium, that promote bone health in children and teens, she says.

Dairy also helps simplify healthy cooking in her recipes. “It provides you not only

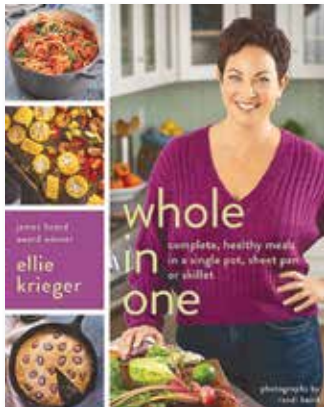
great nutrition, but also great taste, texture and satisfaction,” Krieger says.

“Milk, cheese and yogurt all contain protein, and I think most people don’t realize that a cup of milk has 8 grams of high-quality protein, which is more than an egg,” she notes. “When I tell people that, it’s news to them. Protein really is key in many ways, because people are often looking to get more protein into their diets.”

The cookbook offers recipes for nutritious meals, and it follows them with recipes for healthy desserts. The maple-pecan pancake

has a maple-sweetened egg batter cooked in a skillet. It can be served warm from the pan, or chilled, which she says will give it the essence of a custardy flan-like tart.

More meal ideas at MilkMeansMore.org.



Maple-pecan dessert pancake

(8 servings)

1 cup pecan pieces, divided
4 large eggs
1/3 cup whole milk
1/4 cup pure maple syrup
1/4 cup light brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 pinch salt
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 teaspoon confectioners’ sugar

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. In food processor bowl, pulse 1/2 cup pecans until finely ground. Transfer to a bowl. In processor, pulse remaining pecans to coarsely chop.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs, milk, syrup, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Stir in the finely ground pecans and the

coarsely chopped pecans.

3. In a 10-inch ovenproof skillet over medium-low heat, melt butter. Add batter to heated pan. Cook without stirring until edges begin to set, about 5 minutes. Transfer to oven and bake until completely set and golden brown, about 10 minutes. Pancake will puff up in oven then fall into place as it cools. Allow to cool in pan 10 minutes then sprinkle with confectioners’ sugar. Cut into eight wedges. Serve warm or chilled.

Nutrition information (per serving): 203 calories, 14g fat (3g saturated), 98mg cholesterol, 76mg sodium, 16g carbs, 2g fiber, 14g sugars, 5g protein

— Recipe, photo from “Whole in One” (Da Capo Lifelong Books, \$30) by Ellie Krieger

Cauliflower ‘risotto’ with shrimp

(4 servings)

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup chopped shallot
3 cups cauliflower rice (see note)
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons, plus 1 teaspoon, all-purpose flour
1-3/4 cups 1-percent low-fat milk
3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1 pound medium shrimp, cleaned and tails removed

1-1/2 cups fresh or frozen green peas
2 tablespoons fresh basil cut into ribbons
1. In a large, nonstick skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add shallot and cook until softened, 2 minutes. Stir in cauliflower rice, salt and pepper; cook 2 minutes.

2. Sprinkle flour over cauliflower and stir to incorporate. Add milk and cook, stirring occasionally, until it comes to gentle boil. Stir in 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese until incorporated. Add shrimp and peas.

3. Return to simmer. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until shrimp are pink and no longer translucent, and sauce has thickened, about 5 minutes. Garnish with basil and remaining Parmesan cheese.

Tester’s note: Buy cauliflower “rice” fresh or frozen, or grate fresh cauliflower.

Nutrition information (per serving): 348 calories, 14g fat (5g saturated), 241mg cholesterol, 677mg sodium, 16g carbs, 3g fiber, 7g sugars, 38g protein

— Recipe, photo from “Whole in One” (Da Capo Lifelong Books, \$30) by Ellie Krieger

Eggs are a natural for Easter decor



When you crack open an egg for breakfast or baking, practice draining the contents through a small hole. The empty shell that remains can become a surface to decorate, and a vessel to display and enjoy spring's tiniest flowers.

Make a small crack in one end of an egg, then peel away pieces to make an opening. Or try using the tip of a metal skewer or a sterilized nail to repeatedly tap one end of the shell until you are able to make a tiny opening. Using a skewer, stir and poke around inside the shell to break the yolk and coax out the egg.

