

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1996

# TASTE

B

## TASTE SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

### Early baking, freezing eases holiday pressure

**P**ositioned between two of the largest "cooking, baking, feasting, shopping and frenzied" holidays, it's hard to know where to start. Beat some of the holiday rush with detailed shopping lists for gifts, food and party guests. Early baking and freezing food for gifts or entertaining later will help take the pressure off. Get a head start by baking cookies, candies or breads before the rush. If these are frozen and used within six months, the taste and texture will not be affected. They will taste as fresh as the day you baked them.

#### To store cookies in the freezer:

- Both frosted and unfrosted cookies can be frozen.
- Arrange cookies in a container lined with plastic wrap or aluminum foil; separated with layers of aluminum foil or plastic wrap.
- Tightly seal container, label and freeze.
- Thaw cookies by allowing them to stand loosely covered on a serving plate for about 20 minutes before serving.

#### To store candies in the freezer:

- Individually wrap candies in wax paper or plastic wrap; nearly all candies will stay fresher longer.
- Store individually wrapped candies in boxes, tins or carton with tight-fitting lids.
- Exception: store small, hard candies together in a tight fitting jar after dusting with finely ground (not powdered) sugar.
- Do not mix candies that absorb moisture (caramels, mints, hard candies) in the same container as those that lose moisture (fudge, fondants, meringues).
- Use wax paper to individually wrap or separate layers of fudge to avoid sticking.

#### To store breads in the freezer:

- Baked quick breads such as muffins, biscuits, corn bread and fruit and nut breads should be wrapped airtight before freezing.
- Wrap in double thickness of foil or put in two plastic bags.
- Thaw soft-crusted breads at room temperature still inside the wrapping.
- Muffin dough can be frozen right in the muffin tin, wrap well to make hot breakfast muffins when you want them, but you'll need to thaw an hour before baking.

If you are worried about making foods healthier for the holiday, make over some of your recipes. Nut breads, muffins, carrot cakes and other moist cakes are all candidates for a make-over. Use pureed fruit such as applesauce or prune to replace up to three-quarters of the oil called for in a recipe. In bar cookies, substitute equal amounts of dried fruit in place of nuts or chocolate chips.

Substitute two egg whites for one egg and use cocoa powder for chocolate. Your old-fashioned cookie recipes don't usually fare too well with fat or sugar reductions, so it may be better to find a recipe designed specifically for that purpose. There are certainly enough cookbooks out there with tested low-fat recipes.

Update recipes for holiday eggnog. Do not serve raw eggs in any form. Eggs need to be cooked for safe consumption. Commercially made eggnogs are safe to serve; they are made with pasteurized eggs. Commercial pasteurization destroys the salmonella bacteria. If you want to make homemade eggnog or homemade ice cream, start with a cooked base, not a raw base.

#### More helpful hints for the holidays are:

- Pies can be baked and frozen. For best results use within two to four months.
- If you forget to thaw the frozen whipped dessert topping, place the container of topping in the microwave, cook uncovered on medium-low until softened, about one minute.
- Buy candies and freeze; they burn better after being frozen.
- There are holiday food hazards to watch out for while entertaining. If you set food around on low tables during a party, be careful if there are small children around. These items can get caught in their windpipes and they can choke: peanuts, hard candies, popcorn, cocktail franks, small meatballs and raw carrots.

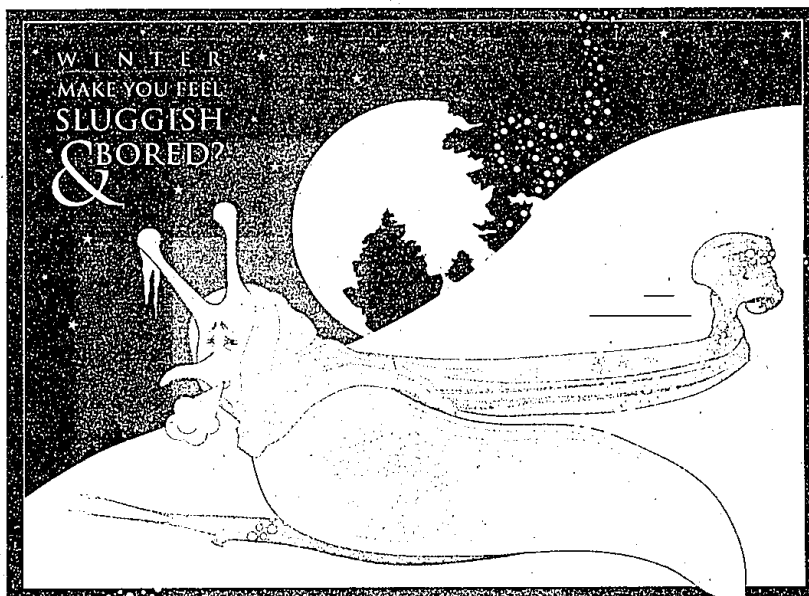
The holidays are for enjoying, not for panicking. Design a plan now to avoid feeling overwhelmed with things left to do. The more things you can do ahead of time, the better off you'll be to avoid the last minute rush.

