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State park yurts had a sun-drenched interior thanks to an overhead skylight.

Outside but inside

In 2017, it was decided that all the round, canvas-sided shelters at five state parks would be replaced by small cabins.

Even if you have fond memories of outdoor overnights with fishing, lake swimming, nature hikes, fire-cooked meals, charred marshmallows and spooky stories heightened by forest sounds in the night, you may never have slept in a yurt.

But if you're lucky, you remember what it was like to listen to rain and watch lightning break the darkness through an overhead skylight that capped this camp structure that shielded from the elements. Maybe you pushed bunk beds together, forming something like a giant elevated crib beneath the stars because you hoped to reduce chances of encountering smaller visitors who left evidence of their presence beneath the lower bed cushions.

Officials said the yurts had to go because they were hard to keep clean, but we remember them fondly. One came to mind for this issue because summer always makes me think of camping.

Among its 51 state parks and forests, New Jersey has 19 state-operated campgrounds with a variety of activities. Many are pet-friendly, and pitching a tent is optional. Use the campground reservation system at Camping.NJ.gov to find and learn more about state campsites. Reserve cabins, sites for a group of tents, or for a personal trailer through Dec. 15.

Filter your search for those with bike or hiking trails, or areas for birding and flower viewing. Get park passes and fishing permits. Twelve sites rent boats or canoes, five rent bikes, most sell fishing bait or tackle, and all sell firewood. (To avoid



At Home New Jersey

A yurt at Brendan T. Byrne forest in 2015.

introducing forest-threatening insects, don't bring along your own wood.)

Camping can be an adventure with family and friends. Visit Brendan T. Byrne State Forrest and explore the Pine Barrens, the state's cranberry producing region that also gave the world the first cultivated blueberries. At Washington Crossing State Park, try a primitive camp.

A lesser camping thrill that endures is finding a flashlight for late-night runs over mossy ground and through the trees to the restroom and shower building. The lights might even go out, but you'll laugh later.

Kimberly L. Jackson
 Editor@AtHomeNJ.com

AT HOME NEW JERSEY

THE BEST OF LIFE WHERE YOU LIVE

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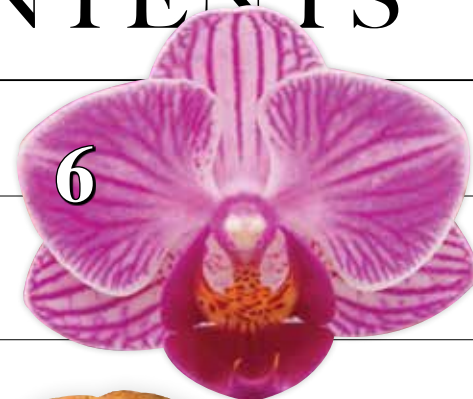
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On the cover: Summer thirst quenchers. Courtesy National Watermelon Promotion Board

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LOVE for lean pets



As part of an “End Pet Obesity” campaign to help pet parents learn about the health risks of even a few extra pounds, Hill’s Pet Nutrition suggests the L.O.V.E. test.

To help assess a pet’s weight, the pet food maker suggests the acronym for four actions: Locate the pet’s ribs, Observe from above, View from the side, Evaluate feeding behavior.

“We have been studying the impact of nutrition on how pets’ bodies function for over a decade,” said Karen Shenoy, chief veterinary officer of Hill’s Pet Nutrition U.S. “We learned lean pets have a different biology than overweight pets. This guided our development of formulas that both help support a pet’s metabolism for a healthy body weight and taste great.”

Those who have concerns about their pet’s weight should seek their veterinarian’s guidance. Ask about your pet’s ideal weight and how to reach it. Seek a veterinarian’s advice to choose the right food to maintain a healthy weight for your pet, and don’t forget that pets also need exercise.
iStock photo by Terry J.



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An American Robin feeds its fledgling. Male and female birds share parenting duties.

Feathered fathers

By Richard Elliott

Nesting season is in full swing, and some local birds, like Black-capped Chickadees, have already raised this year’s brood and sent them off into the world.

Rearing families from egg to fledgling is a joint venture for most of our backyard birds. With a nod towards Father’s Day, let’s look at how male birds help out to varying degrees. Males guard the nest and chicks against predators. They bring food to Mom as she sits on the eggs to incubate them. Males also bring food to their young after they hatch.

Male woodpeckers are often given the Best Dads distinction, since they help out with incubating eggs and brooding the newly hatched chicks to keep them warm and as they grow. They also give Mom a break at night, incubating the eggs as well as brooding the nestlings — all that while still finding time to feed the family.

By our standards, baby birds grow fast. Songbirds can take as little as two weeks to go from a newly hatched, featherless chick to a flight-ready juvenile. Before leaving the nest, many juvenile birds can be up to a third larger than their parents! Once out of the nest, Mom and Dad teach them how to find food for the first few weeks, and they need that extra weight to help them survive as they learn to forage.

At first, Mom and Dad bring food to their fledglings, and we often get to witness this behavior both at our feeders and on our lawns. Most baby birds are able to maintain short flights, but need a couple of weeks to gain the muscle necessary for

a prolonged time in the air.

We may see newly fledged birds on the ground or perched in a tree, waiting to be fed. Early on, young birds need soft, easy-to-swallow foods like insects and worms. But, as they mature, young backyard birds are often introduced to our feeders. Frequently this happens with one or two young at a time, but the young of Common Grackles and European Starlings can sometimes mob a feeder in a noisy, frenetic affair.

How bird feeders help

Bird feeders are an important supplemental food source for parents and young alike. Studies have shown that broods whose parents have access to feeders are more successful than those who do not. This may result from the parents being able to concentrate more on feeding their young, and less on worrying about feeding themselves.

As mentioned before, we might find some young birds on the ground at this time of year, and that is perfectly normal.

If you come across a young feathered bird on the ground, observe it for a while before intervening, if at all. Are the parents nearby? Is it threatened by a predator? Does it look sick? As long as the fledgling seems reasonably safe, just observe.

Learn more about helping an injured or orphaned bird at TheRaptorTrust.org, our local wildlife rehabber’s website. At 1390 White Bridge Road in Millington, The Raptor Trust is home to disabled birds housed in large outdoor aviaries, which can be viewed by walking along trails.

Richard Elliott is owner of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Scotch Plains.



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A checkup for houses

Eventually, all the building products in a home will need to be replaced, so it's a good idea to annually assess your home so any problems can be addressed as needed.

It may be time for a new roof or to replace your windows or front door. All these projects can also add to the curb appeal and overall value of your home.

Summer is a good time of year to do a top to bottom survey of a home's exterior features using the suggestions below.

If you get in the practice of evaluating these six items regularly, you can be sure you are staying on top of your home's needs and keeping it looking its best.

Check the roof. Using either a ladder, or binoculars from across the street, look for problem areas, such as missing or broken shingles, along with roofing tiles that may be loose and flapping in the wind. These are all indications that a new roof may be in your future. If that's the case, research products such as polymer shake and slate roofing tiles. These impact-resistant tiles are man-made in a wide variety of colors.

Clean and assess the siding. Scrubbing and/or pressure-washing with environmentally friendly detergents will work well for many homes to remove the dirt and algae that can grow on siding. Remember never to pressure-wash trim pieces, windows or their screens. The extreme high pressure could crack or destroy the caulking around the units. While cleaning the siding, make sure to check for changes in the exterior, and be alert to buckling, warping, peeling paint or insect damage that will always need to be investigated.

Check the gutters. Don't underestimate the importance of the gutter system on your home. Each year, homeowners should check to make sure their gutters are clean, leak-free, unclogged, securely attached to the home and that they remain sloped for proper drainage. Plus, make sure the water running off the roof doesn't cause damage to the house, landscaping or other property.

Evaluate the windows. If your home's windows don't operate easily, or there's air leaking in or out, or there's condensation between the glass panes, it may be time to consider replacement windows.

Vinyl framed windows have the highest growth rate in the country due to their energy-efficiency, aesthetic appeal and durability. Some of the best have fusion-welded corners and multi-chambered construction. Plus, maintenance hassles are so low that you can forget the horrors of rotting frames, and the scraping and repainting that come with wood windows. Vinyl home windows offer a variety of features. There are many color options for exterior frames beyond the usual white, and energy efficient windows will often qualify for a federal income tax credit. See EnergyStar.gov for details.

Spend time with your doors. If you can see light around a door from inside, it's probably time for a new door. Even if you can't see light, air may be moving through gaps in the weather stripping at a surprising rate. More support for replacement: your door is warped, or it's hard to close or lock it.

Also, think about the weather conditions your home's doors face, and the amount of your energy bills. If either run to the extreme, consider replacing an inefficient entryway with a high-performance fiberglass door. These can have up to four times more insulation value than wood doors.

Look at accessories. Spend some time with your shutters, trim and louvers to see if they are rotting or deteriorating. Check for water spots, decay or peeling paint in the bottoms and tops of columns and near the joints in crown and other mouldings. See if they're deteriorating in any way. They may also be suffering from termites, insect infestations or warping.

When it's time to replace these features, low-maintenance urethane or PVC products are lightweight and easy to install.



Courtesy Fypon

Check your home regularly — from its roof to its foundation — to keep it looking lovely and to be sure all the essential systems remain in good working order.



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Mixed messages

Unscramble a quote from the 35th president of the United States. Solution on AtHomeNJ.com



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si nweh eht uns si nnsghii.
—nohj f. neyneck

Make room to work



Courtesy Benjamin Moore/Fernwood Green

A fresh coat of paint can create a relaxed mood and help reduce the stress that can come with doing business in a household space that wasn't designed for working.

Many people have been working from home more frequently. Getting organized can help in tackling work and home management tasks more efficiently.

Making the workspace a priority — especially if it's used for both work and household document storage — can reduce frustration when the environment is more orderly and supports work at home.