With any size opening, rinse out the egg and let the shell dry fully before decorating.

Even if the kids are well beyond the age for an Easter egg hunt, coloring and decorating a dozen eggs can be a relaxing project to enhance seasonal decorating. Display an egg in your favorite color on an egg cup tied with cute ribbon. Consider the ideas that follow, then see what you come up with to truly enjoy the beauty of eggs.



Photos courtesy iBulb

A cracked egg shell painted blue becomes a place to tuck daffodils or crocus blossoms. Try decorating with natural materials for a fun and creative holiday challenge.



Put decorative straw in a pretty bowl and add plain eggs. Pair this with potted daffodils tucked into a matching bowl, and they'll make an eye-catching seasonal display.



To hang an egg vase, thread cord through one or two small holes in the shell and knot the ends inside. Above, muscari blossoms hang from a branch on an indoor egg tree.

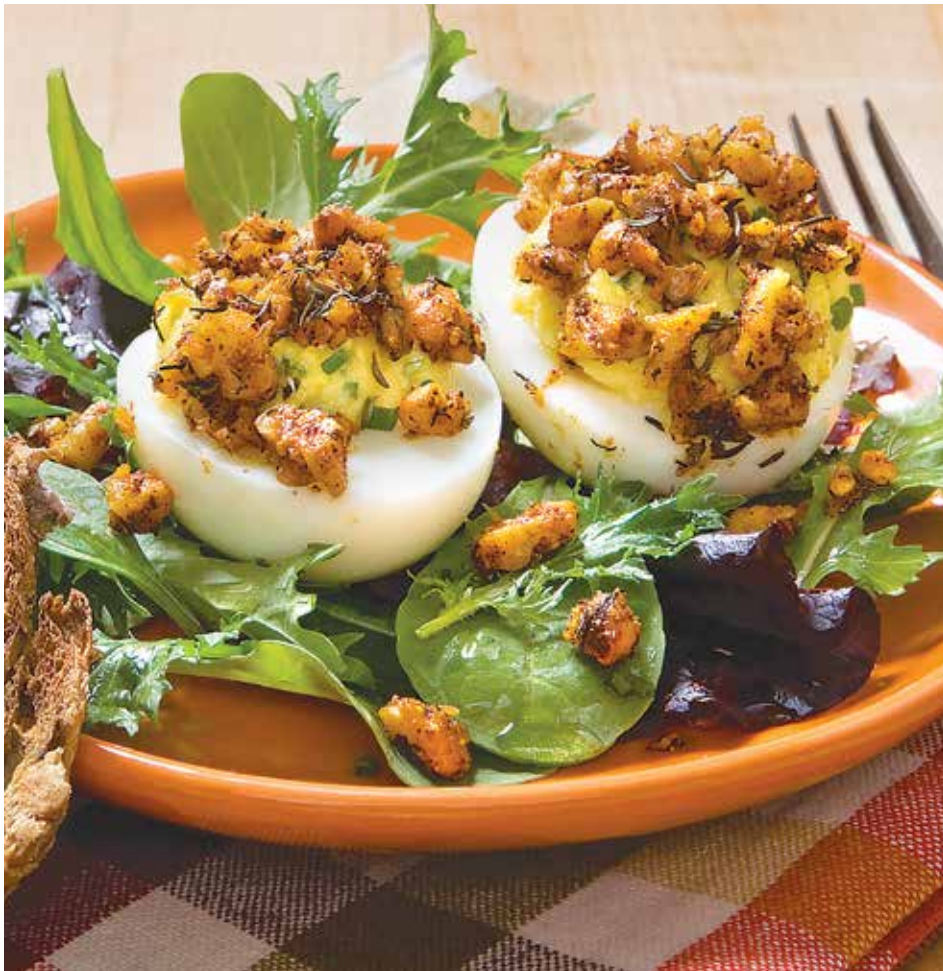


Goose, duck and speckled quail eggs can be purchased online or from certain poultry farms around the state. Here, an arrangement of tulips and fritillaria in assorted shells.



A lisianthus blossom and buds in an arrangement with a quail egg in moss. Also try decorating the egg vase. For a cleaner finish, use cuticle scissors to trim egg opening.

