Eastern Washington Agricultural Museum

EWAM was founded in 2005, and dedicated to collect, preserve, display, and educate the public. It is totally staffed by volunteers. The facility consists of 2 large buildings with many tractors and large items outside, most being under roof. One of the most rare items is a 150-year-old horse-powered sweep. To see the generosity of area donors is truly amazing!

Museum Mystery Combine

Do you have any idea what brand this machine is? Please contact the museum!

Inside, the displays range from small household and shop items, to tuck and large items such as a rare and restored wooden Harris Harvester, wagons, buggies, gas and diesel engines, a large steam engine and much more.

The facility is located at the Garfield County Fairgrounds, 1 mile east of Pomeroy. Four Star Supply to Fairgrounds Road, then follow the road.

It is open by appointment only. Call David Ruark at 509-843-3506, or Jay Franks at 509-566-7027.

Eastern WA Plowing Schedule

Pomeroy—April 2 & 3

At the Garfield Co. Fairgrounds east of town. For information: David Ruark 509-566-7000

Colfax—April 16 & 17

At the Palouse Empire Fairgrounds, 5 miles west of Colfax, on Highway 26. For information: Stan Riebold 509-657-3682 or Tom Hennigar 509-648-3462

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What’s Happening?

If you know of any ag related events coming up soon, please drop us a note or give us a call, we would be happy to add it to our calendar.

Mar 17  ST PATRICK’S DAY!
Mar 19-20  19th Annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival, Othello, WA, Moscow, ID. (Contact: othellsandhillcrane festival.org or call 1-886-726-3445)
Mar 18-21  2016 Oregon FFA State Convention, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR. (http://www. oregonffa.com)
Mar 19  5th Annual Women In Agriculture Conference, held at various sites in the Northwest. For more info visit: www.WomenInAg.wsu.edu or contact Donna Rolen, donna.rolen@wsu.edu 509/745-8531)
Mar 20  Northwest Horse Fair & Expo 2016, Linn County Fair & Expo Center, Albany, OR. Largest equine expo in the NW, clinics by world-class horse trainers & riders, breed & stallion review demos, equine entertainment & trade show. (http://www.equinepromotions.net/)
Mar 27  HAPPY EASTER!
Mar 27-29  Family Forest Landowners & Managers Conference & Exposition, University Inn-Best Western Plus in Moscow, ID. Pre-register by March 21, at the door cost is $10/person more. (For info: email: info@idahoforestowners.org or call 208/683-3168.)

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April 6 for April 11
May 4 for May 9
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Easter is here early this year. In honor of that wonderful spring holiday I have included some interesting recipes to try out for your Easter dinner. May you all have a Happy and Blessed Easter!

Asparagus & Mushroom Puff Pastry Pie
From Allrecipes, http://allrecipes.com—Recipe by: DMEIER1

“A delicious pie with asparagus, mushrooms, garlic and hollandaise sauce baked in puff pastry.”

½ cup butter
2 bunches fresh asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces
6 cloves garlic, diced
1 pound sliced fresh mushrooms
1 cup prepared hollandaise sauce
1 (17.25 ounce) package frozen puff pastry, thawed

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F (200° C).
2. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the asparagus, and cook for about 10 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms and garlic; cook and stir until the mushrooms are tender. Set aside.
3. Prepare the hollandaise sauce according to package directions. Stir into the asparagus and mushrooms.
4. Lay one sheet of puff pastry out flat in the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish, letting any extra dough go up the sides. Spread the asparagus mixture evenly over the dough. Top with the other sheet of pastry, and pinch the edges together to seal.
5. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes in the preheated oven, until pastry is golden brown. Cool for a few minutes before slicing and serving.

Prep time: 15 minutes; Cook time: 45 m; Servings Per Recipe: 8

Strawberry Romaine Salad I

“For my wedding shower everyone brought a few recipes and this is one of my favorites. It is refreshing and pretty. This salad also travels well, just save the dressing and use it just before serving.”

1 head romaine lettuce, rinsed, dried, and chopped
2 bunches fresh spinach, chopped, washed and dried
1 pint fresh strawberries, sliced
1 Bermuda onion, sliced
½ cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1/3 cup white sugar
¼ cup milk
2 tablespoons poppy seeds

1. In a large salad bowl, combine the romaine, spinach, strawberries and sliced onion.
2. In a jar with a tight fitting lid, combine the mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, milk and poppy seeds. Shake well and pour the dressing over salad. Toss until evenly coated.