These five tips can help get you started:

1. Make sure you have furniture that can adequately store your stuff, including plenty of space for files, reference books and computer equipment. Pieces need not be costly to be functional and there are many attractive options available online and through small and major retailers.

2. Arrange the space with both its intended use and your own work style in mind. For example, if you don't need to spread out over a large, flat work area, such as a table, eliminate that space, if possible, so it won't invite clutter.

3. Place within arm's reach the items you rely on frequently, such as a calculator or ruler. They can then easily be put

away between uses. Capture these items in containers and bins to keep the space looking as neat and uncluttered as possible.

4. Establish a filing system that lets you keep track of important papers. Whether you alphabetize, color code or use some other method, group paperwork into categories such as bills, banking, health care, auto, insurance etc. for easy future access. If your town accepts shredded paper in municipal waste collection, have a shredder handy for any sensitive documents. Otherwise, set aside a bag or bin for such papers so they can easily be transported to a bulk shredding location.

5. Tangled cords can make even the most organized spaces look messy, and they also may pose a fire risk or tripping hazard. Get control of cords by securing them with ties or clips. Store away devices you don't use regularly, and remember to use a surge-protected power strip to minimize the chance of damage should a power surge occur.

To find more home-related ideas, visit eLivingtoday.com from Family Features.



Built-in cabinets create work areas that blend seamlessly with a home's living space.

An office in disguise

Tuck in the chair, and the cabinet assembly shown above is a display and storage spot in a bedroom or family room. The laptop, the papers, the trash bin and the office supplies that would identify it as a place of work are all tucked away behind sleek doors.

It's one example from Wellborn Cabinet to show how working from home can be a happier prospect when a workspace is integrated into your dwelling's overall decor. Here, anything that suggests work is neatly and conveniently stored behind doors in shelves, drawers and pull-outs — all out of sight for a soothing visual when the work day ends.



A hutch rises high to expand work-area storage. Premier series cabinets with crown molding support a cohesive design that coordinates a joint family room and kitchen.

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The chosen plants of 2023

It's the Year of the Orchid.

And the year of amaryllis, and spirea, and rudbeckia and celosia — and broccoli.

This according to the National Garden Bureau, which each year highlights several plants, providing an overview and history of each candidate on NGB.org, as well as planting tips and information about the various species and cultivars.

Spirea, for instance, are sturdy, fast-growing little shrubs that love full sun.

“Once established, they are one of the lowest maintenance, easy-to-grow shrubs,” according to the site. “Unlike some landscape plants, every few years you can prune spirea hard, by as much as two-thirds, if you want to clean up overgrown plants.”

The benefits go on: Spirea tolerate poor soil, pollution, drought, heat and extreme cold temperatures. They are rarely — if ever — grazed by deer, rabbits and other wildlife. However, their small blooms call butterflies, bees and other pollinators.

While fall is the best time to plant them, the garden board advises that spirea can be tucked in anytime during the growing season. Just be sure the plant's early hydration needs are met.

“Spirea prefer well-drained soil that should be kept moist their first year, watering deeply, especially during summer heat. Once established, minimal supplemental watering should be needed.”

Broccoli, the garden bureau notes, is a relative of cabbage, cauliflower and turnips. Since the plant prefers cooler weather, look for young nursery plants in late summer. In containers, grow one plant per 2-gallon pot.

We show examples of other 2023 plants. *Find expert garden guidance at NGB.org.*



Orchid: Brought to us from rain forests, these epiphytes typically attach to trees to live on decaying bark and tropical showers. Numerous types are more widely available, challenging hobbyists support reblooming.



Celosia: There are 45 different species of celosia, which is in the amaranth family. Plants of many heights, shapes and colors are divided into three groups by flower form: the flame-like plumosa (above), cristata types with wavy cockscomb flowers (left) and spicata types whose rounded flower shape resembles the human brain. Celosia does not like this area's heavy clay soil, so it's easiest to grow in pots or raised beds. The leaves of some celosia are edible.



Spirea: Got a sunny, challenging landscape? Chances are spirea can thrive in it. Once established, it's a no-maintenance plant that rewards neglect with beauty in summer flower clusters and leaves that turn red, gold and bronze in fall. There are many choices, too.



Amaryllis: There are more than 600 named varieties of this plant that produces large, stunning flowers indoors over the winter. Many will bloom without soil — over water or from wax-coated bulbs.



Rudbeckia: This easy-to-grow native perennial comes in a vast range of old and new varieties. It blooms all summer and thrives in the heat. Butterflies and bees love it, and birds dine on seeds as flowers fade.



Pick your share of flowers

Zinnias, shown growing at Dreyer Farms, are sun-loving annual flowers that come in so many shapes and colors. Long stems make them perfect for arrangements, and cutting the stems actually stimulates the plants to grow more flowers. Zinnias and other farm-grown flowers are used in the farm store's summer bouquets, and available for cutting by Flower Share members. Sign up at the farm or on DreyerFarms.com to clip flowers each week for your own bouquets, starting mid July. Fresh flowers in your vases all summer for less than \$100! Want to grow your own? The garden center has numerous flowering plants.

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Gomphrena

Globe amaranth reaches 24 inches tall with a bushy habit. Two great varieties for cutting are 'Purple' and 'Strawberry Fields,' which resembles small red berries on long straight stems. Some have glittering golden flecks. Gomphrena dries well, fading slightly. It can be displayed all year.



Ageratum

Here's a closeup of ageratum, shown in early bloom. The small, fuzzy looking flowers come in shades of blue. They grow 30 inches tall and bloom all summer, making them another good candidate for cutting. The blossoms grow in tight clusters and will add both color and texture to arrangements. Some other flowers to grow for cutting are tall marigolds, celosia, asters, dahlias, gladiolas, strawflowers and cleome. There's no limit to the variety of flowers available, and there are always more choices to enhance the outdoor and indoor flower palette.

Sunflowers

The most recognizable garden flowers can reach up to 10 feet tall. Huge round flower heads have yellow, bronze or maroon petals and spirals of florets and seed pods in the center. Awe-inspiring size can make them a favorite candidate to grow with children, and their long stem makes them a natural choice for cutting. They look amazing alone or grouped together in a sturdy vase. Several lower-growing sunflowers have more manageable habits, but there is a breathtaking beauty in the Mammoth sunflower and its death-defying climb into the upper altitudes. In fall, let some of your sunflowers mature on the plant so birds can enjoy the seeds.





Whip this up: Berries, cherries, grapes and cuts of summer fruit can glamorize plain doughnuts (or bagel halves or cookies or crackers) when artfully held in place by flavored cream cheese. Pipe it on in neat little dabs for the prettiest presentation, or just spread it to top with varied fruit displays for an impressive, low-effort breakfast, brunch or dessert platter.

Get together!

Skewer salad: Long bamboo paddle picks (found at ShopRite stores) are a carrier that can make salad sexier. Enjoy with family and friends by skewering grape or cherry tomatoes, cuts of sweet red bell pepper, olives and balls of marinated mozzarella with fresh leaves of basil, baby spinach or arugula. Add sliced radishes, mini cucumbers and any other small vegetables you enjoy. Marinate the veggies before skewering, or serve skewers with cups of dressing for dipping. These salad sticks will bring color to the party at any outdoor gathering, and go great with whatever's coming off the grill.



Have a ball: A melon baller (found at Clark Acme) is a spoon-like swivel tool to scoop balls from soft fruits and vegetables. Watermelon balls can be added to infused water, sangria or other drinks; frozen to chill cocktails; or spiked. Boil 1/3 cup water, add 1/3 cup sugar, stir and cook 3 minutes. Add 1/2 cup rum, simmer 2 minutes. Let cool. Stir in 1 teaspoon lime zest, 1/3 cup of lime juice. Pour over balls. Chill 4 hours or more.



Mix melons: Watermelon syrup sweetens many cocktail recipes at Watermelon.org. Combine 2 cups seedless watermelon cubes and 1 cup sugar in a small saucepan. Use a muddler (or potato masher) to press watermelon and sugar together, releasing liquid to dissolve sugar. On medium heat, stir and simmer for 5 minutes. Pour through a fine mesh sieve into a pitcher, pressing solids to extract liquid. For 2 margaritas, shake 1 ounce syrup, 4 ounces tequila, 2 ounces lime juice and 4 ounces strained watermelon juice. Pour over ice.



Drink light: Infused water is gorgeous when fresh herbs and fruits are floated in a pitcher or glasses. For still or sparkling water, add combinations such as rosemary sprigs and grapefruit slices, mint leaves and lime (shown), tarragon and orange, or lemon and basil. Another option is to offer a variety of chilled fruit juices and cut them with chilled seltzer for a healthful alternative to sodas. Hire an older kid to staff the juice bar, and let guests pick fruity garnishes. A variety of choices will add excitement to the summer refreshment. For adults, sparklers made of white or rosé wine are lighter than sugared sangria. To mix them, just use a ratio of one part well chilled club soda or seltzer with 3 parts of a chilled dry or sweet varietal you enjoy. Garnish sparklers with fruit slices or a few berries.



Angel hair pasta in beet pesto

(4 servings)

8 ounces angel hair pasta or spaghetti
 2 cups chopped cooked beets
 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
 1 small clove garlic, minced
 1/4 cup walnut pieces, toasted
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
 2 ounces crumbled goat cheese
 4 teaspoons chopped fresh chives

1. Cook pasta according to package directions; drain.

2. In a food processor or blender, pulse beets, Parmesan, garlic, walnuts, lemon juice, salt, pepper and 2 tablespoons of water to blend. Drizzle in olive oil while processing until nearly smooth. Toss pesto with hot pasta, sprinkle with goat cheese and chives. Serve immediately.

