

The TOPS Reminder

A newsletter for Western Massachusetts Counties

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Workshop

Mark November 1st on your calendars. I'm holding a workshop at the Shriners' Hospital in Springfield. Beverly Enos will **not** be able to make it as I planned; more info to follow.

KOPS Honor Society

I have not forgotten about starting a group. I have 3 chapters interested out of 16. The chapters are Westfield 0412, Chicopee 0211 and Greenfield 0395. My problem is finding a place to hold the meetings. I have asked leaders if I could use their hall, but haven't heard back from them.

Let's Talk Turkey

When buying a turkey go for the less expensive brands. A woman at a retreat said she had to cut the butterball turkey breast and inside of them were layers of butter. Maybe it tastes a lot juicier but in all honesty there would be more calories than you expected. Most people put gravy on their food any ways.

Retreats

As many of you know I just returned from a retreat. It was a great experience and I feel everyone would benefit from one. The main concern many

members have is the cost, but you have to realize that you get a room, food for 1500 calorie program and lots of educations. I know a lot more about the exchange system than I ever did. I learned things about myself and have a different attitude than before I left. We had lots of fun and I met many new friends. Many chapters have funds to help members attend. The below picture is me dressed up for fun night at the retreat. To learn more you need to attend a retreat.



2015 Area Captain Program "Making Your Plate Great" with the food exchange program

The promotional item for this year's program is this cute bear key chain that be attached to your purse or gym bag. The

cost is \$3 and it is a soft PVC (bendable) with food groups on it.



Shown actual size: 1 3/8" x 1 3/8" x 1/4"

Chapter Visits

I have one chapter visit left for 2014 and as soon as I receive my 2015 program, I will call to make appointments to visit. I have enjoyed my visits this year doing the AC program and installing new officers. You are a wonderful group of people if I'm in the area I might stop by.

Westfield MA411 Has Lost Two Special Ladies



Kay Pratt and Eleanor Gray were both rays of sunshine at our meetings and helped to make our group successful. Both were friends of everyone in our group and took part in all the contests and activities we did.

Kay lived in Monterey and had to make a decision to either join the Pittsfield or Westfield group. Luckily, she chose ours and was dedicated to attending our meetings for 5 years. She often appearing as the Loser of the Week and showed up on our Loser of the Month board multiple times. She took her turn running the Pot of Gold, which gave our members an extra incentive to lose. She loved doing her crafts and created a beautiful doll in a crocheted dress, which was then put up for a drawing to raise funds for our group.

Eleanor resided in Agawam and had been a TOPS member for 14 years until health issues prevented her from attending meetings this year, but remained in touch with many of the members and had hopes of returning once her doctor cleared her to drive. We were delighted that she was able to

make an appearance at our annual picnic back in June. Both Kay and Eleanor will be sorely missed.

MA 0411 Three Point Goalers won the Basketball Game!

Game 1: 18 to 14 against the Hot Shots

Game 2: 17 pts to 9 against the Dream Team

Game 3: 16 pts to 13 against the Wippersnappers

Three Point Goalers: Millie Lonergan, Christy Giles, Gladys Peck, Pat Hall, Marion Parks & Bill Carroll (not pictured: Donna McEwan)



Both articles submitted by leader Sharon Marks.

Activity for Halloween

I had an empty pickle jar and I filled up with two types of candy. I asked my members if they knew how many calories? And how much sugar? I was surprised how far off they were. I gave the members that were the closest a week's free dues. I tossed the candy out.



Remember

With baby steps you can climb any mountain to your goal!



Terri

Quit starving yourself!

5 reasons crash diets probably won't work

Jessica Migala Men's Health



You don't have to live on undressed salad for effective weight loss.

If you want to lose weight and look good in those trunks this summer, rethink that extreme diet plan. Drastically cutting your calories to slim down has long-term effects on your health, revealed preliminary research presented at a recent European Congress on Obesity.