Lois Thieleke, of Birmingham, is a home economist for the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, Oakland County. For answers to food questions, call the MSU Food and Nutrition Hotline (810) 858-0904.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Champagnes add sparkle to holidays
- No-guilt sweets



TAMAR GRAVES/STAFF ARTIST

## BEATING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS  
SPECIAL WRITER

**T**his is supposed to be a happy time of the year, when friends and family gather together, exchange gifts and reflect on all that we are thankful for. But for many, the frantic pace, added responsibilities and financial strain of the season can lead to depression. Add fast food eaten in the car, between shopping stops, and we can feel down right sick.

It is common to feel sluggish and bored as the days grow short and the weather gets colder. Many people suffer from seasonal adjustment disorder (SAD) this time of year. We drive to work before the sun comes up and drive home in the dark too. Some people respond to the lack of sun by overeating, sleeping more, feeling like they have no energy and even feeling mildly depressed.

To overcome the Holiday Blues and the urge to hibernate, you must be a little selfish. It is important to keep sight of your body's needs and adhere to them in order to stay healthy and ready to tackle the next shopping trip.

To try to avoid the fast food drive-through line. Instead, when you head off on your next shopping junkie, pack some easy-to-eat snacks that provide energy and are nutritious. Apples, bananas and other fresh fruit are good choices. Raisins, sunflower seeds and pretzels are easy to eat out of hand. Sandwiches made

with whole-grain bread and lean meat are a much better choice than a high-fat burger. If you stop at a fast-food restaurant, choose a plain hamburger with no "special sauce," or a plain baked potato, side salad and juice or low-fat milk.

- Exercise! The chart below gives you an idea of some suggested exercises you can do in order to burn off some of the extra food we tend to eat this time of the year. If you are not

Here's one way to think positive! Look at this suggested exercise list before you sit down to a big feast. Eat moderately, but don't deny yourself a taste of any special holiday foods. Then, plan the exercises right into your schedule. You'll feel better knowing that you are in control. These are general guidelines. Remember that each individual burns calories at a different rate, depending on fitness level, age, sex and other factors. These are only meant to be examples.

Turkey: nine ounces of light and dark meat, with skin and gravy  
580 calories  
Walk 5.8 miles  
Stairing: one cup  
500 calories  
Rowing machine for 50 minutes  
Candied sweet potatoes: one cup  
250 calories  
Water aerobics for one hour  
Green bean casserole: 1/2 cup  
120 calories  
Jello: one 11 minutes  
Cranberry sauce: 1/4 cup  
123 calories  
Swim for 14 minutes  
Wash 10-piece glass  
240 calories  
Stationer for 35 minutes



accustomed to exercising, begin moderately. A brisk walk can do wonders for your spirit. Learn to cross-country ski or help a child build a snowman. Shovel a shut-ins sidewalk and make two people happy.

- Try to put more light into your life. Make sure you get outside during the daylight hours, even on a cloudy day. Soak up the sun wherever you can, but remember that the sun reflecting on snow magnifies its intensity. Be sure to wear sunscreen and sunglasses.

• Eat feel-good foods. Food that helps you relax are rich in carbohydrates and low in fat and protein. A baked potato with salsa, a bagel with jam, oatmeal or pretzels can help you wind down. Remember not to add butter or other fats to these foods and you'll feel more relaxed.

• To fight drowsiness, eat protein-rich foods like cottage cheese, beans or lentils, fat-free yogurt, a hard-boiled egg or tuna.

• Share those Christmas cookies with others. Don't keep them around the house. By giving them to someone else, you will not only get them out of your sight, the act of giving will lift your spirits.

- Eat regular meals. It doesn't make sense to starve yourself before a big party then eat out of control when you get there. Eat your normal meals and satisfy your hunger.