Nutrition information (per serving): 301 calories, 24g fat (7g saturated), 33mg cholesterol, 558mg sodium, 15g carbs, 3g fiber, 7g sugars, 11g protein

— Adapted recipe, photo courtesy National Pasta Association. More recipes at ShareThePasta.org

Veggie pastas with fewer carbs

The latest red, green and golden pastas are made of flours ground from lentils, chickpeas and other beans, sometimes with cauliflower or sweet potato thrown in. They're free of wheat and other grains, and some can be a good choice for those watching carbohydrate intake.

A 2-ounce serving (about 1 dry cup) of Al Dente brand's red lentil and sweet potato pasta (shown at Prince's Farm Stand) has 30 grams of carbs and 3 grams of fiber at 190 calories. Wheat pastas typically have more than 40 grams of carbs with 3 grams of fiber in the same serving size.

Short twists of the Al Dente pasta added appetizing color and subtle flavor to our grilled calamari or scallop salad (page 12).

If you can imagine your favorite sauce over black spaghetti, Red Bank-based Explore Cuisine offers even fewer carbs in black bean pasta. This variety doesn't need a drop of squid ink to hold its dark color. A 2-ounce serving of the spaghetti (found at Clark ShopRite) has 19 grams of carbohydrate and an impressive 14 grams



of fiber. The company also makes pasta with other beans. We broke up thin, pale green lengths of the edamame and mung bean fettuccine for a tasty, toothsome complement to creamy ripe avocado and fresh tomatoes in a pasta dish on page 12.



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Salad bites and quick meals

A deliciously light summer meal idea from Prince's Farm Stand: Spoon the Hidden Chickpea's addictive chicken salad into round leaves of butter lettuce. Top each salad cup with a pineapple chunk for sweetness, cuts of red bell pepper for color, and a scattering of peanuts for crunch. Easy, pretty, yummy!

Ask for a bunch of the farm stand's fresh basil (it's cut to order), grab some Jersey tomatoes, an avocado and a bag of pasta. You'll only need to boil the pasta and do a little chopping for an Italian food expert's

surprisingly simple pasta dish (page 12).

Or pair a farm stand sauce with ravioli filled with lobster, braised beef, creamy vegan spinach, or the fun mac & cheese.

On no-cook days, assemble a snack board with crudites of fresh Jersey veggies and assorted pickles. Round things out with cubes of the farm stand's local cheeses, nuts and summer fruit.

Follow Prince's on Instagram or Facebook for food and gardening events, and to know when prepared meals (many vegan), pies and other baked goods are delivered.

Use your noodle

Easy options can make pasta summer's best friend



Chicken pasta salad & chutney dressing

(6 servings)

2 cups dry salad macaroni (ditalini)
2 cups diced grilled chicken or smoked turkey
2 cups California red seedless grapes
3/4 cup diced celery
1/3 cup diced red onion
1/4 cup sliced green onion
2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley (optional)
Chutney-inspired dressing (recipe follows)

1. In a large pot of water, boil pasta according to package directions. Drain and add to a large bowl with remaining ingredients.

2. Dressing: In blender, process until smooth 1/2 cup **mayonnaise**, 1/2 cup **marmalade** or apricot preserves, 1 tablespoon **apple cider vinegar**, 1 teaspoon **raisins**, 1 teaspoon peeled and finely grated **fresh ginger**, 1 teaspoon water, 1 teaspoon **ground cumin**, 1/2 teaspoon **ground coriander** and 1/4 teaspoon **ground cinnamon**. Toss with salad.

Nutrition information (per serving): 351 calories, 9g fat (2g saturated), 51mg cholesterol, 194mg sodium, 51g carbs, 2g fiber, 19g sugars, 19g protein

— Adapted recipe, photo courtesy GrapesFromCalifornia.com

Lemony grilled calamari with ziti

(4 servings)

2 generous cups dry ziti rigati
6 ounces calamari bodies or small scallops
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1 cup sliced celery
2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Cook ziti according to package directions. As pasta cooks, heat grill or grill pan over high heat. Pat calamari or scallops

dry; season with salt and pepper. Toss in vegetable oil. Grill calamari or skewered scallops about 1 minute per side, until nicely grill marked and just cooked through. Slice calamari in 1/4-inch rings. Place drained pasta, calamari or scallops and celery in a bowl. Toss with parsley, lemon juice and olive oil. Season to taste.

Nutrition information (per serving): 305 calories, 11g fat (2g saturated), 42mg cholesterol, 378mg sodium, 25g carbs, 1g fiber, 1g sugars, 25g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy National Pasta Association. More at SharethePasta.org



Pasta alla Destefanis

(4 servings)

1 ripe Haas avocado (soft but not wrinkled)
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3/4 pound fresh, sweet, vine-ripened cherry tomatoes or other fresh, vine-ripened tomatoes
1 small clove garlic, pressed or minced
2 or 3 leaves fresh basil, torn into small pieces
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, or to taste
Freshly ground white or black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons kosher salt
8 ounces dry short-cut pasta (macaroni, shells)

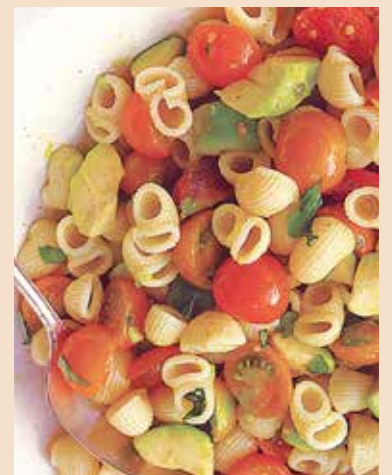
2 ounces Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

1. Fill an ample pot with 5 quarts of cold water and bring to a rapid boil.
2. Halve avocado, remove pit, scoop out flesh and dice. Toss with olive oil in a serving bowl.
3. If using cherry tomatoes, slice in quarters, or if very small, in halves. For larger tomatoes: core, slice and cut in small dice.
4. In the serving bowl, toss tomatoes, garlic, basil, sea salt and pepper with avocado.
5. To boiling water, add kosher salt, followed

by pasta. Return to a rolling boil. Follow pasta manufacturer's cooking directions for "al dente." Drain, reserving about 1/2 cup of cooking water. Immediately toss hot pasta with tomato-avocado sauce. Add a little pasta water if necessary to moisten. Sprinkle with Parmesan and serve.

Nutrition information (per serving): 454 calories, 27g fat (6g saturated), 10mg cholesterol, 578mg sodium, 44g carbs, 7g fiber, 3g sugars, 13g protein

— Recipe courtesy Julia della Croce. More at JuliaDellaCroce.com. Photo by Nathan Hoyt





Grilled cauliflower pasta in lemon-tahini sauce

(6 servings)

2 cups dry pasta shells
6 cups cauliflower florets
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon dried thyme
1/2 teaspoon smoked sweet paprika
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
Lemon-tahini sauce (recipe follows)
1 cup chopped tomatoes
1/3 cup chopped red onion

1/3 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
Lemon wedges

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside. Meanwhile, heat grill to medium-high.

2. In a large bowl, toss cauliflower, oil, thyme, paprika, salt and pepper. Grill in a perforated pan, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 12 minutes or until cauliflower is tender and lightly charred.

3. Lemon-tahini sauce: Stir 2 tablespoons **tahini paste**, gradually adding 1/4 cup **fresh lemon juice** and 2 tablespoon water until smooth. Stir in 1 clove minced **garlic**, 1/4 teaspoon **ground cumin** and a pinch each of **salt** and **cayenne pepper**.

4. In a large bowl, combine pasta, cauliflower and sauce. Stir in tomatoes, onion and parsley. Serve with lemon wedges.

Variation: Add 1/2 cup chopped cucumbers and 1/4 cup sliced olives to salad.

Nutrition information (per serving):
255 calories, 9g fat (1g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 236mg sodium, 38g carbs, 5g fiber, 4g sugars, 9g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy National Pasta Association. More recipes at SharethePasta.org

Broccoli, olive oil and orecchiette

Orecchiette, which means “little ears” in Italian, is one of those less common pasta shapes that can impress with its relative novelty. Most pasta is designed to be a carrier for sauces, and orecchiette does the job well, delivering a little pocket of flavor in each tiny bowl.

Broccoli sauteed in olive oil with a little garlic is a great complement to any pasta shape, and you can give this combination a bit more heft if you make a broccoli pesto to blend with a half pound (8 ounces) of pasta. For the most nutritious meal, always aim to use more vegetables than pasta.

For the pesto: Cook pasta according to package directions. While it cooks, load the food processor with 5 cups of cooked, cooled **broccoli florets**, the zest and juice of half a **lemon**, 1/4 cup **fresh basil leaves**, 2 ounces freshly grated **Parmesan cheese**, 1/4 cup **nuts** (pine, walnuts, almonds), 3 cloves peeled **garlic**, 1/2 teaspoon **salt** and 1/4 teaspoon **ground black pepper**. Process while drizzling in enough **olive oil** (2 tablespoons to 1/4 cup) to reach desired consistency. Scrape down bowl sides as needed. Adjust seasoning to taste and toss with cooked pasta for 8 servings.



Perfect pairings

For a nutrient-packed meal, pasta can be a great delivery system for vegetables.

Top your chosen pasta with chopped fresh or frozen cooked vegetables and a favorite bottled sauce. Instead of meat, try adding vegetables to a light tomato sauce to give your pasta plenty of flavor, nutrients and appetizing color. Toss cooked pasta with grated or chopped carrots, baby greens and any other salad vegetables you enjoy.

The National Pasta Association offers the following tips to make more meals with pasta that are easy and nutritious with a variety of enjoyable flavors and textures.

Start sauces with broth. As an alternative to cream and butter, start with a base of broth, vegetables, or vegetable purees and add spices and fresh herbs for flavor.