Prep time: 15 minutes; Ready In: 15 minutes; Servings Per Recipe: 6

continued on page A7
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Wise Up & Chow Down

Back in the 1800’s when cattle wearing different brands shared the same range it was quite common for ranchers to eat the beef of another rancher. After all, for every beef of your neighbors you ate that was one of yours that you could sell for $12.50.

One of the more amusing stories I’ve heard from this era occurred when Burk Burnett, legendary founder of the Four Sixes in Texas, invited Don Waggoner over to his ranch for dinner. Waggoner was also a famous rancher as well as a wonderful horse breeder. As an inclination for coming over to his house for dinner Burnett promised Waggoner that he would serve him something he had never eaten before. Waggoner showed up for dinner and was served a delicious meal but after the last course was served Waggoner remarked to Burnett, “You have not furnished anything I have never tasted before.”

“Oh, but I have,” responded Burnett, picking up a platter. “Taste a piece of your own beef.”

Even though we don’t have such problems in this day and age with cattlemen eating other rancher’s beef we still have a similar problem. Only now it is called “picking up the check”.

My road agent buddies and I routinely traveled with a fellow who would have got on our astonishment he actually asked the waiter to retaliate was when he invited us all to the server brought the check and then excusing himself to use the restroom. I swear he could tricks included waiting until just before the when we called him the next morning to brought the sizable check. Meanwhile, we had forgotten to call my wife and once in the table all by his lonesome when the waiter off that day we write him a check. Next, Butch got up to go to the bathing and when he did not return for twenty minutes K.C. had to go look for him. I had forgotten to call my wife and once in the lobby of the restaurant I asked the waiter to tell Willard he’d left the lights on in his car. This left our moocher friend sitting at the table all by his lonesome when the waiter brought the sizable check. Meanwhile, we had all met outside at the car, laughing and congratulating ourselves.

Stiffing a guy for a check is one thing but leaving him stranded is another, so we waited until he came out to give him a ride back to the motel. We stayed until quitting time but he never did come out.

We never found out if he paid the check, washed dishes or escaped out the back door but when we called him the next morning to join us for breakfast he impolitely declined our generous offer for some reason.
Braided Easter Egg Bread

From Allrecipes.com—Recipe by: MARBALET

“This decorative Easter bread has whole eggs baked into it! Do not cook the whole eggs, as they will bake at the same time that the bread does. The eggs can also be dyed for extra color.”

2½ cups all-purpose flour, divided

⅓ cup white sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
2 eggs

5 whole eggs, dyed if desired
2 whole tablespoons butter, melted

1. In a large bowl, combine 1 cup flour, sugar, salt and yeast; stir well. Combine milk and butter in a small saucepan; heat until milk is warm and butter is softened but not melted. Gradually add the milk and butter to the flour mixture; stir until smooth. Add two eggs and ½ cup flour; beat well. Add the remaining flour, ½ cup at a time, stirring well after each addition. When the dough has come together, form the dough into a ball and turn to coat with oil. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise in a warm place until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

2. In a large bowl, place the dough in the bowl with 1 cup flour, salt, yeast; stir well. Combine milk and butter in a small saucepan; heat until milk is warm and butter is softened but not melted. Stir constantly. Add two eggs and ½ cup flour; beat well. Add the remaining flour, ½ cup at a time, stirring well after each addition. When the dough has come together, form the dough into a ball and turn to coat with oil. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise in a warm place until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

3. Roll each round into a long roll surface. Divide the dough into two equal size rounds; cover and let rest for 10 minutes. Roll each round into a long roll surface.

4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Place loaves on a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth.

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continued on page A8
Calendar continued from page A2

Apr 2-3  Spring Farming Days at Pomeroy, WA, Garfield County Fairgrounds off Hwy 12 E. Horse, mule and antique farming on 13 acres. Ag Museum will be open and offering active demonstrations, art exhibits. Camping and noon meals available on site. (Jen, 509/843-3506 or David, 509/566-7000)

Apr 4  Wind Energy on the Farm, Bassetti Farm & Ranch, Goldendale, WA. (Contact Tilth Producers, 206-632-7506 or email: organic@tilthproducers.org)

Apr 6-9  Idaho FFA State Leadership Conference, College of Southern Idaho, Twin Falls, ID. (idahoffa.org/)