While we're on the subject of eggs ...



Courtesy California Walnuts

Try this devilishly good topping

Here's an idea for traditionalists who like deviled eggs made strictly with mayo, mustard, salt and a sprinkle of paprika. It's also for those who'd mash up the yolks with yogurt or avocado or hummus or hot sauce. Make your favorite deviled egg recipe, and then top it with seasoned nuts to increase protein, nutrients and flavor. Savory chopped-nut blends also can be used in place of breadcrumb toppings by those who want to reduce carbohydrate consumption. But try it first for deviled eggs with this recipe from Walnuts.org.

Cajun-spiced walnut crumb topping: Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Add a

teaspoon each of dried thyme and smoked paprika, and 1/4 teaspoon each of salt and garlic powder. Stir to blend spices and oil. Add a cup of finely chopped California walnuts. Keep stirring until evenly distributed. Stir nuts 5 to 8 minutes to toast, being careful not to burn them. Stir in cayenne pepper to taste, if desired, and remove from heat. When cool, refrigerate any leftover topping in a tightly lidded jar.

Once you've learned to make the nutty topping, mix up the spices to get different flavor profiles. Heating your chosen spices will release their fragrant oils to enhance the flavor. Toasting the walnuts makes them lighter with a pleasing crisp texture.



Courtesy McCormick

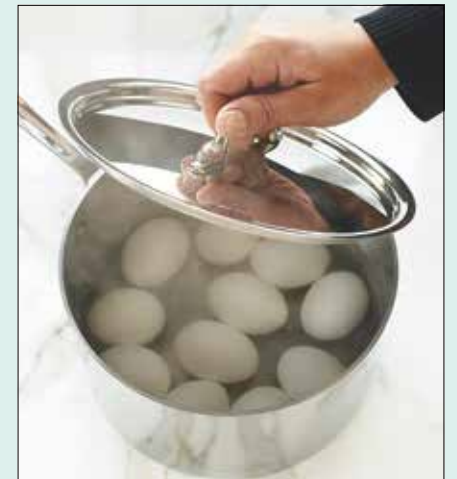
Add oil for slick Easter designs

Instead of buying decorating kits, we like making Easter egg "paints" with food color that lasts for years. It's as easy as adding drops of color to a half cup of boiling water with a teaspoon of vinegar stirred in. As with real paints, primary food colors can be blended to make more colors. To make the marbled designs shown, mix 1/4 cup boiling water, 1 teaspoon vinegar, 1/8 teaspoon oil and 4 to 8 drops of McCormick food color in shallow bowl. For smaller patterns, stir the oily mix before adding eggs. Use a spoon to roll egg in the dye until egg is

the desired shade. Use a slotted spoon to remove egg from dye. Allow to dry, then wipe away excess oil. For the two-color egg shown, put the dry egg into a second dye without oil. For single-color marbling, it's a good idea to start with your lightest color and then add drops of darker colors to the dye water to make new colors. Adding drops of red to yellow will make orange, for example. Add drops of blue and get green. Red and blue make purple. Experiment to expand your color range, and see the dye color guide at McCormick.com.

Let them sit

If you've boiled eggs longer than five minutes, you're wasting energy. Once the water comes to a boil, it can cook eggs perfectly with the residual heat. Try this for Easter: Put large eggs in one layer in a saucepan and add enough cold water to cover them by about an inch. Bring to a rolling boil at high heat. Cover eggs and remove from heat. Let stand 12 minutes for hard-boiled eggs (go to 15 minutes for extra-large eggs). For soft-boiled, let eggs sit in the boiling hot water for 5 minutes, or less for runny yolks. To keep yolks bright, put eggs in ice water to cool quickly. Older eggs peel more easily.