Enrich with vegetables. Experiment with vegetables that can simulate the texture of fats. To slim down your favorite lasagna recipe, for example, puree two large roasted and peeled eggplants and blend with ricotta so you can cut the amount of cheese used in half. Mashed ripe avocados bring in creamy texture and help the body absorb vitamins from other vegetables. Pureed roasted red peppers also make a fast, great-tasting sauce.

Think fresh. In summer, it's easy to keep fresh herbs on hand as a quick way to add lots of flavor. Basil, which has a very fresh, delicate essence, is best added to

sauces at the last minute to protect its flavor. Rosemary is woody, so it's especially suited to cream sauces and earthy ingredients, such as mushrooms. Because sage is so pungent, it stands up well in heartier pasta dishes with veal and pork.

Tap the blender. Create your own combinations of cooked vegetable purees. Use a juicer for raw veggies and you can simmer the liquid with your favorite herbs and spices before tossing with cooked pasta.

Bring in beans. Pairing pasta with low-fat dairy products or legumes such as beans and lentils makes protein-rich but inexpensive and delicious meatless meals.

Remember texture. Add a toss of toasted pine nuts or toasted chopped walnuts to a creamy pasta sauce for added crunchy interest.

Save time. Double your favorite recipes and freeze the extra servings for later use. This works especially well with sauces and baked pasta dishes like lasagne.

Don't be afraid to substitute. If you planned to use zucchini in a pasta dish, but the mushrooms look particularly good, use mushrooms.

Repurpose leftovers. Add unused cooked pasta to your favorite soup or salad. (To add dry pasta to a soup, add a little more broth and simmer for an additional 5 to 10 minutes until the pasta is cooked.)



Less is more: When creating an impromptu pasta dish, remember that “less is more” and limit the number of ingredients you use. Toss pasta with a little olive oil, tomato, fresh basil or broth for a simple sauce. By marinating tomatoes, chopped fresh mozzarella and fresh basil leaves in a little oil and tossing them with hot pasta you can have a quick, healthy meal in no time.

A deli-cious choice: Instead of a sandwich for lunch, think of pasta as an alternative to bread. Cubes of well chosen deli meat can add a flavorful hit of protein to basic macaroni salad. But why not expand with red onion, tomato, a scatter of grated cheese or anything you might enjoy between sliced bread? For a flavor twist, try cubed ham with the hearty potato pasta gnocchi, as shown below. Just blend a good store-bought pesto with mayonnaise for an easy dressing.



How much pasta?

For a single portion of spaghetti, angel hair, vermicelli or linguine, grab a clutch of the dry pasta that's about half-inch diameter. (There are tools that make this easy to measure.) This will equal about 2 uncooked ounces for a serving of about 1 cooked cup.

For egg noodles and short pastas, such as macaroni, shells and ziti, the standard serving size of 2 uncooked ounces is roughly equal to 1/2 cup dry, also about 1 cup cooked. (Bulkier shapes such as bowties, rigatoni and wide noodles may yield more, while smaller shapes such as stars or alphabets may yield less. A 2-ounce serving of lighter weight veggie pastas can be about a cup. A single portion of most sauces is also a 1/2 cup.

Make meals more enjoyable by serving fun pasta shapes — stars, letters, wheels and bowties (farfalle). Introduce young eaters to finger-friendly ziti, rotini and radiatore.

If you get excited about unique pasta from Italy, look for Flowers from Torino's brand (found at Clark ShopRite). The durum wheat pasta is blended with red bell pepper, beets, tomato, spinach or turmeric for its mix of “blooms” in five natural colors, shown above.

It's market Saturday!

On any summer Saturday, baskets of just-picked vegetables and fruits draw early birds to what's usually the parking lot of Scotch Plains Municipal Building.

These shoppers seek out the best selection of Jersey produce, sold at the Scotch Plains Farmers Market by people who grew it. Farming vendors bring variety to their tables with heirloom tomatoes and vegetables in surprising colors. Go regularly and you'll see what each week of the season has to offer: leafy beets and carrots, glistening peppers, humongous garlic and assorted squash. Strawberries, peaches and melons rule in summer but give way to amazing apples in the fall.

The market is a setting where friends and neighbors meet over the vast selection of rye breads and sweets baked in Elizabeth, microgreens sprouted in Scotch Plains, jams cooked up in Gillette and artisanal piero-



gies the roll in from Rahway. There's world of baked goods with cookies and other treats. Try Italian biscottini or fruity filled French macarons (not to be confused with coconut macaroons).

Greek Donut Bar gives a more accessible name to *loukoumades*, bite-sized fried puffs of dough. For the market, they might be drizzled with chocolate and strawberry sauce and topped with cookie crumbs or sprinkles. There's classic walnut, and as-sorted combinations that create PB&J, apple pie and other flavors.

Breadsmith brings the cinnamon with buns and its must-have cobblestone bread (shown left). There are cookies, muffins, scones and other breads from the Cranford bakery. For a quick lunch, try one of the buns that have spinach and feta, pepperoni and mozzarella, bacon and cheddar, or sausage, peppers and onions baked inside.

Craft spirits, mixers and beer

Ever had a mead? It's a fermented drink that starts with honey and yeast. Beach Bee Meadery in Long Branch produces fruity, herby hard ciders and dry, sweet, sparkling and hopped meads. Earl Grey Lemon is a cider that involves the namesake tea. For Wake Zone, their mead made with wildflower and avocado honey is infused with Costa Rican coffee and hints of chocolate and vanilla.

For cocktails, Potent Potables of Red Bank sells its mixers with fruits, flowers, herbs, spices and other botanicals.

Also look for Montclair Brewery which on certain Saturdays will offer a variety of its craft lagers and ales. Some of their brews tap allspice, baobab fruit and other exciting flavors of the Caribbean and West Africa.

Closer to home, Tree City Vodka brings crafted spirits to market from its Kenilworth distillery. Some vodka is infused with lavender, hibiscus, rose or jalapeño. The brand's CitroCello has a blend of orange and grapefruit.



Nashville Attitude, among the market's live performers.



At Home New Jersey photos

Vicky Fallon at her Aunt Vicky's Bickys market stand.

Dogs will be glad to meet Vicky Fallon, maker of Aunt Vicky's Bickys. She offers a rotating selection from her 40 biscuit flavors named after dogs she's known. There's her best seller, Pedro's Peanut Butter Paws, or the Ozzie Cheddar Animal Crackers. She makes bacon, egg and cheese biscuits. Some treats have beans, sweet potatoes or apples.

"I try to keep everything as natural as possible," Fallon says. "I don't use salt, sugar or white flour."

She's learned what dogs like from selling her biscuits for years at Ramsey Farmers Market closer to her home in Bergen County. "When I first started, all of my friends' dogs were taste testers," she says. Cats weren't so easy.

She sells only one cat treat, her single success after trying many recipes on her own cats — even one with catnip.

"They wanted to play with it, but they wouldn't eat it."

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A friendlier dragon fruit

With its hot pink coat and an impressive crown of radiating green scales, dragon fruit is one of those produce-section eye catchers.

Split the thing open and there's even more dazzle in its seed-speckled flesh. That really looks great on a fruit. But taste it and the flavor doesn't really stand up to its style — or the high price curiosity might prompt you to pay.

Maybe you've just passed them by.

Stop for the golden variety, though. We're seeing them more frequently, and they are a true eating experience. Just slice one in half and use a spoon to scoop out the soft flesh.

Yellow dragon fruit isn't nearly as showy as other types, but it's sweeter, juicy and far more flavorful. The black seeds are easy to chew with a crispy, snap-crackle-pop quality that, texturally, is a bit like puffed rice cereal. The seeds aren't hard like those in blackberries and raspberries.

While the flashy, flavor-challenged pink dragon fruit can showcase its stunning polka dot flesh in a dessert, cocktail or salad, choose the yellow type and it will bring along soft-spoken good taste when it joins the flavor party.

Years ago, we were captivated by an image of a dish where spicy prawns were paired with balls of speckled white dragon fruit and served in a hollowed out dragon fruit shell. In this case, eye appeal and a savory sauce likely stepped up to cover for the fruit's unremarkable taste.

Inspired by that dish, we hollowed out a golden dragon fruit using a melon baller and mixed the balls with blueberries, canteloupe and watermelon. We spooned the salad into the thick shells to present two individual servings.

You may know dragon fruit as the pitaya of smoothie bowl fame. Those use a vibrant red-fleshed dragon fruit that we've never seen in area stores. We *have* seen red skinned dragon fruits that cost \$10 apiece; the yellow type typically cost about \$5. If you buy one, don't let yellow dragon fruit get lost in a smoothie. Let it get cold and refreshing in the fridge, then slice it open and enjoy.



All show: Have you tried red dragon fruit? Don't be surprised if it's all flash and no flavor. It's culinary value is mostly decorative. For eating, look for the plainer but tastier varieties that have yellow skin but the same seed-speckled flesh within.

Photo illustration



Yellow dragon fruit is a sweeter variety appearing more frequently.

Nutrition information: They're good for you

With its texture and flavor that has been described as a cross between a kiwi and a pear, all types of dragon fruit bring an impressive amount of fiber thanks to their pleasantly chewable seeds.

According to the USDA, 6 ounces of dragon fruit have 102 calories and about 5 grams of fiber with 22 grams of carbohydrate. It's also a good source of calcium, iron, magnesium, riboflavin, Vitamin C and other nutrients.

While peak dragon fruit season is said to be December through February, we are seeing them all through the year at Asian markets and stores that specialize in produce. The fruit is now being grown more widely in Asia, Mexico and Central and South America.

Dragon fruits are tropical fruits in the cactus family and they grow among strappy succulent limbs from sprawling vines that can climb and cover structures. Yellow dragon fruits start out with spines that drop off as the fruit matures. The red types grow long, leafy scales with any prickly spines more likely to be on the plant's long limbs.