Apr 11-13  Managing Poplar & Willow for Environmental Benefits & Renewable Fuels Industry, The Benson Hotel, 309 Southwest Broadway, Portland, OR. A wide array of stakeholders to discuss opportunities for poplar and willow in environmental applications and as a feedstock for developing renewable fuel industries. Registration fee is $300. (http://hardwoodbiofuels.org/poplar-willow-forum-registration/)

Apr 16-17  2016 Old Time Farming Days, Palouse Empire Fairgrounds, 5 miles W of Colfax, WA on Hwy 26. Come see horses, mules and antique farm equipment at work tilling and planting. (For information contact, Stan Riebold, 509/657-3682 or Tom Hennigar 509/648-3462)

Apr 15-16  WSU Cattleman’s Boot Camp, Benton County Fairgrounds, Kennewick, WA.

Apr 25  Solar Energy on the Vineyard, Badger Mountain Vineyard, Kennewick, WA. (Contact Tilth Producers, 206/632-7506 or email: organic@tilthproducers.org)

May 26-28  International Cool Climate Wine Symposium, Brighton, England. Bringing together the world’s foremost experts in viticulture and enology, the challenges of cool climate wine production takes center stage. Website: www.iccws2016.com

Kitchen continued from page A7

Easter Breakfast Casserole

From Allrecipes, http://allrecipes.com—Recipe by: Stephanie

“‘This is looked forward to every Easter, it is so delicious!’”

1 pound bacon

¼ cup diced onion

¼ cup diced green bell pepper

3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese

8 eggs

2 cups milk

1 (16 ounce) package frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Lightly grease a 7x11 inch casserole dish.

2. Fry the bacon in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat until evenly browned, about 10 minutes. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate. Crumble.

3. In a large bowl beat together eggs and milk. Mix in cheese, bacon, onion and green pepper. Stir in the thawed hash browns. Pour mixture into prepared casserole.

4. Cover with aluminum foil and bake in preheated oven for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 30 minutes until eggs have set.

Prep time: 45 minutes; Cook time: 55 minutes; Servings per recipe: 10

Editor’s Note: I have made a similar casserole using cooked, drained ground sausage or chopped ham. Either substitute is equally delicious!
Peel Off The Layers Of Growing Artichokes

By Kym Pokorn, Oregon State University

With deeply lobed silver leaves and a 3-foot stature, the artichoke unfolds as much mystery in the garden as it does on the dinner table.

Used to set off any color in a perennial border, as a striking specimen plant or the flagship of a vegetable garden, the artichoke has much to recommend it to the gardener. But the reason most people grow them are the leathery leaves made to dip into butter—or is it mayo?—and the succulent heart at the center.

Although most artichokes thrive in the cool, moist climate of coastal California, western Oregon is usually mild enough to grow these edible thistles as perennials if cut back and mulched in the winter, according to Jim Myers, plant breeder and researcher at Oregon State University.

For the best success he recommends varieties Green Globe, Imperial Star and Emerald.

“For something unusual, try growing Violetto,” Myers said. “It is particularly variable for spines and purple heads, but in my opinion, has the best flavor of all of the artichokes.”

Artichokes as annuals also can grow in many places east of the Cascade Range, with a little coaxing, he added.

To grow artichokes from seed, start them indoors in late February or March under grow lights for about eight weeks, and then plant them outside after the last frost. In May or June, it’s best to purchase starts from your local nursery or mail-order catalog.

“Plant artichoke starts in loose, well-amended soil in full sun,” Myers said. “Space them 3 to 5 feet apart, and when planning your garden, think about the shade they will cast. Water and mulch regularly.”

By mid-summer, the artichoke plant should send up flower buds. To eat the buds, harvest them before they open. If left to flower, the plant will produce a large purple thistle that can be dried and used in arrangements. If you harvest all the heads, in milder climates artichokes may send up a second crop in the fall.

An artichoke will produce well for about three or four years, Myers said. After that, it’s best to dig and divide it as it produces off-shoot plants that may crowd the original plant.

“In the fall, cut back your artichoke plant and mulch it with a covering of leaves or straw. After mild winters, new plants will sprout in the spring from the old parent plant. Uncover them in April. Cold winters, however, may kill artichokes, whether or not they are mulched.”

Western Ag Industry Survey

From Diana Roberts, Washington State University Extension

We invite you to participate in a project to learn more about risk conditions in the Western Ag Industry. It has been developed by members of the Western Extension Committee located at Land Grant Universities across the 13 Western states.