Courtesy American Egg Board

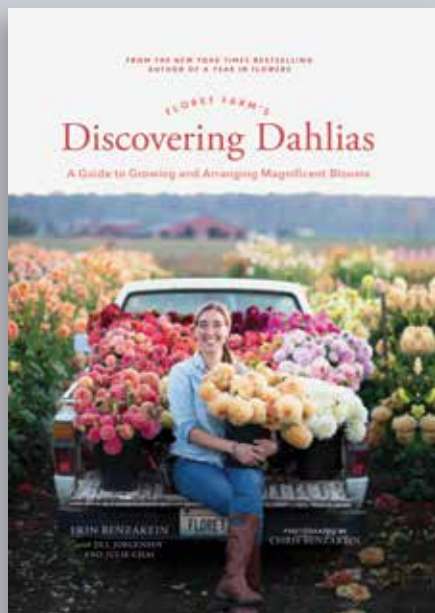
Mixed messages



Unscramble this quote from one of the most popular poets of the 20th century. Solution on AtHomeNJ.com

rdows adn gesg stmu eb ddalneh
 twhi acre. neco onkber yhte rae
 mbeposiils hntgis ot pareir.
 — nena xnesto

Shapes of things to come



“Floret Farm’s Discovering Dahlias” (Chronicle Books, \$24.95) is more than just a pretty flower book.

In it, Erin Benzakein, the face and brains behind the flowers, will truly inspire gardeners with pages that reveal how easy it can be to grow, propagate and hybridize the wide range of dahlias. The book recommends growing 360 tested varieties. Included is a discussion of various forms (shown above). One chapter features arrangements of dahlias and other farm flowers, listing floral ingredients but offering only visuals as guidance.

“I’m personally drawn to the oddballs, including anemone, stellar, incurved cactus and orchette,” Benzakein writes. She advises that understanding differences between the forms will help in selecting new varieties.

“Dahlias are relatively easy to grow and need only a few essentials: good soil, adequate water, and lots of sun. These hardworking beauties are quite sensitive to cold, and if you live in an area with cold winters, you’ll

need to dig up your tubers in autumn and store them in a frost-free place until it’s time to replant in the spring.”

With this digging, growers learn that the planted dahlias have produced tubers for even more dahlias. The book details how to divide, cure and store them. Benzakein uses a Sharpie to label each tuber by type.

If that’s not enough, you can learn to grow dahlias from stem cuttings using a rooting hormone gel.

Benzakein recommends that growers get a soil test that will detail what amendments are needed.

For small spaces and the problem of clay soil, she suggests raised garden beds. “There are so many places you can sneak in a few plants if you get creative.”

Win the book: For a chance to win “Floret Farms Discovering Dahlias,” email Win@AtHomeNJ.com with your name, address and phone number by April 24. Make “Floret” the subject and be sure to tell us where you found your copy of At Home New Jersey.

ESTATE PLANNER

Keep proof of aid to an aging parent

If a family member is providing hands-on, in-home care to a frail or disabled elder, this might be a good time to look into a formal employment arrangement.

Planning for an elder's long-term care often includes the potential use of long-term care insurance or Medicaid benefits to pay for hands-on care. Building a solid foundation of evidence can be helpful when the time comes to file those applications.

A well-structured care plan can enable the elder to remain in their home. It will cover the supervision provided to assure a parent's on-site safety, and how the family caregiver assists with activities of daily living (ADLs) – feeding, getting around, bathing, dressing, use of the bathroom, transferring from bed to chair and vice versa.

As Covid-19 continues to spread, many have lost their jobs and, in some cases, are moving home with parents. If care is being provided by an adult child who lives with the parent, consider documenting all the care-giving assistance provided. Keep time records; photos; lists of activities and functions; time spent in transport to medical visits or overseeing hospital care. Include sworn statements by third parties who have observed such care being provided.

If Medicaid benefits will be useful and

appropriate, the elder parent may want to apply for home care services through the NJ Medicaid Long Term Services and Supports program (MLTSS). Although the application process can be grueling, once approved, Medicaid benefits can be used to pay a family caregiver through the Personal Care Assistant option of MLTSS. Should the elder (the patient/employer) have to apply for Medicaid to pay for long-term care, having a formal employment arrangement could prevent certain problems, such as penalties for asset transfers to family caregivers.

The five-year look-back

When a person applies for long-term care benefits under the MLTSS/Medicaid program, they will generally be denied benefits for a period of time if they transferred (gifted) any assets during a five-year look-back period. There are certain express exceptions to that basic rule. Transfer of the home to a child who meets the criteria as a "caregiver child" is one of those exempt transfers.