People who ate an extremely low-calorie diet (500 calories a day) for five weeks lost a similar amount of weight as those on another restricted low-calorie diet (1,250 calories a day) for 12 weeks—19 and 18 pounds, respectively. But it was the starvation diet group that lost more muscle, and even a month after stopping the diet they had significantly less lean muscle as the other group. Obviously both diets in the study cut calorie levels to ridiculous levels, particularly for men. Any calorie restriction for weight loss should be more tailored based on your own weight, says Christopher Mohr, Ph.D., RD. So if you're over 200

pounds and want to drop weight, you should aim for no less than 1,800 calories. Extreme calorie-cutting forces your body to burn muscle for fuel instead of fat, and having less muscle mass slows your metabolism. But the truth is many dieters only care about the number on the scale versus what's going on inside the body, says Jim White, RD, owner of Jim White Fitness and Nutrition Studios in Virginia Beach. For long-term weight loss, crash diets won't work—and not only because they reduce your muscle mass. Here are four more reasons to avoid the fast fix:

It's mostly water: Yeah, you can shed a lot of weight before your buddy's wedding with an extreme diet that cuts carbs. For every carb gram you consume, your body retains 4 grams of water, explains White. Drop pasta, rice, and other grains from your diet for three days and you'll pee out a bunch of water and look slimmer. But it's not fat you're losing, and it's all temporary once you eat normal again or drink water.

They hurt your body: Losing weight quickly and then regaining it—yo-yo dieting—is taxing to your cardiovascular system, suggests a study in the *International Journal of Obesity*. More proof: a 2013 animal study in the journal *Diabetes* suggests that yo-yoing alters fat tissue and decreases glucose tolerance, which could increase your risk of diabetes and heart disease.

It's not sustainable: Extreme diets are definitely not about moderation. They have rules to follow and cut out entire food

groups, making it impossible to have a social life, says White. (Unless you want to be that guy ordering an undressed salad when everyone else gets pizza.) And research in *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that those on a very-low-calorie diet for 10 weeks had lower levels of the “fullness” hormones leptin and peptide YY to go along with an increase in the hunger hormone ghrelin. The dieters said their appetites were greater, too—even a year later.

Your friends will nickname you “Misery”: Shocker, being hungry and starved for nutrients will turn you into a grumpy, moody, and tired person. One study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* found that when people had to use high levels of self-control—like during dieting—they were more likely to prefer angry messages and displayed higher levels of irritability. After all, most of the brain's energy runs on carbs, says White.

Your plan: If you want weight loss that lasts, drop the extreme diet mentality. Watching portions is the best thing you can do to lose weight, says White. Then, think about the little things you can do to cut calories from your day: milk instead of cream and sugar in your coffee, choose a leaner cut of steak, or serve yourself extra vegetables instead of rice.

Doesn't this sound a lot like TOPS. Remember slow and steady wins the race with tiny changes.



Top 10 Feel Good Habits

We all want to feel good, as often as we can. A lot of times we think that it's just part of life to be stressed, and to feel worn out. I've learned to cultivate many habits that help me to feel good on a daily basis; they're my non-negotiables that help me to do my best and feel great doing so. I think it's important for everyone to figure out what works for them, but to get you started check out my top 10 daily habits for wellness, energy, radiance, and joy.

1. Morning meditation. I fluctuate with time and type, but I make sure to always start my day in stillness. It sets me up for success, and you don't even need to leave your bed to do it! Make your meditation practice your own and learn to cherish that time of quiet and calm.
2. Set your intentions. I love intention-setting practices. They give me a goal and allow me to aim for it every day. I often set an intention for my day right after meditation, where I have gone inward and feel really connected with myself, that's where I know what I want to focus on for my day.
3. Stay hydrated. Often when I start to feel less than stellar, my first go to is to drink more water. Nine times out of 10 I haven't been keeping myself hydrated and I can feel it! I could write a whole blog on the importance of water (and

maybe I will!) but for now, just make sure that you drink as much as you can on a daily basis.

4. Yoga every day. Yoga is my thing, I love it, it makes me feel great, and I find some way and time to do just a little every single day. It could be just five minutes of stretches, or even going upside down for an energy boost, but I make sure to get my body moving no matter what is going on in my day.
5. Focused attention. Devoting your time and attention to one thing at a time is so important. You're more efficient, more present, and it allows people to know how you value your time and theirs. Try doing just one thing at a time; multitasking is so 2012!
6. Eat your greens! Find some way to get your daily dose of veggies into your diet. Green veggies in particular have so much fiber and nutrients that will keep you feeling and looking great. Throw some greens in a smoothie, sauté them in a stir-fry or eat them raw in a salad. Find what you like and make it a staple!
7. Make some time for journaling. I definitely feel more clear when I take even a few minutes to put pen to paper and free write. Don't edit, just write and notice how you feel!
8. Daily connection with loved ones. Often times on a spiritual path we go inward to feel great. It's also important to cultivate those relationships with others that lift us up, and connect with them regularly. Find some time to just be with those you are close with.
9. Allow some time to disconnect. We are a very wired society, on technology 24/7. Give your eyes, your mind, and your soul a break from your technological devices for a little bit everyday.
10. Get your sleep! Sleep is so important, we know, so make sure you're getting enough! If you don't think you have enough time to get your ample rest see what you can cut out of your day to make time!