To pick a good one, look for dragon fruit with firm, waxy looking skin that's free of wrinkles or dark spots, especially around protruding areas. They should give slightly when squeezed and feel heavy for their size, indicating a juicy fruit. The flesh has a high water content, making dragon fruit a great natural hydration source with a summer-perfect mildly tangy, somewhat floral flavor.



The skin of a dragon fruit is inedible, but when the fruit is scooped out, a thick-walled shell remains. It can be a vessel for presenting fruit salads and desserts into which the seeded flesh is blended. Crisp edible seeds look striking in the white fruit. They add dietary fiber, and they're also fun to crunch.

At Home New Jersey photos

Bring on the fizz



Mark Roper

Yeast-hosting foods in bottles of sugar water are capped with balloons inflated by the release of carbon dioxide.

From sourdough to kombucha to kimchi to meads, there's been a growing interest in fermentation.

Whether it relates to the prospect of improved health with the introduction of probiotic or "good" bacteria to the digestive system or just a desire to create tasty foods and drinks, many are experimenting at home with yeasts and other microbes whose activity releases carbon dioxide.

Carbon dioxide is added for the fizz in factory sodas and seltzers, but sparkling beverages have been made by nature around the world for eons. Anyone who has left juice in the fridge too long may have tasted evidence that carbonation and the progression of juice to an alcoholic drink are natural processes.

In "Wild Drinks" Sharon Flynn offers recipes and guidance to explore "the new old world of small-batch brews, ferments and infusions."

Flynn, an Australian expert, says her recipes are from "tinkering, observations, tastings, travel, reading, conversations and research."

"I have been fermenting all kinds of things from all over the world since my early twenties," she writes. "I learned about the direct connection between living foods and drinks, our precious and vulnerable microbiome and its own very real connection to our brain and moods."

Microbiome is the world of bacteria that live in and on

our bodies, and by "living foods" she means those such as yogurt, sauerkraut and drinks teeming with microbes that research suggests may enhance bodily functions.

"Not only can you brew kombucha and kefir in your kitchen," she says, you can brew beer, sake, *makgeolli* (a Korean rice beer), *kvass*, cider, mead and all kinds of sodas." Make sparkling soda out of everyday herbs, flowers, fruits and veggies (and use the scraps to make vinegar).

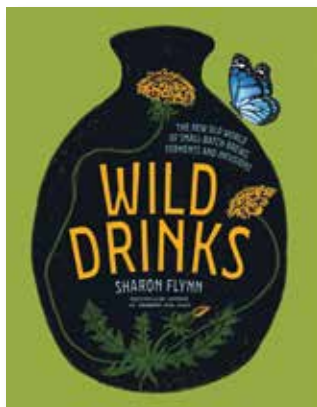
Which brings us back to fizz-making carbon dioxide and how yeasts and other microbes produce it, along with alcohol, as a result of their activity.

"To catch and activate wild yeasts, you need fruit, vegetables or another medium with yeast living on it, and sugars to feed those yeasts and coax them to grow," Flynn writes.

In a recipe for the Eastern European drink *kvass*, dark toasted, dark rye bread is added to a jar with water, sugar, honey, malt and raisins. Toasting caramelizes

the bread, bringing its sugars to the surface to help feed yeasts from the bread and raisins. In five to seven days, she says the result should be an excitingly sour effervescent drink, that's a bit sweet with a rich smoky quality.

Win the book: Email your name, address and phone number to Win@AtHomeNJ.com by Aug. 25. Make "Wild Drinks" the subject. Tell us where you found us!



The easiest iced coffee

Try this caffeinated cooler of Vietnam and Thailand where a hot cup of strong, dark coffee or espresso is simply blended with sweetened condensed milk.

Add 2 tablespoons (or up to 1/2 cup) of sweetened condensed milk to your java and pour over ice in a tall glass. The method also works with tea, so try blending the milk with a fragrant cup of South Asia's spiced black tea for a chai drink that's totally chilled on ice.



Allison Webber

Ice textured by resting its sides on a heated metal mallet.

It's crystal clear

For visual appeal, better flavor and slow melting, Camper English takes ice to a higher, perhaps obsessive, level. He's bothered by cloudy ice and has devised techniques using mostly common household items to produce crystal clear cubes, spheres and spears frozen for cocktail glasses.

In "The Ice Book" (Red Lightning Books, \$19), he shows a bottle of whiskey impressively suspended in an ice block. This also can be done with bottles of gin, vermouth, vodka and other spirits that don't freeze because of their high alcohol content.

(English warns of the risk that would come with using beer, wine and non-alcoholic liquids that *do* freeze, expand and shatter bottles.)

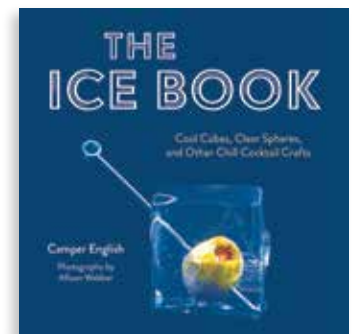
Most of his ice begins in smaller coolers —the type that might carry food for a day trip, or the old-fashioned round sort that would be filled with beverage for a group.

For ice-making, the coolers filled with water or smaller ice-shaping vessels and placed in a freezer.

"I figured out that you can imitate how a pond freezes by putting water into a hard-sided beverage cooler," he writes, discussing "directional freezing," where a cooler's insulation discourages water from freezing from inside out. With his method, air and impurities usually at the center of ice will be on one side and can be removed for a clear slab.

"The slab, first scored to form a cutting line is easily broken by a whack with a knife," he writes. "You do not need a saw for cutting cube-sized ice made in a home freezer."

In 145 pages, he covers techniques and tools (cut ice is rubbed on a pot to polish it). Some ice has added color or decorative flourishes. A few cocktail recipes are included.



Cooking back to the past

There was a time when the most impressive salads held ingredients suspended in a shapely gelled mass of complementary artificial flavor and color.

“The Complete Everyday Cookbook” is of that time.

It has at least 90 recipes (I keep finding more) where vegetables, fruits, nuts and other foods are married in plain or fruit-flavored gelatin. There’s even a “jellied” tomato juice consommé among the soup recipes.

Hot dogs also play a big role. They’re split and filled with sharp cheese or a fresh bread crumb stuffing with sage and grated onion. They’re sliced and tossed in salad with lettuce, kidney beans, pickles and onions.

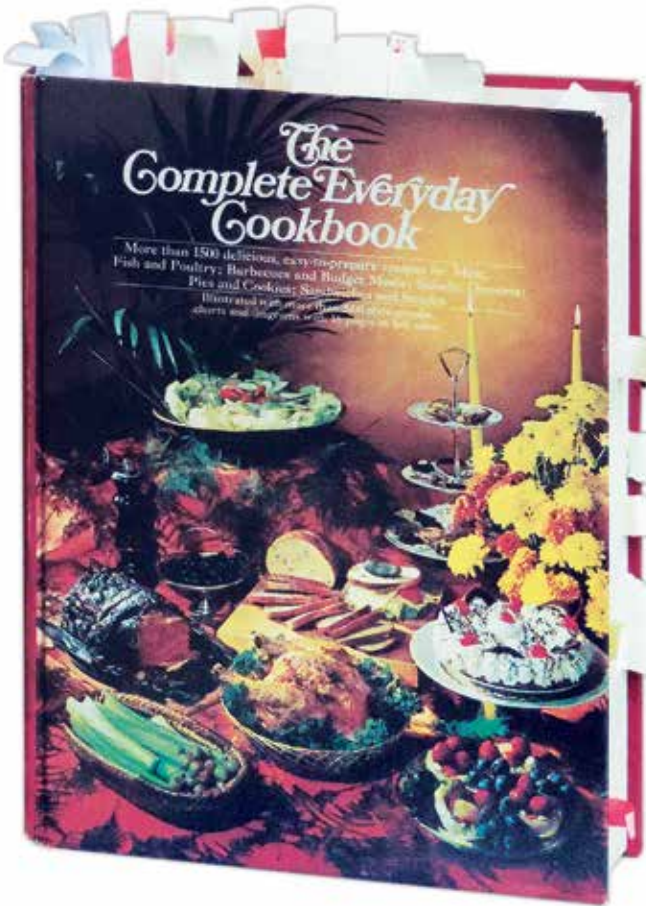
A photo of one gelatin-free mold shows wieners propped lengthwise like edible beams around the edges of an American-cheese-topped potato salad, providing structural support to the potatoes, boiled eggs, mustard and mayo. It’s all toasted under a broiler “until lightly browned and bubbly.” Deep down, you have to admit that it sounds appetizing — as foods that aren’t good for us so often do.

Finally, there’s “Frankalaya,” an odd take on jambalaya where peppers, onions and rice meet hot dog chunks, Cheddar and green beans. Turns out all can go in Louisiana jambalaya. (Thanks, Google.) More familiar is Mardi Gras jambalaya, which has shrimp, ham and okra. The fancy California jambalaya features chicken, ham, brown rice, fresh garlic and Sauterne or another white wine of choice.

This is why I consider this book a rare find even with its many head-scratchers. It is a cookbook that disappoints at turns and then redeems itself. Just when it seems every salad that’s not a Jello salad calls for French dressing, you find the French dressing recipe with eight variations as well as separate recipes for beer French dressing, Florida French dressing, Ruby French dressing and Mystery French dressing. The mystery could be whatever it was that actually made a dressing French back then.

I came upon the cookbook recently at a library giveaway. I was drawn to the cover’s period-iconic type with curvy upturned letters that called to mind “flip” hairstyles. But here it’s more Mary Tyler Moore than Farrah Fawcett. While printed in 1971, the cookbook is actually a compilation that consolidates nine 1964 cookbooks in one binding!