The "look-back" refers to the five years of documentation a Medicaid applicant will need to provide for every single financial transaction that occurred with individual (and spousal) resources. Gifts are distin-

guished from other financial transactions.

An individual who is medically in need of nursing home care can apply for Medicaid to pay for that care once his or her countable, available resources have been reduced to \$2,000. If the applicant is married, then at the time of application, the community spouse can retain up to \$130,380, or half of the marital resources – whichever is less – along with the marital home, a car and personal effects.

The transfer of the house to the "caregiver child" will protect the house, but concrete proof is needed about the level of caregiving provided. For those who are diligent to build up the evidence, it can be easier to pursue a Medicaid application when the time comes.

Additionally, paid family caregivers may be classified as employees by the IRS, so there will be income tax ramifications. But there are also benefits. A formal employment arrangement could position a family caregiver for eligibility for Social Security and Medicare, unemployment, temporary disability and other benefits.

Contact our firm for advice on family employment contracts, Medicaid applications, and estate planning, including power of attorney, advance directives, wills and trusts.



LINDA ERSHOW-LEVENBERG, ESQ.

Linda Ershow-Levenberg, the managing partner at the Clark law firm Fink Rosner Ershow-Levenberg, is a certified Elder Law attorney. Call (732) 382-6070 for advice on wills, trusts, estates, and Medicaid planning. Follow the firm on Facebook and learn more at LegalNewsYouCanUse.com. This column is not, nor is it intended to be, legal advice.

Overweight? First, try training your brain

Laurel Mellin is convinced that much, if not most, of people's struggle with food is based in the emotional part of the brain.

She is a health psychologist whose neuroscience research is focused on the underlying causes of overeating, specifically how physiologic stress or "brain stress" sets up a myriad of chemical changes that can make overeating almost inevitable.

"We know that in times of stress, three brain structures – the amygdala (fear center), the hypothalamus (appetite center) and the nucleus accumbens (reward center)—activate a cascade of biochemical changes that increase hunger, slow metabolism and favor fat deposition," she writes in an article on TheConversation.com.

"One of the primary reasons people overeat and regain lost weight is that they have not changed the underlying behavior that leads them to crave comfort from food," she writes. "Studies have shown that they are related to habitual ways of responding to stress that leave us triggered to overeat and awash in the chronic stress that promotes weight regain," she writes.

"The brain remembers that food 'saved us' from stress, so it encodes an expectation, such as 'I get my safety from food.'

That circuit can be replayed for a lifetime, fueling maladaptive eating."

The good news: "There are promising ways to retrain the brain and to help people change the way they think about food."

In developing Emotional Brain Training, a neuroscience-based approach to weight loss, Mellin and her colleagues at the University of California, San Francisco focused on changing the brain to avoid overeating and other stress-related excesses.

"Our approach was to ask people to focus on something more positive than counting calories or measuring portion sizes." Instead, at moments of craving – indicating the offending brain circuit is active and open to rewiring – they would use simple tools to reduce their desire to overeat.

"This approach gives practical application to the long-established stress-weight link," she says. "The missing link has been to find practical ways to control "brain stress" and those overreactions that trigger mindless eating, sugar appetites and food binges."

Below, Mellin shares EBT tools that aim to rapidly reduce five levels of stress.

1. Compassion tool: (Very low stress) Say to yourself, "Feel compassion for myself," then wait for a wave of compassion

to flow through your body. Next say, "Feel compassion for others," and feel a slight wave of warmth. Last, say, "Feel compassion for all living beings."

2. Feelings tool: (Low stress) Ask yourself, "How do I feel?" Often, three feelings bubble up, but wait long enough so that one feeling is the strongest. That's the one! Next ask yourself, "What do I need?" And, finally, "Do I need support?"

3. Flow tool: (A little stress) Say the words: "I feel angry that ..." and watch what words arrive in your mind to complete the sentence. State the sentence again, for seven more feelings: sad, afraid, guilty, grateful, happy, secure and proud. Notice the glow in your body and how your stress is gone. Why? When we *feel* our negative feelings, they fade. We are no longer in peril, and the brain focuses on positive feelings that give us the energy to move forward and do good things in our life.

