Soup’s On!

Soup is the ultimate comfort food, dispensed like medicine by mothers around the world for generations. It looks like those moms knew a thing or two, because soup definitely has its nutritional advantages. It can be a hearty source of nutrient-rich vegetable, whole grains, and legumes, soup can even help you to lose weight. According to several studies, consuming soup as a first course in a meal reduces the calorie intake of the meal.

Processed soup has been under fire in recent years because manufacturers have been stirring into much sodium and fat. New types of healthier soups have since become available. Still, with the growing number of products, it’s become more confusing to wade down the soup aisle of the supermarket.

You can’t tell how healthy a can of soup is by the label. So what does a healthy soup label look like? If you’re reducing your sodium intake, then watch for soups that have less than 300 mg per serving. If you are not on a sodium-restricted diet, and simply want to eat healthier, soups with 400-500 mg of sodium per serving are good choices.

Choose broth-based over cream-based soups, as the latter can have more than 20 percent of the Daily Value for fat in a single serving.

If you are cutting dietary fat, look for soups that have 5 percent or less of the Daily Value for fat in a serving.

When soup packages call for additional milk during preparation, choose fat-free milk to improve the nutritional lineup, but be cautious, many nutrition labels are based on what’s in the package, not on what you may be stirring into the soup pot.

-continued page 2-
While you’re on your quest for healthy soups, look for soups that contain the real thing: whole foods. Read the ingredients list. Look for soups such as bean or split pea that incorporate fiber-rich whole grains, legumes, and vegetables.

Can you create a nutritious bowl of soup from a can or a starter kit and not flood your diet with sodium?

Soup is no longer relegated only to cans. You can find instant soup in pouches, soup starter mixes, frozen soups, and single-serving, microwaveable soups. But beware of misleading portion sizes. Some microwave cups suggest serving sizes of 1/2 the container, even though most people down the whole cup.

If you’ve grown weary of scanning the labels of processed soup products, why not stir up your own soup pot? Start with a can of low sodium broth or canned tomatoes. Mix in frozen or fresh vegetables, leftover brown rice, spices, and herbs for a quick home cooked soup that's packed with nutrition and low in fat and sodium. Then dig in and comfort your body and soul. (see recipes)

Source: Food & Fitness Advisor, December 2005

2006 Resolutions

Many people welcome in the New Year with resolutions — a promise to do things differently in 2006. Hopefully, some of your Resolutions have to do with your personal finances and your health. Below are some ideas to get you started:

1) Resolve to become a comparison spender. There are two forms of overspending. The first group is the “borrow and spend” crowd — those that use credit and spend more than they have. However, the biggest over-spender group never compares prices — they just buy! An estimated 60-65 percent of all consumers pay too much for things. Comparison shopping and spending will put a quick stop to that financially detrimental practice. You can check prices in the newspaper, phone, on-line before making a purchase and save some money!

2) Resolve to become a regular saver. “When it comes to saving money, most people will simply stop at nothing.” In other words they never seem to get started. That's the way it often is received. Becoming a regular saver is quick, simple, something most people can and should do everyday. Start right now by taking a dollar bill and all of your pocket change and set it aside.

-continued on page 3-
Do this every day, even on the weekends. It will average $50 a month. An extra incentive to save a little more is to take all the folding money with your initials on the serial number, and save that $1, $5, $10, $20, $50 and $100 bills.

3) **Resolve to get your free credit files.** One of the best gifts to consumers from Congress was the ability to get free credit reports annually from the three major credit reporting agencies. Click on [http://www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com), call 877-322-8228, or complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. The form may be printed from [http://www.ftc.gov/credit](http://www.ftc.gov/credit)

4) **Resolve to Exercise.** Exercise 30 minutes or more most days of the week. Find ways to stay motivated with physical activity and keep it enjoyable.

5) **Resolve to be more active around the house.** Cleaning, cooking and gardening all burn twice the calories as sitting.

6) **Resolve to find eating out choices.** Find choices that are lower in calories and fat. Where can you get more lowfat items like: soups, salads, beans and rice, fish, pasta, etc?

7) **Resolve to find a way to make smaller portions.** For everything you eat, find a way to make the portion a little smaller or to choose a more low-cal option.

8) **Resolve to concentrate on eating more high-fiber, low cal foods.** Concentrate on eating more high-fiber, low cal foods instead of refined foods that are high in calories and low in nutrients.

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**Tax Refund E-Mail Scam**

The Internal Revenue Service recently issued a consumer alert about an Internet scam in which consumers receive an e-mail informing them of a tax refund. The e-mail, which claims to be from the IRS, directs the consumer to a link that requests personal information, such as Social Security number and credit card information.

The IRS does not ask for personal identifying or financial information via unsolicited e-mail. Additionally, taxpayers do not have to complete a special form to obtain a refund.

This scheme is an attempt to trick the e-mail recipients into disclosing their personal and financial data. The practice is called “phishing” for information.