Since there was no internet to drive food trends back then, it wasn’t a problem for Ottenheimer Publishers to bring back recipes from previous titles that weren’t quite a decade old. Chapters of the “complete” cookbook are the previous cookbook’s titles: Barbecue; Budget; Buffet; Cookie; Dessert; Meat; Fish & Poultry; Pie; Salad; and Sandwich & Party Snack. (No plurals.)



If I was officially reviewing this cookbook, the editor in me would call out page number references that don’t match up because they were carelessly held over from the original books. The index is extremely difficult to navigate, not giving an easy way to find every recipe with gelatin or franks, for example. I might note that the format of recipes is inconsistent because they were collected from many sources. And while the cover boasts “more than 200 photographs, charts and diagrams,” the mostly black and white images are often poorly reproduced and never have captions to explain what they show.

It can be a bit frustrating to encounter a cookbook with as many as 8 recipes on one page. Today’s image-driven cookbooks typically feature at least one expertly styled photograph for each recipe. In “The Complete Everyday Cookbook,” you rarely see a photo of the finished dish, so you must scan ingredients and instructions to get an idea of what your efforts might produce. It takes a lot more time to

go through a cookbook when you have to read each recipe to know if you might want to make it.

But doesn’t that offer the excitement of discovery if you spend time with the book? Consider this volume in the context of its time — a time when cooks rarely had more cookbooks than toes. This is the sort of cookbook that might have been gifted to a bride who would cook through it over decades, highlighting family favorites and those that were holiday and party successes.

My book was found in excellent condition, without food stains or markings. Now it’s full of paper strips to mark the many recipes I plan to try or just learn more about.

For the cook in me, old recipe books can be a gateway to secret ingredients and terms and techniques to research.

I couldn’t find one photo online of *wirre gedanken*, dough circles threaded over a wooden spoon handle and fried for sugar-sprinkled treats whose name means “troubled thoughts” in German. Food for stress eating, perhaps?

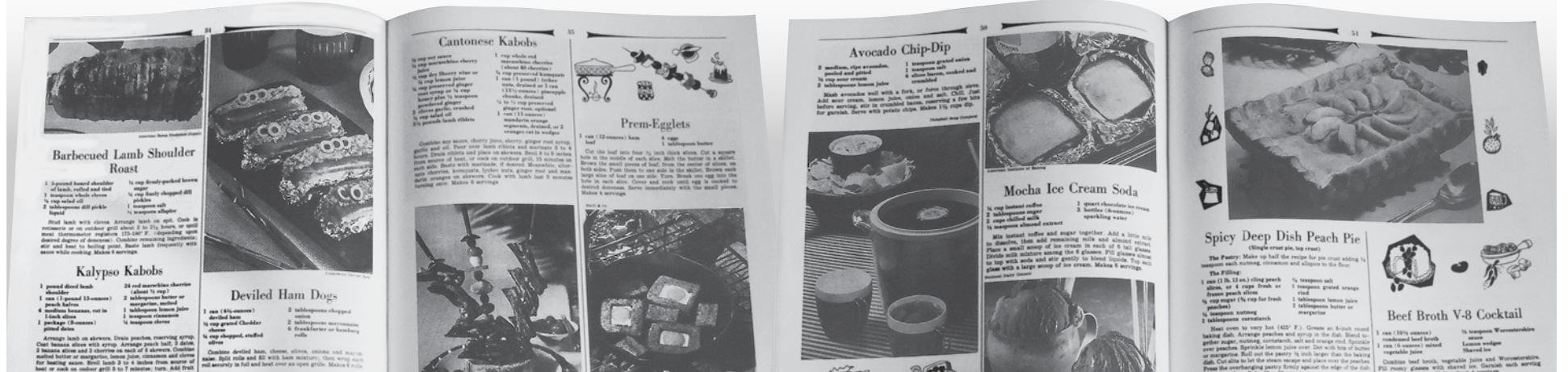
There’s got to be a conversation starter in Chicken Dandy, a curry powder-and-MSG-seasoned rice casserole with peanuts, peppers and bread crumbs. Reveler’s Reward was another name that caught my attention, so I made the cheesy sausage and rice bake with its crazy-good cracker crumb topping. The second time I left off the “clock” and added finely chopped broccoli (see next page).

Among more than 1,500 recipes, there are many that would be enjoyed if they landed on a 21st century plate. Probably not broccoli-lima bean casserole with canned creamed soup, curry powder and “bite-sized shredded rice biscuits.” But like Reveler’s Reward, the Yambilee Ice Cream Pie could be a holiday-season candidate. To fill a ginger snap-crumble crust, a pint of softened vanilla ice cream is blended with 3 cups of mashed sweet potatoes, 1/4 cup chopped pecans, 1/4 cup maple syrup, 1/2 cup heavy cream, a tablespoon of sugar and a little cinnamon. Then it goes into the freezer until serving time.

I imagine this as an easy Thanksgiving finisher with lots of laughter around the presentation of its kooky name and origin story. Following the thread, “Yamboree” is a ham and sweet potato bake with canned pineapple and a flambé that sets fire to applejack, the nation’s first commercially sold spirit. (License No. 1 was issued in 1780 to Laird’s of Colts Neck, New Jersey.) The blaze burns out over a buttery blend of brown-sugar-coated sweet potatoes and apples.

The book is still sold online, and you can view it free online if you sign up for access at the Internet Archive.

See our adaptations of three recipes on the facing page. — Kimberly L. Jackson



Page spreads from “The Complete Everyday Cookbook” show some recipes that have stood the test of time. Underwood Deviled Ham is still being sold. We did have to check.

Reveler's Reward

(16 buffet servings)

1 pound loose sausage (see notes)
 2 medium onions, chopped
 1/4 cup chopped green bell pepper
 1 cup cooked brown rice
 8 ounces sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
 1-1/2 cups whole milk
 3 eggs, slightly beaten
 30 round crackers (we used multigrain)
 1/3 cup melted butter
 Red pepper for garnish

1. In a large skillet, brown sausage with onions and 2 tablespoons of the green pepper. Stir in rice. Spoon into a 2-quart oblong baking dish. Top with cheese.

2. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Blend remaining peppers and milk into eggs and pour evenly over cheese. Press everything down lightly to blend. Place a small bowl, open side down, at center of dish. Finely crush crackers, blend with butter and spread over the cheese. Carefully remove bowl to maintain a circle for a decorative clock. Use slivers of red pepper to mark quarters and eighths on clock. Make

hands from slivers of green pepper.

3. Bake 45 minutes; serve immediately.

Tester's notes: Sausage seasoning for one pound of ground turkey or chicken: In a small bowl, blend 1 tablespoon dried sage with 1 teaspoon each ground rosemary, onion powder, garlic powder, ground fennel seed, smoked paprika, ancho chile powder, and 3/4 teaspoon sea salt. This will seem like a lot of seasoning, but blend it all into the meat by hand as evenly as possible. Let seasonings blend with meat overnight, if possible, before using in dish. Ancho chile is mildly spicy, but use less or substitute 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper, if desired. 12 ounces of frozen broccoli, thawed, well strained, and finely chopped in a food processor can be added with the rice.

Nutrition information (per serving): 455 calories, 24g fat (9g saturated), 87g cholesterol, 689mg sodium, 41g carbs, 2g fiber, 6g sugars, 18g protein

— Adapted from *"The Complete Everyday Cookbook"*; At Home New Jersey photo



Chocolate banana cookies

(About 30 cookies)

1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
 1/3 cup shortening
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 large egg
 1/2 cup mashed overripe banana
 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sifted whole-wheat flour
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/8 teaspoon baking soda

1. In a bowl set atop a saucepan half filled with barely boiling water (note that this was a time before microwaves), melt chocolate chips. Set aside to cool slightly.

2. In a large mixing bowl, cream shortening and sugar until light and

fluffy. Add egg and beat well. Blend in mashed banana and melted chocolate to fully incorporate. Sift (yes, again) in flour, baking powder, salt and baking soda. Stir to form a smooth dough. Avoid overmixing. Use a spoon and scoop out roughly equal amounts to roll with slightly damp hands into 30 balls.

3. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Place balls on baking sheets. Bake 8 to 10 minutes; remove immediately to a wire rack to cool.

Nutrition information (per cookie): 69 calories, 3g fat (1g saturated), 6mg cholesterol, 29mg sodium, 9g carbs, 0.3g fiber, 5g sugars, 1g protein

— Adapted from *"The Complete Everyday Cookbook"*; At Home New Jersey photo

Scottish sour cream scones

(16 scones)

1 cup sifted white whole wheat flour
 1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 tablespoon sugar
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 5 tablespoons butter, frozen
 1/2 cup currants, chopped golden raisins or chopped dried cranberries
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1 cup sour cream

1. Sift together flour, salt, sugar and baking powder. Using a metal box grater, coarsely grate butter into dry ingredients. Stir in chosen dried fruit.

2. In a large bowl, stir baking soda into 2 tablespoons water and blend with sour cream until smooth. Blend in dry ingredients, working dough just enough to combine as a soft, slightly sticky dough.

3. Divide dough in four parts. Flatten each into a disk, 1/2 inch thick. Cut rounds into triangular quarters. Cook over low-ish heat on a greased griddle about 20 minutes, turning every 5 minutes for even browning.

Tester's note: Like Welsh cakes and Irish *farls*, these scones are baked on a pan. Sifting flour before spooning it into the measuring cup will make lighter, buttery scones. It helps produce baked goods that aren't made dry by too much flour. Sifting,

so often avoided in newer recipes, removes lumps and adds air to flour (even for those labeled "presifted," which surely settle in transit). Getting the heat just right can be a challenge here. The pan needs to be just hot enough to lightly brown each side in 5 minutes. The sides will be fully dry when done. We confess to turning them on the cut sides to hasten this. This a good recipe that's fun for novelty, jam — and camping!