4. Cycle tool: (High stress) Start by stating what is bothering you (don't hold back), then protest that stress by saying "I feel angry that ... I can't stand it that ... I hate it that ..." Each time, watch what words arrive in your mind. This can unlock the brain circuit so you can change at a

deeper level. Pause, take deep breaths, then say the words: "I feel sad that ... I feel afraid that ... I feel guilty that ..." and watch what words arrive in your mind to complete each sentence. Next, support yourself. Say, "Of course, I could do that (such as overeat) because my unreasonable expectation is ..." Again, wait for words from your subconscious mind, such as: "I get my safety from overeating." That's an old glitch of a memory that needs updating. So, update it. Say the opposite expectation (such as "I cannot get my safety from food ... I can get my safety from connecting to myself"). As you stated this when the circuit was freshly unlocked, the circuit can change into the expectation of your choosing. As the new expectation becomes dominant, the emotional drives for various excesses (including food) can begin to fade so that changing behavior becomes easier.

5. Damage control tool: (Very high stress) When we're that stressed, we need to be held and comforted. Sometimes just rocking in your chair or breathing deeply will help. Also, you can say calming words repeatedly: "Do not judge. Minimize harm. After all, it's just stress and it will fade."

Compiled from TheConversation.com

HOME THEATER

Women's History Month film picks



'Hidden Figures' (2016)

A little-known chapter in the Space Race is laid out in Theodore Melfi's "Hidden Figures." There was a time when math whizzes, not machines, did all the complicated calculations required to construct rockets and determine their trajectories. And math, it turns out, is color blind.

In the 1960s, three black women lived with segregation in Virginia, where they reported to NASA to do this calculating. But NASA was no oasis in the desert of racism.

Taraji B. Henson plays Katherine Johnson, a math genius who struggles to be valued in this racist, sexist milieu. Octavia Spencer plays Dorothy Vaughan, who does the grueling work of a department supervisor, without the title or salary. Singer Janelle Monàe plays Mary Jackson, who, when asked if she would wish to become an engineer if she was a white male, replies: "I'd already *be* one."



'The Miracle Worker' (1962)

There are two bravura performances in Arthur Penn's compelling film: Anne Bancroft as live-in tutor Annie Sullivan, and Patty Duke as Annie's blind, deaf charge, Helen Keller (who later became an advocate for the disabled).

Inga Swenson plays Helen's distraught mother Kate, who knows that Helen yearns to communicate. Victor Jory plays Arthur, Helen's imperious father whose own wife calls him "the Captain." But Arthur meets his match in Annie, an Irish tutor brought in from Boston with an uncompromising approach to her work. If she and Helen must physically fight to achieve a spec of progress, so be it.

Annie has her own troubles. She is nearly blind, and has flashbacks to her nightmarish childhood spent in group care.

Bancroft and Duke repeated their performances from the Broadway production, and both won Oscars in their roles.



'The Iron Lady' (2011)

It's not merely how Meryl Streep physically transforms herself into Margaret Thatcher, England's only female prime minister (1979-90), who endured many trials from good-old-boy sexism to the Falklands War. As Thatcher in her later years, Streep's "old age" makeup — and her ease within it — is utterly convincing. Phyllida Lloyd crafted a superb movie in which to house Streep's performance.

You are thrown off by the very first frame — a hand-held shot of milk cartons in a dingy convenience store fridge. The movie continues to surprise, via superb editing that guides us through hallucinations, flashbacks, dreams and TV news footage, in a story framed around the present-day Thatcher as she slowly succumbs to dementia.

"The Iron Lady" makes you think about life, about the end. What will become of you? Are you ready? It's all here.



'The Virgin Queen' (1955)

Where is the line between loyalty to a queen and love for a woman? Henry Koster's soapy CinemaScope spectacle is Bette Davis' second go-round as unlucky-in-love Queen Elizabeth I (the first being 1939's "The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex"). Here, Elizabeth is approached by Walter Raleigh (Richard Todd), who wants, not her heart, but for her to fund his dream, an expedition to the Indies.