Your answers will be kept confidential and will only be released as summaries in which you will not be identified. We estimate it will take about 10 minutes to complete the survey. Your participation is voluntary. However, you can help us a great deal by sharing your perspective. If you prefer not to respond to a specific question, please omit it and move on.

Survey questions are intended to include perspectives from a broad cross-section of individuals across the agricultural industry. As such, some questions are worded as “you” and “your” with the intent that you provide responses from your personal perspective. Elsewhere, questions include the wording “in your area” with the intent that you provide responses for your local area. In some cases this may be the state where you work, the local region or county, or the location of one or more farm operations you are involved in.

Survey results will be made available free of charge in an electronic format once the data have been compiled at http://wec.farmmanagement.org.

The 2016 Western Ag Industry online survey is available at: http://survey.farmmanagement.org/index.php/628982. Thank you in advance for your help with this project.

Members of the Western Extension Committee, wec@farmmanagement.org or 307/766-2166.

Northwest Farm Credit Services Reports 2015 Earnings

From Jennifer Rohrer, Northwest Farm Credit Services

Northwest Farm Credit Services, the Northwest’s leading financial cooperative supporting agriculture and rural communities, announced 2015 earnings of $255.6 million, an increase of $27.5 million, or 12.0 percent compared to $228.1 million in 2014. Increased earnings were primarily the result of continued loan growth and positive credit quality trends. Total capital increased 8.6 percent during the year to $2.1 billion.

“2015 was another solid year for the association,” said President and CEO Phil DiPofi. “We’ve continued to build a strong financial base to meet our customers’ growing needs for credit and work with them to prepare for volatility in the marketplace. Based on strong earnings, reserves and capital levels we are sharing a higher percentage of the associations’ profits with our customer-members this year.”

As a cooperative, Northwest FCS returns a share of its net earnings to customer-members in the form of patronage dividends. The Northwest FCS board recently approved an increase in patronage from 0.75 percent to 1.0 percent of a customer’s eligible average daily loan balance. Cash patronage returned for 2015 totaled a record $91.9 million compared to $64.1 million for 2014. Since the patronage program began in 2000, Northwest FCS has returned $590.6 million in cash patronage to customer-members.

For more information about current market conditions, see Northwest FCS Industry Insights.

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Online Boat Navigation Course
From D. Scott Croft, BoatUS News

If you’re looking to improve your marine navigation but can’t seem to find the time for a classroom course, the new, go at your own pace, online “Modern Marine Navigation” course from the BoatUS Foundation and US Coast Guard Auxiliary could be the answer. The course can be taken anytime at home or on the road and allows course takers to stop and return to the course as their busy schedules permit.

Aimed at giving recreational boaters on any body of water the navigational skills for a safe afternoon of boating or navigating on longer journeys, it’s available for a $40 course fee at www.BoatUS.org/navigation. For a limited time, using the early bird discount using promotional code “Nav2016” will save you an additional 10%.

“Classroom courses are a great way to learn, but it can be a challenge to find the block of time,” said BoatUS Foundation Director of Education Amanda Sattles Pérez. “We’re offering a very comprehensive, in-depth course on navigation in a way that works with your schedule.”

The course uses a series of online voyages as practical learning tools that course takers complete using navigation skills. Quizzes check progress and allow you to review previous course material at any time with no penalty. Topics covered include:

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Crop Insurers Celebrate Past Success, Set Sights On Future
From National Crop Insurance Services

Crop insurers and farmers have shouldered their share of challenges in recent years, ranging from an historic drought to lower-than-expected financial returns, legislative debates, and implementing a new Farm Bill.

But Tim Weber, chairman of the American Association of Crop Insurers and National Crop Insurance Services, said today (February 15, 2016) that those challenges have only strengthened crop insurance providers and better equipped them for the future.

“I believe crop insurance is stronger today for the obstacles it has faced in recent years and most importantly, it is ready to meet tomorrow’s challenges,” he told colleagues at the industry’s annual conference.

Weber, who is coming to the end of his term as chairman, used his remarks to reflect back on lessons learned during pivotal years within the industry in a time, he said, when teamwork and building alliances was emphasized.

