



The Balancing Act

Summer 2011



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The new "My Plate"

By: Katie Barnes, Tift County



The Food Pyramid has undergone another facelift this year! The Food Pyramid began in the early 1900's and until the 1930's focused mainly on "protective foods" and established guidance on food groups. At that time, the Food Pyramid was titled "Food for Young Children" or "How to Select Food". As time went on, the name changed to "A Guide to Good Eating" (The Basic Seven) in the 1940's when it's main focus was food intake adequacy and daily serving amounts from seven basic food groups. This design lacked specific serving sizes plus had a complex and detailed design. Progress continued on through the 1950's through the 1970's simplifying not only the design but the number of food groups. This design only included four food groups and was titled "Food for Fitness, A Daily Guide". Even though the design was easier to read, it didn't

include information about fats, sweets and alcohol or the daily amounts of these food items. In 1979, changes were made once again and an extra food group was added back in to include a fifth category to include fats, sweets and alcohol. The name once again changed to "Hassle-Free Daily Food Guide". In 1984, not only did the name change again to "Food Wheel: A Pattern for Daily Choices" but this design also included the idea of eating food in moderation, included five food groups and three different calories levels. In 1992, it became known as "The Food Guide Pyramid" and included a total diet approach including moderation and nutrient adequacy and was designed using consumer research to help bring awareness to new food patterns. In 2005, the name changed to "MyPyramid: Food Guidance System". This simple design that included a pyramid full of vertical colors representing food groups also included a figure next to the pyramid to symbolize the concept of activity. This design, even though simpler in appearance included

information on 12 different calorie levels and more detailed information to support the design was added to "MyPyramid.gov" website. This year, the design has again changed to an even simpler and easy to understand format and one that we can all relate to: "MyPlate". The design is a four section plate which shows you how to build your plate and what food items should be included. The shapes were used to grab the consumer's attention by using new visual cues. This design focuses on making half of your plate fruits (red) and vegetables (green), while the other half is 1/4 lean protein (purple) and 1/4 grains (orange). There has also been a round circle that represents a glass of milk which adds dairy as a food group (blue). Even though the name and design has changed over the years, the Food Pyramid, Food Guide Pyramid or MyPlate still focuses on one main goal: healthy eating and proper nutrition. So begin building your plate using the guidelines below. For more detailed information about MyPlate be sure to visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.





Strategies to Strengthen Your Family

By: Andrea Scarrow, Colquitt County



What one activity decreases the chance your kids will drink, smoke, or use drugs? Hint: this same activity builds your child's self-esteem, builds family traditions, and improves your family's health! The answer: eating a nutritious meal together around the table! Research shows that when families eat together, children are healthier. Families that eat meals together at home typically consume more fruits, vegetables, milk and nutrients. Not only is it healthy for the body; when families eat together, children also do better in school and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Family relationships can be strengthened around the dinner table. To accomplish these positive results from family meal time, there are some challenges to overcome. For example, cell phones and TV's must be turned off to avoid interruptions as the family focuses on conversation with each

other. Parents should take the lead and encourage children to share their ideas as well as listen with respect when someone else is speaking. Think ahead about some conversation starter ideas. You may ask younger children, "If you could be any type of animal, what would you be and why?" or "If you could have a super power, would you rather fly or be invisible? Why?" With older children you might ask, "How could we as a family help others in our community?" or "How does it make you feel when someone is really listening?" Get them talking with questions that are open-ended and require more than just a "yes," "no," or "whatever" answer. Eating five family meals together each week makes a difference between healthy and unhealthy outcomes for children. Mealtime is a powerful and pleasant experience when families make it a priority and work together to

plan ahead and make it happen. You don't have to cook an elaborate meal to enjoy family meal time. Keeping it simple, nutritious and even allowing the children to help with the preparation will make it fun and meaningful. Don't allow hectic schedules to rob your family of the most important time of the day—being together around the table!



Grill it Safely

By: Rachel Hubbard, Lanier County



We love to grill foods for holidays, family gatherings, and most any occasion all year round. Summer is especially popular for outdoor meals, picnics, and barbeques. Make sure you take precautions to handle food safely to protect against foodborne illness. While marinating meat and poultry be sure to place it in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter. Do not reuse the leftover marinade unless you have boiled it first! Separate vegetables from meats prior to grilling to avoid cross-contamination. And, be sure to wash any utensils and plates that may have come in contact with the raw meat before using with cooked foods. Take only the amount of food that you intend to cook outside, and keep the rest refrigerated.