Raleigh appeals to Elizabeth because he is a "blunt soldier," not a "smooth-tongued courtier." Elizabeth puts Raleigh in charge of her guard, to the seething jealousy of Sir Christopher (Robert Douglas). Meanwhile, Raleigh catches the eye of the queen's lady-in-waiting (Joan Collins).

Davis captures a weary loneliness in a vanity-be-damned performance. Oddly, there's more swashbuckling in this film than in the 1939 one, which co-starred Errol Flynn!



'Norma Rae' (1979)

Sally Field earned an Oscar for her performance as the title character, a cotton-mill worker and exhausted single mother of two whose small-town life is upended when she meets Reuben (Ron Liebman), a unionizer from New York.

At the mill, the hours are long, the pay is low, and cotton dust comes down like snow flurries, making some workers sick. Even so, the mill is the town's main employer, and generations work there. Clever but uneducated, Norma Rae has a checkered past in a town that thrives on gossip. Beau Bridges plays Norma's second husband, Sonny, who balks as she gets more involved with unionizing — and Reuben.

Martin Ritt's "Norma Rae" is based on the true story of Crystal Lee Jordan, a cotton-mill worker who advocated to unionize the J.P. Stevens mills in North Carolina, and, like her screen counterpart, was punished for her efforts.



'The Passion of Joan of Arc' (1928)

In her final film and only starring role, Renée Jeanne Falconetti is unforgettable as Joan of Arc, in Carl Theodor Dreyer's silent masterpiece about the trial and execution of the French martyr. You can't look away from Falconetti's eyes. Indeed, Dreyer's cinematographer Rudolph Maté keeps the actress in extreme close-up for much of the film.

The sole woman in the courtroom, Joan cries and prays while steadfastly maintaining her faith, as the grotesque men around her leer, jeer, and take delight in her suffering. Recurring symbolism frames Joan as a Christ figure.

Butchered by censors upon release, a complete print of Dreyer's film was feared non-existent. In 1981, a complete print was discovered in, of all places, a janitor's closet at a mental hospital in Norway. The world is richer for it.

— Mark Voger, MarkVoger.com

ASK DR. BARB

Strategies to avoid eating for comfort

Dear Dr. Barb,

I am a single person who enjoys cooking and baking, but I fear that I have become obsessed with food. During the pandemic, I have been working from home, unable to travel, get together or go out with friends. I find that I am almost always thinking about what I am going to eat. Having a good meal seems to be my only pleasure these days, and eating is sometimes the only thing I have to look forward to. Even with the vaccine, I worry that it might be difficult to break this pattern. I do exercise regularly, but I am afraid that eating constantly will soon catch up with me. Could my focus on food be a sign of depression? Do you have any suggestions that might help?

Dear Reader,

Surveys are showing how the social isolation and the uncertainty of how to stay safe in the ongoing pandemic are taking its toll mentally. Now more than ever, individuals are struggling with feelings of anxiety, sadness and anger. Consequently, alcohol and drug abuse are on the uptick, as well as overeating and over exercising.

In your case, working from home, living alone and cut off from enjoyable social routines, you must be feeling some or all of the depressive symptoms mentioned. It seems that the routine of eating has become a source of emotional comfort for you.

Without accessing other sources of pleasure, you turn to eating, which allows for temporary escape and immediate reward.

Nevertheless, when life suddenly seems so out of control, the focus on food as a sole source of pleasure can go too far. Eating then turns to be obsessive and, like any other addictive behavior, it becomes compulsive

in nature. It is a good thing that you realize that you are stuck in this unhealthy habit and that you are seeking help before it becomes worse, even once you become vaccinated.

To begin with, in order to help yourself, focus on your self-care! Start by making and keeping a sensible shopping list to avoid buying foods that trigger out-of-control eating. Instead of loading up on sweets and carbs, consider healthy snack options to keep in easy reach like a veggie tray with hummus or a bowl of fresh fruit on your countertop.

Research shows that there are benefits to healthy eating. Healthy foods help reduce anxiety, improve energy and can boost mood. During a pandemic, these benefits are invaluable and improve one's ability to cope and sustain willpower.

Nevertheless, if you take an all-or-nothing approach, only eating healthy foods, your efforts will become unsustainable. Trying to be too strictly in control, ultimately, may lead to an uncontrollable binge. And, the feeling of self-defeat and shame that often follows will make it harder for you to stay motivated.