The information fraudulently obtained is the used to steal the taxpayer’s identity and financial assets. Generally, identity thieves use someone’s personal data to steal his or her financial accounts, run up charges on the victim’s existing credit cards, applying for new loans, credit cards, services or benefits in the victim’s name and even file fraudulent tax returns.

If you receive an unsolicited e-mail purporting to be from the IRS, take the following steps:

- Do not open any attachments to the e-mail, in case they contain malicious code that will infect your computer.
- Contact the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 to determine whether the IRS is trying to contact you about a tax refund. The IRS has seen numerous attempts over the years to defraud the public and the federal government through a variety of schemes, including abusive tax avoidance transactions, identity theft, claims for slavery reparations, frivolous arguments and more. More information on these schemes may be found on the criminal enforcement page IRS.gov.
Recognizing a Stroke

This might be a lifesaver if you can remember the following advice, sent by a nurse, whose husband is a medical doctor.

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. A stroke victim may suffer permanent brain damage when people fail to recognize what’s happening. Now, doctors say any bystander can recognize a stroke, simply by asking three questions:

• ask the individual to smile.
• ask him or her to raise both arms.
• ask the person to speak a simple sentence.

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 911 immediately, and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher. Researchers are urging the general public to learn to ask these questions quickly, to someone they suspect of having a stroke. Widespread use of this test could result in prompt diagnosis and treatment of a stroke, and prevent permanent brain damage.

The advice given in this much-circulated e-mail appears to be sound, although it needs to be pointed out that it has yet to be endorsed by American Stroke Association. It was drawn from a report presented in February 2003 at the American Stroke Association’s (ASA) 28th International Stroke Conference, and news of it can be found on the ASA web site and the American Heart Association’s web site. The ASA has not taken a position on the topic nor endorsed the test because the results, though positive, arose from a very small study.

If the study’s findings hold up, it would mean that recognizing a stroke has taken place would be something just about anyone could do and would be a skill worth mastering in light of the importance of getting medical attention for stroke victims at the earliest possible moment.

The warning signs of a stroke are:

• Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
• Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding.
• Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
• Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
• Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.
IS ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP BEST?

Over the past several weeks, we have been reminded of the importance of handwashing. Just when we think we are doing a great job, we find out that antibacterial body and hand wash products are no being questioned.

Is this because they aren't safe? No, we have been using these products safely for over 30 years. We have found that there is an increase of “superbugs” that are resistant to antibiotic drugs. Public Health experts attribute this increase to the misuse and overuse of antibiotics, not because of increased antibacterial product use.

Does this mean that antibacterial soaps are better than plain soap and water? Washing with plain soap and water removes many germs from hands. According to the Soap and Detergent association, “Antibacterial soaps contain an active ingredient that keeps the number of germs at a reduced level for an extended period of time, providing improved germ control.”

Is this necessary for most of us? Probably not. If someone is caring for someone who is ill or caring for young children, possibly. If good handwashing procedures are followed, antibacterial products are not necessary.

To be sure that hands are washed well, remove rings and jewelry before beginning. Use warm water (most soaps work best in warm water, and soap; lather well and rub paying particular attention to the knuckles, nailbeds, and wrists. Sing “Happy Birthday” or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” all the way through twice. That should be about 20 seconds, the time recommended for good hygiene.

Be sure you use a paper towel to turn off the water, dispense your final paper towel, and to open bathroom doors. Remember, you may have washed your hands but the person before you, either at home or in a public restroom may not have washed theirs.

Florida’s Arbor Day is
Third Friday in January

I’ve always enjoyed trees in one way or another – climbing them as a kid, eating their fruits, using them to build tree houses, etc. As an adult, I still enjoy and appreciate trees for their beauty and benefits. Can you imagine our parks, roadsides, schoolyards and landscapes without trees?

Trees were everywhere in my hometown of Kathleen, Georgia. I remember four old, large pecan trees on our lot. There were two in the front yard on either side of the driveway. As children, I claimed one tree as my own and my twin sister, Linda, claimed one as her tree (and I better not touch it). But I not only touched it I climbed it once or twice, too. It wasn’t the best climbing tree, though. Neither was the one I claimed as mine on the west side of the drive. It no longer exists. It was cut down years ago. But Linda’s tree is still there and still produces pecans. It produced the best pecans between the two trees anyway. I think that’s really why she picked the tree.

I remember a large black cherry tree that was a volunteer in our backyard. It was a good climbing tree. It is the tallest black cherry tree I’ve ever seen. This tree is native throughout most of the United States. Some people call it wild cherry. Some birds like the ½ inch fruit produced by black cherry trees. The seeds will go
through their digestive system, remain viable and then germinate from bird droppings. This is probably how the tree I climbed got its start.

There were many other kinds of trees in our yard. We had various fruit trees including peach, plum, apple and pear. When I was in junior high and high school, I had the responsibility of caring for the fruit trees. Actually, I volunteered to do this because at the time I was involved in FFA and agriculture, horticulture and forestry classes. We had an outstanding Vocational Agriculture and FFA program at my high school.