Completely defrost meat before grilling to make sure it cooks evenly. Precooking foods in the

microwave can be a great time saver, but move them directly from the microwave to the grill to ensure that cooking is complete. Cook everything thoroughly and use a food thermometer to check internal temperatures. Clean your grill after use so that dirt and bacteria do not stick to it. Serve hot food immediately, and refrigerate leftovers within the first two hours of serving, one hour if it's 90° F or higher.

It's important to handle foods properly during preparation, grilling, serving and storing to protect you and your loved ones from foodborne illness.





Credit Card Confusion

By, Sandra Gay, Stewart County



The harder money is to get, the more important it becomes. Such is the present status of the consumer with the economy as it is. In recent years, the credit cards have changed dramatically to meet the demands of a troubled economy.

Heretofore, it was easy to acquire a credit card or raise the credit limit. Getting a credit card was as easy as applying for one and getting more credit was as easy as asking (unless you had been late with a payment). The logic for this is obvious. The higher the credit limit, the more likely you would carry a balance and the more interest the credit card company would be paid.

Things have changed. Lenders view unused lines of credit as potential liabilities. In seeking to reduce potential losses, credit card companies are lowering credit card limits and closing unused accounts.

This credit card company attitude change does impact consumers. If a credit card account is closed or your credit limit is reduced, it may affect your credit score. If you have a lower credit score, it will impact your ability to obtain additional credit and will raise the interest rate you pay.

All of this promotes confusion. But take heart, even the experts are confused. Financial management experts offer the consumers conflicting and varying advice. Some say charge a little on each credit card and pay off the balance each month. A national expert recommends paying only the minimum amount on your credit cards to keep the accounts open.

Why this conflicting information? The experts desire to offer advice that works for everyone. But good advice for you may be bad for someone else. The advice you should follow depends on your financial status.

For the consumer in the ideal situation (having a savings equal to three to six months of living expenses for unexpected expenses and emergencies) much less available credit is needed. In this case, use one credit card regularly so the account will not be closed. Pay the balance in full each month to avoid paying interest.

If you do not have the emergency saving fund and do not generally carry a balance on your credit card, it makes sense to use one credit card regularly and pay off the balance each month so there is no finance charges. But set a goal to save three to six months of living expenses to reduce your dependence on credit.

If you have no emergency savings fund and carry a balance on one or more credit cards and can afford to make at least the minimum payments, make paying off your credit card debt your top priority. With the average Annual Percentage Rate of 15.35% interest on credit cards, making only minimum payments is an expensive way to keep an account open. Paying off your debt makes much more sense. Contact your local UGA Cooperative Extension office for a plan to eliminate debt.

Safety Begins at Home

Presented by: Sylvia Davis, Baker & Mitchell Counties



Each year 150,000 Americans die from injuries and another 30 million are hurt seriously enough to go to the emergency room. Many of these injuries could have been prevented. Make time to learn what you can do to protect yourself and the ones you love.

- *Assess your home for potential hazards such as poor lighting and uneven surfaces to prevent falls.
- *Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
- *Establish a plan for how you would evacuate from your home in the event of an emergency.
- *Make sure all electrical outlets are covered and inaccessible to children.
- *Supervise young children whenever they are in the kitchen or near a cooking surface.
- *Program emergency numbers, such as the Poison Control Hotline (1-800-222-1222), into your phone.
- *Store cleaning supplies and medicines in locked cabinets out of the reach of children.
- *Check your hot water heater periodically and adjust the thermostat to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to avoid burns.

For more tips on ways to keep your home healthy and safe contact the local UGA Cooperative Extension office (1-800-ASK-UGA1). Also, you can download a home safety checklist from the UGA Cooperative Extension website (www.gafamilies.com).

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Dear Friends,

The Balancing Act is a quarterly publication sent to you by Family and Consumer Sciences Agents serving all South-west Georgia. All information in this newsletter is written by Specialists at the University of Georgia and FACS agents, and is backed by research from the University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This newsletter brings you the latest information, please contact the agent in your county.

Thank you,

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