The best approach is to try to achieve a healthy balance and variety in your food choices. Focus on eating carbs, sweets and fats more moderately. Enjoy healthier options like vegetables, fruits and whole grains more generously.

Besides using self-care in your eating, try to bring more moments of pleasure into your time at home. Since you no longer have to commute to work, make the excess time an asset. With more time, it easier to try new pleasurable interests.

Perhaps there is a hobby you have always wanted to take up or books you wanted to read. There might even be old friends

whom previously you haven't had time to catch up with. Reach out to them!

On the other hand, try to stay clear of obstacles before creating new activities. If your goal is to take better care of yourself, you want to figure out how to make it as easy as possible. If the goal can be made easier, you are more likely to succeed.

For example, if you aim to practice better self-care, try to practice it in 15- to 30-minute increments throughout the day. This can include pleasurable activities like listening to music, calling a friend or even taking a short walk.

In general, some of the best advice to be given in times of crisis, is to try to stay positive. Negative thinking that the pandemic will never end only will add to your down mood.

One strategy to help keep positive in outlook is to put a pen and a notebook by your bed and do a nightly stress-dump of all the negative things on your mind. With the bedside notebook, you also can get a head start by making a short-to-do list of all the fun things you can do the next day.

At the end of the day, reflect on three good things that happened, large or small. This exercise helps decrease anxiety, counters depression and builds emotional resiliency. Right now, you may miss your pre-Covid social routines, like going out with friends. However, what we miss about the old routines often has more to do with the comfort of their regularity than sometimes even the activities themselves.

In many ways, times of uncertainty and feelings of loss come and go as part of the life cycle. It is best to learn to navigate through them in ways that are as healthy as possible. The good that we can extract through them can be learning more about



BARBARA ROSENBERG

ourselves and our unrecognized potential. Even living through the unprecedented, challenging times of a pandemic, one can grow stronger and become more adaptable for future crises.

Barbara L. Rosenberg, Ph.D, is a licensed psychologist whose Summit practice serves individuals of all ages, as well as couples and families. She previously chaired educational and social programs for the Essex-Union County Association of Psychologists. Contact her through BarbaraRosenberg.com or call her office at (908) 277-4206.



Photo illustration

During store outings, a shopping cart has been known to double as a walker.

Coping with dementia in the family

“What you need,” I told my baby sister Jan, who is now 61, “is a shopping cart at home.” True, a shopping cart would be a bit large for the retirement-community house Jan lives in with Dottie, our mother who just turned 87 and is in early Stage 3 dementia. But it might cut down on falls.

Unfortunately, Mom doesn't remember the falls, or the hospital stays that result.

She doesn't remember the time she ventured out of the house at about 4 in the morning to “check the mail,” and fell in the driveway. Around dawn, she was spotted by a neighbor on an early-morning dog-walk. (My sister has since installed a front-door alarm which sounds in her bedroom.)

Mom only remembers that she used to be

able to walk well. She thinks she still can, and there's no telling her otherwise.

Adult children of dementia patients have learned — in training and in practice — that arguing is pointless. Instead, we employ subterfuge. We change the subject.

For the most part, Mom gets around her home without incident. There's a lot of familiar furniture to steady herself on, and even some “grab bars” on the walls. They're 20-plus years old, from when our late father, Bill, was a stroke patient possessed of likewise shaky ambulatory skills.

My sister moved in with our mother two years ago, when Dottie began insisting that a neighbor was regularly breaking into her house to steal jewelry and dish detergent.

Since being diagnosed by a neurologist, Mom's condition has deteriorated. But having family around regularly has slowed that process. Still, I worry as much for my sister as for my mother. Clearly, Jan suffers from what is called “caregiver burnout.”

So what made me think of a shopping cart? My mother refuses to use a walker, which she believes carries a stigma. But the other day, when Jan and I took her to Walmart, she clutched a shopping cart without hesitation, and she zipped — relatively speaking — through the aisles.

And so, medical-equipment industry, here's my suggestion: Design a walker that looks like a shopping cart.

— Brad Volpe

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