Nutrition information (per scone): 120 calories, 7g fat (4g saturated), 16mg cholesterol, 187mg sodium, 13g carbs, 1g fiber, 1g sugars, 2g protein

— Adapted from *"The Complete Everyday Cookbook"*



Banana s'mores:

Use grilled fruit in place of marshmallows in Dole's spin on the camp classic. Grill unpeeled bananas over medium-high heat, about 15 minutes on each side until dark and soft. (They may split a little to release steam.) Spotty-ripe bananas will be the sweetest. Slice open to cool; spread warm over chocolate on graham crackers. At home, make banana splits or banana bread.



Potato pouches: Meals pre-packed in aluminum foil can simplify camp cooking. Toss cubed potatoes in oil and season with salt and paprika, or as desired. Add sliced onions (also try sliced red bell pepper). Put everything in foil and wrap well. Two smaller pouches will cook more easily than a large one. For a meatier version, top potatoes with thick smoked sausage slices before closing each pouch. At camp, place pouches on a grate over fire. Cook about 30 minutes, or until tender. Rotate pouches periodically to avoid scorching.



Egg toast: Camping is all about utility, so use a large lid to cut and press out holes in 4 bread slices. Heat a large cast iron pan on the grill. In a bowl, beat 3 eggs, 2 tablespoons milk and a tablespoon of McCormick's Applewood Rub. Dip each slice in eggs and place in the pan. Brown on one side. Flip toast and break an egg into each hole. Sprinkle with more rub, top with cheese or a pat of butter, if desired, and cook until eggs are set.



Marshmallow flambé: If you ask us, the best marshmallows to eat are those that have been set ablaze. As kids, we lacked the patience that good slow-roasted marshmallows require. We'd just let them catch fire and quickly blow out the flame to ease off the black charred skin and enjoy the gooey sweet mass below. Somehow, we managed to never set ourselves on fire. Still, we do not recommend this for today's children — or their parents, who, of course, are our own children.

Camp cuisine



On a stick: Much of the fun of camping is doing things that are out of the ordinary. Cooking a hot dog on a stick is one of those fun things. We know that the best sticks for roasting are found on the ground. In dirt. Before spearing food, you can sterilize the end of your stick over fire. Just burn it a bit — about 5 inches on the cooking end, just to be safe. Let the burned end cool down and wipe it off. Now it's weenie-ready! Of course, kids doing their own roasting need to be supervised by an adult. Be sure to use a long stick, as shown, and keep everyone safely away from the flames.

The day's catch: Even if you didn't go fishing, pan-seared fish is a camper's delight. It gets nice and crisp in a cast iron skillet, and all you need is a little fat and a little seasoning for the fish you brought or caught, cleaned and filleted yourself. The blackened Cajun-style catfish shown is for a Spice Islands recipe that's a natural for camping. It has just three ingredients — your chosen fish, a little butter and the brand's Louisiana-style Cajun seasoning. Simply heat the cast iron for 10 minutes on the hottest part of the grill. Coat the fish fillets with melted butter and sprinkle with the Cajun seasoning. Place fish in the hot skillet; two fillets at a time is recommended to avoid crowding. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until the fish has a deeply browned crust and flakes easily when tested with a fork.



HOME THEATER

Superhero movies: Up and away



'Batman' (1966)

How do you make a movie out of a TV show that's broadcast for free — namely, the 1966-68 action comedy "Batman" starring Adam West and Burt Ward?

Ya gotta go big. Add cool, expensive-looking vehicles like the Batcopter and the Batboat. Have four villains instead of one, and make 'em the biggest, baddest villains ya got (in this case, Frank Gorshin as Riddler, Cesar Romero as Joker, Burgess Meredith as Penguin, Lee Meriwether as Catwoman). Finally — and this is key — don't limit their crimes to Gotham City. Cook up a caper with no less than global implications. *Then ...* you've got a movie.

"Batman" showrunner William Dozier's strike-while-the-iron's-hot theatrical release strove to be bigger than the TV series, if not necessarily better. Still, the big-screen "Batman" was sufficiently cinematic, and had a vibe of its own.



'The Avengers' (2012)

It was a plan worthy of an evil mastermind.

After stringing along superhero-movie nerds with solo films featuring Captain America (Chris Evans), Thor (Chris Hemsworth), Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) and the Hulk, Joss Whedon's "The Avengers" hit the multiplexes and sifted in a few more heroes, such as Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) and Quicksilver (Jeremy Renner). All of that meticulous planning paid off. "The Avengers" was a hit.

The plot revolves around a power play by Thor's evil relation Loki (Tom Hiddleston), but does it really matter? Whedon keeps all the balls in the air, regularly checking in with each character amid the chaos and destruction.

The high superhero count was then a novelty. But the last couple of Avengers movies have had way too many heroes — and *that's* just on the movie posters.



'Superman' (1978)

Richard Donner's film was only the third superhero movie, after the low-budget indie "Superman and the Mole Men" (1951) and the TV tie-in comedy "Batman" (1966).

As such, the '78 "Superman" was the first big-studio movie to take the superhero genre seriously, and put the full might of its resources (and *marketing*) behind it. "Superman" became the second-highest-grossing film of the year.

The production garnered much publicity by casting Marlon Brando as Jor-El, Kryptonian father of Superman. New face Christopher Reeve wore the costume well as Superman. Also cast were Margot Kidder as Lois Lane; Jackie Cooper as Perry White; and Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor.

Scenes of Superman flying — state-of-the-art in 1978 — still hold up nearly a half-century later. Proclaimed the movie posters: "You'll believe a man can fly."



'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice' (2016)

In Zack Snyder's "roid rage" movie, Ben Affleck makes his debut as Batman, while Henry Cavill and Gal Gadot return for Round 2 as Superman and Wonder Woman, respectively. Jesse Eisenberg is appropriately annoying as passive-aggressive tech giant Lex Luthor, no doubt written and played to remind you of real-life high-profile CEOs in sheep's clothing. (*You* know who I mean.)

Jeremy Irons plays Alfred the butler, which is dream casting, except now he's more like Q from the 007 films. No time to serve tea when you're developing battle gear.

"BVS" is a sequel to "Man of Steel" concocted as the second in a planned Justice League megafanchise meant to Xerox the success of Marvel's "Avengers" series. As ever in Hollywood, it's follow the money.



'X-Men' (2000)

Bryan Singer's film was the first "superteam" movie — that is, one featuring a collection of superheroes in a single story. Based on Marvel characters concocted by Stan Lee and Jacky Kirby in 1963, the premise still strikes a chord.

The X-Men are "mutants" — in this telling, humans (or humanoids) with extraordinary powers — who reside in a group home run by Dr. Xavier (Patrick Stewart), a wheelchair-bound academic who can transmit thoughts astrally.

His "students" Marvel Girl (Famke Janssen), Storm (Halle Berry), Mystique (Rebecca Romijn), Cyclops (James Marsden) and others are joined by an arrogant interloper, Wolverine (Hugh Jackman in his starmaking role).

A casting coup has Ian McKellen as Magneto, an old ally of Xavier who is now his nemesis. Seeing Stewart and McKellen trade dialogue seems like a master class in acting.



'Black Panther' (2018)

Set in Oakland and in the mythical kingdom of Wakanda, Ryan Coogler's film marked a maturation of the superhero genre. Chadwick Boseman starred as Prince T'Challa, who suits up as the resourceful, mysterious Black Panther.

T'Challa's nearest and dearest are Shuri (Letitia Wright), his tech-geek sister; Nakia (Lupita Nyong'o), his are-they-or-aren't-they love interest; and Queen Ramonda (Angela Bassett), his regal mother. Okoye (Danai Gurira) is the no-nonsense leader of the Wakandan military.

Conflict comes in the person of N'Jadaka (Michael B. Jordan), T'Challa's cousin who aims to supplant him.

Boseman's career was cut tragically short when he died of cancer in 2020. The sequel "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" (2022) is largely a tribute to the actor's memory.

— Mark Voger, MarkVoger.com

What we gain from giving back

By Jennifer A. Jones/University of Florida

More than 77 million Americans volunteer a total of 6.9 billion hours a year doing everything from fighting fires to raising funds for cancer research. These efforts help others and support communities. But volunteering also tends to benefit the volunteers themselves in at least four ways.

■ **Improved health:** Volunteering has long been associated with good mental and physical health.

In a long-term study, researchers at the University of Wisconsin found that volunteering was linked to psychological well-being, and the volunteers themselves said it was good for their own health. While anyone can benefit from volunteering, people who are the least connected to others tend to benefit most. In fact, the benefits are so strong that researchers have suggested public health officials educate the public to consider volunteering as part of a healthy lifestyle.

One study in particular looked into which kind of volunteering may be best for health. When a team of social scientists combed through data collected in Texas, they found that people who volunteered in ways that benefited other people tended to get a bigger physical health boost than volunteers who were pitching in for their own sake.

That is, serving meals at a soup kitchen might be better for your health than doing unpaid shifts as an usher in exchange for free theater tickets.

Volunteers also benefited in terms of their mental health, such as by experiencing fewer symptoms of depression and becoming more satisfied with their lives.

■ **Making connections:** Volunteering, especially when it's done on a regular basis, can help you make new acquaintances. Whether you volunteer for an organization on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, over time you are bound to develop strong relationships, typically with other volunteers and staff members.

Regular volunteers may get these benefits to a greater degree than people who volunteer sporadically, known as episodic volunteers. Handing out water at a fundraising run in April and then helping bag groceries to give away in November is surely easier to squeeze into a busy schedule



AmeriCorps Seniors

Regular volunteer work can give us a sense of purpose, build new relationships and teach us new skills.

than volunteering regularly in an office. But those more convenient activities aren't as likely to help you build relationships over time. In other words, consistency matters.

There are benefits and drawbacks to every type of volunteering. For example, volunteering once in a while is often easy to schedule and is something families or friends can do together. However, volunteers who pitch in occasionally may not feel very connected to the mission of the nonprofits they support or get to know many other volunteers.