• Limit alcohol consumption. It's easy to get carried away with

all the parties and stress of the season. But booze not only stimulates your appetite, it also clouds your judgment and works as a depressant. Sparkling water and lime is a great alcohol substitute. You'll feel much better the day after a party if you down a few of these instead of martinis, spiked eggnog or champagne.

- At parties, concentrate on eating slowly. Put your fork down and make conversation between bites. You'll eat less and enjoy your meal more. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to tell you that your hunger has been satisfied.

• Experiment with the "five minute rule." Wait about five minutes after each course to decide if you are still hungry. • Think positive! Talk back to your "internal critic" that says "I'll always be inferior." Train yourself to recognize self-critical thoughts and think about how these are distorted visions of reality. Strive to want to be well and plan to be well.

Peggy Martinelli-Everts, R.D., a Clarkston resident, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a 31-year-old Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company, specializing in food service management for hospitals, long-term care facilities, businesses, private clubs and private schools. HDS services has over 180 management accounts throughout the U.S., Europe and the Asian Rim.

### Here's an elegant meal in quick time

BY LAURA L. SYKES  
SPECIAL WRITER

The holiday season can leave us feeling rushed and tired. With so many functions to attend, gifts to buy and chores to do, it is no wonder we don't look forward to standing over a stove in the evening. Yet, healthy meals don't have to be time consuming.

This month's recipe, Chicken with Mushroom Gravy, is an elegant meal with minimal preparation. Served with a tossed salad and steamed green vegetables, it is nutritious and filling.

The original recipe called for one pound of chicken breasts. With the skin, there are 784 calories, 41.6 grams of fat and 288 milligrams of cholesterol.

If we replace the original chicken with one pound of boneless, skinless chicken breast meat, we lower the calories to 496, contribute only 0.4 grams of fat and reduce the cholesterol to 256 milligrams.

Sour cream should always be

substituted in a recipe for a lower fat alternative. Three quarters of a cup of sour cream contains 36.2 grams of fat and 369.6 calories. Substituting nonfat yogurt or nonfat sour cream will eliminate all the fat from this ingredient and contribute only 100 calories!

Margarine is added to most recipes to provide moisture. Since yogurt is higher in water content than sour cream, the excess liquid from the yogurt will allow us to reduce the amount of margarine.

Don't forget to use low-fat or fat-free salad dressing! Fat grams and calories can add up quickly if you aren't careful.

For more low-fat and fat-free recipes from "Laura's Fat Free Kitchen," and her 8-page monthly newsletter, send a \$24 check or money order for 12 issues to PS Publications, P.O. Box 7687, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302-7687. For a complimentary issue send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the above address.

#### CHICKEN WITH MUSHROOM GRAVY

Original Version • Serves 4

- 1 pound chicken breasts
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 1-1/2 teaspoons corn starch
- 1/8 teaspoon smoked yeast
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/2 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1/4 cup dry cooking sherry

Sprinkle chicken breasts with pepper. Set aside. Combine sour cream, corn starch and yeast. Set aside. Melt margarine in a skillet. Sauté mushrooms and onions in melted margarine. Push mushrooms and onions to the side of the pan and sear chicken on both sides until cooked through. Remove chicken and mushrooms and onions to a dish. Pour sherry into pan and let cook until reduced to 1 tablespoon. Return mushrooms and onions to pan. Stir in the yogurt mixture and heat gently. To serve, pour gravy over chicken.

Calories: 410.4 kcal  
Fat: 31.9 gm  
Cholesterol: 84 mg  
Carbohydrates: 6.4 gm  
Protein: 21.1 gm  
Sodium: 290 mg

#### CHICKEN WITH MUSHROOM GRAVY

Low-fat Version • Serves 4

- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- Salt-free lemon pepper
- 3/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons corn starch
- 1/8 teaspoon smoked yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt-free margarine
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons dry cooking sherry

Remove all visible fat from chicken. Sprinkle generously with lemon pepper. Set aside. Combine yogurt, corn starch and yeast. Set aside. Add margarine to a non-stick skillet and melt. Sauté mushrooms and onions. Add water or chicken broth if more liquid is needed. Place mushrooms and onions in a bowl. Place chicken in pan and sear on both sides until cooked through. Remove to a serving dish. Pour sherry into the skillet and cook until reduced to one tablespoon. Return the onions and mushrooms to pan. Stir in the yogurt mixture and heat gently. Pour gravy over chicken.

Calories: 199.1 kcal  
Fat: 3.0 gm  
Cholesterol: 67 mg  
Carbohydrates: 7.2 gm  
Protein: 30.9 gm  
Sodium: 208 mg