I remember cracking black walnuts with a hammer on our concrete drive to get to the “meat” of this nut. I don’t know if you’ve tried cracking a black walnut but you really have to want to eat it to even bother. By the time the extremely hard shell breaks into tiny pieces, you’re left with small bits of walnut meat to carefully pick through and separate from the bits of hard shell. They are tasty – much different from store bought English walnuts. My mother planted the black walnut tree. She collected a single walnut and planted it. It grew into a nice tree but I really don’t think my dad cared for the tree. And I can’t say I blame him. The walnut fruit with husk included is about 1½ to 2 inches in diameter. Most years a bearing tree will produce a good number of walnuts to be picked up off the lawn and driveway. This was the case with our tree. My dad usually had the job of picking up the walnuts.

Arbor Day gives everyone the opportunity to celebrate, recognize, appreciate and plant trees. Florida’s Arbor Day is celebrated the third Friday in January. I encourage you to take time to enjoy the trees around you, and if you can, plant a tree. There just might be some little boy or girl out there that will remember you for doing so.

Written by Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County

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**Italian Bean and Pasta Soup**  
Makes 6 main-dish servings

| 1 cup chopped onions | 1 cup coarsely chopped carrots | 1 stalk celery, chopped |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | 7 cups chicken broth, defatted | 1 cup dried white beans, sorted and rinsed |
| 1 cup canned recipe-style stewed tomatoes (with juices) | 1 teaspoon dried rosemary | 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper |
| 1/4 tsp dried sage | 1 teaspoon dried basil | 1 cup tiny shell pasta |

Lightly spray an unheated large saucepan with olive oil no-stick spray. Heat the sauce pan over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic. Cook and stir over medium heat until the onions are tender.

Add the broth, beans tomatoes (with juices), rosemary, basil, red pepper and sage. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 1 to 1-1/2 hours or until the beans are tender.

Transfer about half of the bean mixture to a blender or food processor. Blend or process until smooth. Return the mixture to the saucepan with the remaining bean mixture.

Stir in the pasta. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat. Cover and simmer about 7 minutes until the pasta is tender but firm.

**Nutrition Information:** Calories 230, Fat (g.) 1, %Calories from fat 4%, Cholesterol (mg.) 10.
Cheesy Potato Soup

1 3/4 cups chicken broth, defatted
1 cup peeled and diced potatoes
1/2 cup finely shredded carrots
1/4 cup finely chopped onions
1/4 cup finely chopped celery
1-3/4 cups evaporated skim milk
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup (2 ounces) finely shredded fat-free cheddar cheese
1/2 cup (2 ounces) finely shredded reduced-fat sharp cheddar cheese

In a medium saucepan, combine the broth, potatoes, carrots, onions and celery. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat. Cover and simmer about 10 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Using the back of a fork, slightly mash the potatoes against the side of the saucepan.

In a custard cup, stir together 1/4 cup of the milk and the cornstarch until smooth. Then stir the cornstarch mixture into the broth mixture. Add the remaining 1 1/2 cups milk. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir for 1 minute more. Slowly stir in the cheeses. Cook and stir just until melted.

Makes 4 main-dish servings.

Nutrition Information

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Cheese adds a unique flavor to this potato soup, which has become a favorite. Using a combination of reduced-fat and fat-free cheese, you get the melting advantages of the reduced-fat cheese and the fat savings of the fat free variety. Calories, fat and cholesterol were reduced by:

- Removing the fat from the chicken broth
- Using evaporated skim milk instead of whole milk
- Using a combination of fat-free and reduced-fat (less than 5 grams of fat per ounce) cheddar cheeses

Membership: Are you an active member of your club and council? There are so many opportunities in Home & Community Education clubs….Are you taking advantage of all HCE has to offer—local state and national levels? If not, please consider your participation and try something new this year. Have you ever attended leader training? What about going to District meeting? Camp? Have you entered something in Cultural Arts? Donated $1 to Earn a Dollar program? What about working at Country Store? Would you like to be on a committee or serve as an officer? Let 2006 be the year you make the most of HCE and all it has to offer you…..education, fellowship, learning, fun, community activity, etc. You can also encourage others to join HCE. Spread the word. Let’s make 2006 a banner year for Okaloosa County HCE.

Officer Training Workshop-January 5th – There will be a VERY IMPORTANT workshop at 10 a.m. on Thursday, January 5th in Ft. Walton. All club and county officers and chairpersons must attend. Important info will be shared regarding duties, changes in organization, etc.

District I Meeting-January 18: The annual District I FCE meeting will be held at the Jackson County Extension Office in Marianna on Wednesday, January 18th. If you have not registered, call the office. There is a late fee for registering after the deadline.
Leader Training—Don’t forget the volunteer leader training on January 24 at 10 a.m. This training will be on arthritis. Each club should send 1-2 members for training. Remember this will be the club program in February.

Okaloosa $aves News: There is a lot going on in January as we kick off 2006! Coalition Luncheon and planning meeting will be January 9th, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Niceville Community Center. Please RSVP to assist us in planning.