“Overall, I am very proud of what we have accomplished,” he said. “These accomplishments were the result of a hard-working, talented workforce that was willing to work together as [insurance providers], agents, adjusters, and industry allies to overcome attempts to weaken our farmers’ and ranchers’ insurance providers, agents, adjusters, and industry allies to overcome attempts to weaken our farmers’ and ranchers’ interests.”

Weber noted that, despite crop insurance’s past successes and its popularity with farmers, agriculture’s opponents will continue to criticize the farm safety net. He pointed to the recent Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, which sought to cut $300 million a year from crop insurance, as proof of that criticism and how rural America must counter it.

“We farm from the country side to our defense...as did the great force, the lending community, input providers, Main Street businesses, the conservation world, and leading voices from academia,” he explained. “Notwithstanding this level of support...we would never have won this battle if not for the leadership of key lawmakers who were not bashful about standing up for agriculture.”

Weber urged the group to remain vigilant moving forward by focusing on industry cooperation and collaboration with third-party allies. He also urged insurers to invest in time and resources in the political process as a way to blunt future critiques.

“We need all Members of Congress to hear directly from their constituents regarding the importance of maintaining an effective crop insurance program,” he concluded. “After all, even every person in this country benefits from a dynamic, financially healthy agricultural industry. Not only does it provide a dependable supply of domestically grown food, fuel, and fiber, but it also supports economic and job growth.”
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**BeefTalk: Why Would Calving Time In The Northern Plains Change?**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist, NDSU Extension Service

This is a good time of the year to share four years of data and experiences collected at the Dickinson Research Extension Center on May calving.

Why? The calving date is more than a calendar date on the wall of the barn. The date affects every aspect of a beef cattle operation and should be discussed with the utmost diligence.

Producers with several enterprises on the farm or ranch must fit all on the same calendar in the same barn. I would be the first to say, “Avoid a knee-jerk action that changes the calving date,” but the discussion needs to be held.

So let’s start. Well, the weather is nice in most areas, and the traditional calving time of March and April is fast approaching. The busiest dates will be late in the first week of April, with most cow-calf producers starting in mid-March. If I had to pick a historical start date, it would be March 15.

A review of the CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal Performance System) data set of North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association producers shows the actual 20-year (1994 to 2013) average calving date is April 4. The average date for fall calf weigh-up is Oct. 12. These dates have changed little, with no strong trend showing any significant change, indicating producer contentment with these traditional dates.

Producers calving outside of these dates are rare. In fact, historically, most have not even been interested in discussing the topic. So why even bring up the topic? We have three reasons to discuss it: first, weather effects on calf death loss; second, a decreasing labor pool with the proper cow-calf management skillset; and, third, the growing expenses associated with cattle production.

The three reasons are not in order of importance. Changing the calving date is the most important decision a cattle producer ever will make and should not be made under duress or out of frustration.

Historically, most beef producers have been focused on the weather, which generally involves a bad day or two every year. The problem is that every calving season will have a day or two of bad weather. The center has calved in almost every month of the year through time and has encountered weather challenges every calving season.

So why the discussion? Simple: escalating costs. The traditional approach may be the most comfortable, but if production costs exceed revenue, then the year’s effort is of no avail. Crop producers have the same concern: however, crop producers can change crops in an effort to produce a crop with a value greater than the expense.

Although that is not always easy, the crop producers certainly explore several options each growing season. Beef producers generally have no options to switch species, so change within the beef enterprise is the main option.

Previously, I have noted projected production costs of more than $650 per calf, which is above the speculated gross margin of $600, thus the negative dollars. And beef production in pounds of beef sold seems fairly stable, which is another not-so-good thing.

These are not good feelings, especially if nothing changes, but the challenge is doable. So the time is now to think hard, to bring in the unconventional thoughts and develop a plan.

Two things come to mind. First, if costs go up, pounds need to go up, too, which means keeping the calves longer to add pounds without reinvesting more dollars. Second, overall costs of the operation need to be pushed down. This does not mean painting the gate a different color, but changing the gate— in other words, significant change.

The center was in that very situation and made a change. For years, the center had a targeted calving start date of March 15 and a bull turn-out date around June 1. The average calving date was March 29. After a diligent discussion, the gates were changed; the bullpen gate was locked shut until Aug. 1.

The temptation to get a bolt cutter, open that gate and let those bulls out was real. But we resisted.