Regularly volunteering, on the other hand, makes it more likely that you will develop a deep relationship to the cause and to other staff and volunteers. However, this kind of volunteering requires a longer-term and bigger time commitment. It can also become frustrating if the volunteer's duties aren't a good fit for them.

Still, if people are willing to work toward finding the

right fit and making time in their schedules, volunteering on a regular basis can help them get more out of their efforts, including new friends and acquaintances.

■ **Preparing for career moves:** When volunteers gain and strengthen skills and meet more people, it can help them find new paid work by honing their social and job skills and expanding their professional contacts.

Especially if you're unemployed or eager to get a new job, you may want to volunteer in ways that are more likely to fill gaps in your resume or help you network with people who can help advance your career. For example, you can learn leadership and governance skills by volunteering on a board of directors at your local food pantry and, at the same time, network with other board members.

You can also volunteer for an organization in your field, whether it's healthcare, childcare or accounting, as a way of staying current and active while looking for work.

Including volunteer work on your resume can also signal to a prospective employer that you're community-minded, self-motivated and willing to go above and beyond. As I often see with my students who volunteer, close relationships with nonprofit staff can lead to job referrals and glowing letters of recommendation.

■ **Reducing age-related risks:** Older people who regularly engage in mentally stimulating leisure activities may have better memory and executive function than those who don't, according to an analysis of related studies. And because volunteers may need to tackle new problems, interact with clients and staff or drive to a new location, volunteering can be a highly stimulating leisure activity.

Volunteering can also help older people feel valued. For example, nonprofits can encourage older volunteers to become mentors — giving them a chance to impart what they've learned from their life and career experiences.

Visit Volunteer.gov and VolunteerMatch.com or connect with a community foundation, nonprofit resource center and a regional United Way to find volunteer opportunities.

Jennifer A. Jones is an assistant professor of nonprofit management and leadership. Reprinted with permission from TheConversation.com.

AmeriCorps: A portal for helping hands

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors connect individuals and organizations through volunteering. Each year, this federal agency for national service and volunteerism connects adult volunteers with flexible opportunities to address local and national challenges in nearly 40,000 locations across the country.

"Today, more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers choose to create lasting change in communities by addressing local challenges with local solutions," said Michael D. Smith, AmeriCorps CEO. "Whether you're just starting your career, changing fields or are retired, there is an opportunity for everyone to make a difference and change lives, including your own."

AmeriCorps members can earn education awards to pay educational expenses at eli-

gible institutions or to repay qualified student loans. Benefits vary by program, but can include supplemental health insurance, loan deferment and childcare. Those ages 18 to 26 can travel to serve as a team, with expenses covered in AmeriCorps NCCC.

Locally, an AmeriCorps search offers ways to help, both remotely and in person. Volunteer roles can range from hosting an exchange student, tutoring, or using musical talent to comfort those in hospice. Help through the Friends Group of Children's Specialized Hospital. Serve on a board, deliver meals to elders, foster a dog or cat.

Volunteer counselors with Crisis Text Line provide text-message-based support. They are trained to make a positive impact in the lives of people who struggle with anxiety, depression, loneliness, stress and other situations affecting mental health.

Older Americans can apply hard-earned knowledge to make an impact in a new environment through AmeriCorps Seniors.

"AmeriCorps Seniors is tailor-made for those aged 55 and older," says Atalaya Sergi, the organization's director. "It provides a space for older adults to take charge of their 'second act' and use their time in valuable and impactful ways. All of our volunteers share a goal of making a difference in their communities, and many see their involvement as a chance to make friends and form meaningful connections."

More than 140,000 older Americans are matched with volunteer opportunities each year through three programs: RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program.

RSVP, the largest of the programs, partners with national, state and local organiza-

tions to offer volunteers a wide range of service opportunities, from building houses to delivering food.

For those interested in working with children, the Foster Grandparent Program pairs volunteers with local schools and other kid-focused programs to work with classes, groups or individual students.

Senior Companion Program volunteers give about 20 hours of their time each week to provide companionship to peers who might need help with grocery shopping, getting to appointments, paying bills and other day-to-day household tasks.

To find local volunteer opportunities, visit AmeriCorps.gov to search by Zip code.

Organizations can have volunteer opportunities added to the AmeriCorps Volunteer Search by creating free listings online via Idealist, JustServe or VolunteerMatch.

DR. BARB

Off to college in an uncertain world

Dr. Barbara Rosenberg ended her regular *At Home New Jersey* column at the close of 2022. She has scaled back her practice to spend more time with her husband of 57 years, their family and friends. Dr. Rosenberg has marked 10 years as a breast cancer survivor. We are reprinting some of our favorite *Ask Dr. Barb* columns. The following column is from our March-April 2013 issue.

Dear Dr. Barb:

My son will be a high school senior this year, and with all the violence going on around the nation, I am really afraid to send him off to college. He is our only child, and I don't know what I would do if something happened to him. I know he could be hurt anywhere, but I am really having a hard time supporting his desire to go away to school. Would you have any advice to help cope with these feelings?

Dear Reader:

The journey towards adulthood most always is a long and messy one — for children as well as for parents. Once that journey begins, however, a parent must learn to separate appropriately from the child as much as the child does from the parent. Coping with feelings about sending children off to college is a continuation of the same theme of parents helping their children grow towards independence and maturity.

It is not difficult to understand your fears in sending your only child off to college with all the violence going on at schools and across the nation. But asking yourself “What if something happens to him?” is imagining the worst-case scenario, better known as catastrophizing. If done repeatedly, this will surely aggravate your fears.

You are absolutely correct in your statement that he could be hurt anywhere and, in reality, any one of us could be hurt anywhere as well.

Rather than let your fears control your thinking, remind yourself that the probability of catastrophe is very low and does not warrant your discouraging him from going away to school. Surely the benefits of having a college experience far outweigh the unlikely risk of fatal harm. To be able to attend college away from home will offer your son his first real introduction to adulthood. Not only will he have to get himself up for his classes, he will face the numerous challenges of living independently at college. This will entail selecting courses, making new friends and, most importantly, balancing his time between study, leisure and possibly part-time work.

At first, he, like other freshmen, will feel out of his comfort zone, namely the secure and familiar routine of your home. This initial feeling of insecurity, however, cannot be avoided, nor can the mistakes that will come from inexperience and unfamiliarity. He might party too hard during the first semester or two and fall behind in his studying. Perhaps he'll have some difficulty finding the right fit with friends; or he may decide to change his major. Nonetheless, by facing these minor struggles and

finding solutions, he will learn to develop self-management skills, tools he will take with him and continue to develop into adulthood. If he should feel overwhelmed, he can turn to the campus counseling center which can offer him support to work through any emotional, social or academic hurdles.

Being away at college will take your son out of his comfort zone, and, as a parent, you will be taken out of your comfort zone as well. As you mentioned, your first concern is his safety. In college there will be no curfews or other parental limit-setting.

Over the next few months, why not try loosening his curfew? This way, he can practice safe behavior with your input before he is fully on his own facing unfamiliar choices.

If he goes away to college, you will also feel the discomfort of the empty nest, missing your son as well as the secure and the familiar routines you had from elementary through high school. However, the new-found separation from parental responsibility also can present opportunity for positive change in your own life.

If you are married, the freed-up time may enable you and your spouse to devote more time to your relationship, which often is neglected through the travails of parenthood. If you are a single parent, there's more time to expand your social and career horizons. In general, there will be more time also to engage in community, hobbies or travel. And as you begin to settle into new pursuits, and your own adulthood becomes more enjoyable, you will even start to ap-



BARBARA ROSENBERG

preciate how much you have helped your son become an adult.

Barbara L. Rosenberg, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist whose Telehealth practice serves individuals of all ages, couples and families. She previously chaired educational and social programs for the Essex-Union County Association of Psychologists. Contact her through BarbaraRosenberg.com.



Erik Lucatero

The surgeon general warns that social media use can be harmful for children.

Keeping kids safe on social media

Create a family media plan. A family media plan can promote open family discussion and rules about media use and include topics such as balancing screen/online time, content boundaries, and not disclosing personal information. Check out HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan.

Create tech-free zones. Encourage kids to foster in-person friendships. Since electronics can be a potential distraction after bedtime and can interfere with sleep, consider restricting the use of phones, tablets and computers at least 1 hour before bedtime and through the night. Consider keeping family mealtimes and in-person gatherings device-free to build social bonds and engage in conversation. Help your child develop social skills and nurture his or her in-person relationships by encouraging unstructured offline connections with others and making unplugged interactions a daily priority.

Model healthy social media use. Parents can set a good example of responsible social media behavior by limiting their own use, being mindful of social media habits (including when and how they share information or content about their child), and modeling positive behavior on social media. Kids often learn behaviors and habits from what they see around them, so try to model the behavior you want to see.

Teach kids about technology. Empower them to be responsible online participants at the appropriate age. Discuss the benefits and risks of social media as well as the importance of respecting privacy and protecting personal information in age-appropriate ways. Have conversations with children about who they are connecting with, their privacy settings, their online experiences, and how they are spending their time online. Encourage them to seek help should they need it.

Report cyberbullying. Talk to children about their reporting options, and provide support, without judgment, if a child tells or shows you that they are being harassed through email, text message, online games, or social media or that they have been contacted by an adult seeking private images or asking them to perform intimate or sexual acts. You or your child can report cyberbullying to the school and/or the online platform, or your local law enforcement. Visit CyberTipline, [Take it Down](http://TakeItDown), or contact your local law enforcement to report any instances of online exploitation.

Work with other parents. Help establish practices, support programs and policies around healthy social media use. This facilitates collective action and can make it easier to set and implement boundaries on social media use for children.

See the U.S. surgeon general's entire youth social media advisory at HHS.gov.

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