The first change that occurred at the center once bull turn-out was delayed from June 1 to Aug. 1 was the date that the cows start the third trimester of pregnancy. As cows advance in terms of days pregnant, a significant change in nutritional requirements occurs. When the cows are exposed June 1, the third-trimester day is Dec. 12; while for the cows exposed Aug. 1, the third-trimester day is Feb. 12.

Delayed calving allows producers to take a more aggressive approach to late-season utilization of cover crops, crop residue and other forage sources, resulting in a one-third to two-thirds reduction in winter feed costs. Got your attention? More next week.

May you find all your ear tags.
Renewable Accounts: The Price Of Everything
By David Ripplinger, Bioproducts & Bioenergy Economist, Asst Professor, NDSU Dept of Agribusiness & Applied Economics

One of the fundamental concepts of economics is opportunity cost. The opportunity cost of a choice is the forgone benefit of the next best alternative. A common agricultural example arises when a landowner decides to farm or rent his or her cropland. If the land is farmed, rent no longer can be charged. That forgone rent is the opportunity cost of farming the land.

Estimating the opportunity cost can be challenging. You have to identify major considerations and then value them. Many choices have nonfinancial dimensions that can be easy to miss and then mis-valued once identified.

While the concept of opportunity cost can be used for many decisions, I bring it up to help prepare farmers in the northern Plains to be ready for a situation that may be on the horizon.

Two years from now, after an informational meeting at your local community center, a businessman offers you $50 per ton of wheat straw that he will have baled after you've harvested the grain. Do you accept the offer?

The answer you should depend on the opportunity cost of the straw.

While the straw could be removed and used as bedding, most farmers today value the straw most highly when it stays in the field. These nutrients and organic matter remain, moisture is enhanced and erosion control is provided. Are these and other benefits from leaving the straw in the field worth $50 per ton or more? Again, what is the opportunity cost of the straw?

We could walk through an exercise that maps the composition of straw and current fertilizer prices to estimate the nutrient value, and estimate less precise values for improved soil moisture and erosion control, the values of which may be subjective based on how you value these benefits.

I will be delivering Extensification programming during the next month to help farmers understand opportunity cost and how they can calculate the value of their residue. These face-to-face meetings across the state will make sure they are ready to confidently sign or decline an offer for their residue if and when it is made.
Prairie Fare: How Can You Tell If Food Is Safe To Eat?

By Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist, NDSU Extension Service

“Mom, something in the fridge smells terrible,” my 20-year-old son announced. I was in the living room.

I would have been very happy if he would have done the investigation to determine the cause. However, he was gone by the time I walked into the kitchen. I carefully opened the fridge, half expecting a giant germ to reach out and throttle me.

The offending food was leftover cooked broccoli from the previous day. The cover on the container was slightly open.

Cruferitable vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli and brussels sprouts, have sulfur-containing substances that are responsible for their aroma during cooking and their positive health effects.

I closed the cover on the broccoli and made plans to add it to soup. My son was not going to escape this vegetable.

Later, while I was on the phone, my 17-year-old daughter walked over with a garden of milk. She pointed to the date on the carton. The date had passed the previous day. I pannedomized drinking milk and nodded my head. The date on the carton for milk usually is a “sell by” date. This is the last day that a store can have the food on its shelf. Milk is fine for several days beyond the date if stored between 38° and 40°F. Our refrigerator temperature was set at 40°F. My daughter enjoyed a healthful beverage with nine essential nutrients, including protein and bone-building calcium and vitamin D.

Because many foods are perishable, you have to keep an ongoing eye on your inventory to be sure you do not end up having to toss it. Smelling or examining food does not always tell you if the food is safe.

In general, leftover perishable foods (cooked meat, casserole, vegetables) kept at 40°F or below should be used within three or four days. Based on that timing, our leftover broccoli was OK.

Expiration dates are not required on foods except baby foods and infant formula. Do not use infant foods past the expiration date for nutritional and, potentially, food safety reasons.

However, many foods carry a “best if used by” or “use by” date. If you use the food by this date, the product will be at its highest quality in terms of color, texture, and flavor. Eggs last at least a month beyond the sell-by date if stored in a refrigerator.

For all the other foods, a uniform system of food dating does not exist. Meat, poultry and seafood are among the most perishable foods in your refrigerator. Be sure to use ground meat or poultry within a couple of days of purchase and whole-muscle meat (roasts, etc.) within about four days, or wrap appropriately and freeze.


Remember the old rule for perishable foods: “When in doubt, throw it out.” As I was perusing our fridge and cupboards, I noticed some “inventory” that needed to be used soon. For best flavor, spices also should be moved along, but they are safe for a long time.

I am featuring two recipes that might help you use some food inventory in your cupboard and/or freezer. The first recipe is a low-sodium Mexican Blend Seasoning that can be added to ground beef or chicken to make tacos or fajitas. You also can use part of the mixture in the soup recipe that my student interns tried at NDSU. The soup recipe was a big hit.

Make Your Own Mexican Blend Seasoning

1½ tsp. dried parsley (or dried cilantro)
½ tsp. garlic powder
½ tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. black pepper
1 Tbsp. chili powder
1 tsp. paprika
1½ tsp. cumin
Mix and store in a tightly closed container in a cool, dry place.

Yields about 3 ½ tablespoons of mix.

Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup

1 (16-ounce) jar chunky salsa (mild or medium)
3 c. chicken stock, reduced sodium
2 Tbsp. Mexican Blend Seasoning (see recipe)
1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 (16-ounce) frozen corn
1 pound chicken breast (boneless/skinless)
Optional toppings (shredded cheese, yogurt)

Slice the chicken into strips and place in slow cooker (at least 3-quart size). After canned items (except salsa) are drained and rinsed, place all the remaining ingredients in the slow cooker. Cook on low for six to seven hours or high for four hours. Shred the chicken with two forks until bite-sized. If desired, top individual servings with a pinch of shredded cheese and a dollop of yogurt. Note: You can substitute low-sodium taco seasoning to taste.

Makes about 10 servings (1 cup per serving). Each serving has 210 calories, 2.5 grams (g) fat, 19 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber and 530 milligrams sodium.
Bi-State Partnership
Investing In Spokane River
From Walt Edelen, WR Program Manager, SCCD

A consortium of 20 organizations from both Washington and Idaho aims to implement 150,000 acres of conservation practices on the ground to protect clean water and benefit working lands.

The Spokane Conservation District, along with partnering state and local organizations, secured $7.7 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The program directs funds towards conservation projects to help improve water quality, enhance soil health and support wildlife habitat. This is the second RCPP award in eastern Washington and northern Idaho since its inception in 2014.

The Spokane Conservation District has long been active in promoting the sustainable use of natural resources throughout eastern Washington and parts of northern Idaho. The RCPP award will greatly expand that role through the partnership of more than 20 other organizations including the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene Tribes, multiple conservation districts from northern Idaho and Washington, along with State, County and local governmental agencies. Several non-profits and service organizations representing the entire Greater Spokane River Watershed in both states will also be part of the coalition.

Each partner organization will play a specific and crucial role in the implementation of the project which will include conservation of soil and water resources on over 150,000 acres of agricultural lands. The partners will be contributing matching funds with the cumulative match equaling $15.4 million available for this project.

The program is expected to be available for private landowners to enroll in innovative conservation programs in the fall of 2016. It is anticipated that more than 300 farm operators will become involved over a 5 year period.

For more program information and upcoming media events, contact Walt Edelen Walt-Edelen@sccd.org or Charlie Peterson, Charlie-Peterson@sccd.org at 509-535-7274. You can also visit our website at www.SCCD.org.
UI Researchers Using UAS To Test For Tasty Sagebrush

By Tara Roberts, University of Idaho Communications

A joint research team from the University of Idaho’s College of Natural Resources, Idaho State University, Boise State University and Washington State University conducted research on sagebrush habitat using unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in Lemhi County February 1-3.

The work was part of a collaborative research program to understand habitat quality and choices made by pygmy rabbits, a species that lives only in sagebrush areas.

The researchers fly a small quad-copter over sagebrush patches at 25-50 feet above ground on Bureau of Land Management lands to capture images of sagebrush plants. The copter carries a camera that records reflected light in many different color bands in contrast to the three bands of color (red, green and blue) that make up regular photos.

The researchers are testing if the multi-band images can help to map different types of sagebrush shrubs from the air, and if the images provide information about plant chemistry. Even though sagebrush shrubs look very similar to humans, they can differ widely in their chemical toxicity, which affects whether animals like rabbits or sage-grouse eat them.

Using UAS to conduct this research benefits pygmy rabbits. While the rabbits’ homes are undisturbed by the research, the technology is helping to provide a better understanding of where they live and why, and ultimately could contribute to restoration of sagebrush lands impacted by fires or invasive plants.
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