4 surprising ways to use apple cider in the kitchen



Tracy Saelinger TODAY contributor

It's easy to be lured into buying a jug of cider this time of year—just the sight of it conjures up images of bonfires, hayrides and falling leaves. So you place it in your basket, lug it home and there it sits in the fridge. Maybe you have a glass or two, or even get ambitious enough to mull it, but there's only so much cider one can drink in a season. So what's one to do with all the excess? Luckily, there are plenty of options—and every one of them will make you look like a seasonal cooking superstar. Here are four things to make with the surplus:

Pancakes



Cider doughnuts are a given at fall fairs. But cider pancakes somehow seem healthier—especially whole-wheat ones, like the kind food blogger Caroline Ketchum makes. She adds a cup of apple cider to her whole-wheat apple cider pancake batter, and sprinkles chopped apples into the flapjacks as they cook on the

griddle to double down on the apple flavor.

1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour (I like King Arthur white whole wheat)

1 tbsp sugar

1 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp baking soda

1/4 tsp salt

2 tsp cinnamon

1 large egg

2 tbsp butter, melted

1/3 cup milk

1 cup apple cider

1 medium apple, peeled, cored and chopped small

vegetable oil for greasing the pan

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. In a small bowl, whisk together the egg, butter and milk. Add the egg mixture to the flour mixture and then add in cider. Stir until just incorporated and a few lumps remain. Heat a large skillet over medium heat and brush with vegetable oil. Pour batter onto skillet by 1/4 cupfuls into circles. You will only be able to fit 3 to 4 pancakes onto the skillet. Sprinkle each pancake with about 1 tbsp of chopped apples.

Cook pancakes until large bubbles begin to appear on the surface, 2 to 3 minutes, then flip carefully and cook until bottom side is golden brown, about 2 minutes longer. Repeat with remaining batter, brushing pan with oil as needed.

**If you want to keep the first batches of pancakes warm while you cook the others, preheat your oven to 200F and set a wire rack over a cookie sheet. Place cooked pancakes in a single layer on wire rack while working with subsequent batches.

Makes 10 to 12 4-inch pancakes.

Slow-cooker pulled pork



Cider comes out about the same time of year you pull out the slow cooker, notes Ali Ebright of the blog Gimme Some Oven. So she suggests putting the two together to make dinner: a slow-cooker apple cider pulled pork, in which pork shoulder simmers in a brown sugar and cider mixture. After all, she says, the combo of pork and

apples is a “no-brainer.”

Let your slow cooker do the work for you to make this delicious apple cider pulled pork!

Prep: 5 mins Cook: 8 hours Total: 8 hours 5 mins

Ingredients:

- 3.5 lb. pork shoulder
- 1 small white onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup apple cider, homemade or store-bought
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 bay leaf

Directions:

Place half of the onions in the slow cooker. Set pork on top of onions, then cover pork with remaining onions.

In a separate bowl, whisk together all remaining ingredients. Pour on top of pork and onions. Cook in the slow cooker on low for 6-8 hours, or until the pork is cooked and pulls apart easily with a fork. Shred pork using two forks, then toss once more in the juices so that it is coated.

Serve warm.

You can also refrigerate or freeze the pork in a sealed container.

Difficulty: Easy Ingredients: apple cider, apple cider vinegar, bay leaf, brown sugar, cinnamon, pork shoulder, white onion

Braised veggies



When cider starts fermenting—which you can tell when it starts tasting "fizzy"—Gabe Wright, blogger at *Life From the Ground Up*, uses two or three cups of it to braise root vegetables, like [these turnips](#). Just cover the veggies with cider in a Dutch oven, throw in some rosemary or salt and pepper, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

Cider-braised Turnips

Ingredients

- About a pound of turnips, diced (keep the greens and chop those as well)
- 2-3 cups apple cider
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Put all the ingredients into a [Dutch oven](#). The liquid should just cover the turnips - if there's not enough, add water.
2. Bring to a simmer, then cover and let cook for 15-20 minutes.
3. Check the turnips for doneness - they should be almost tender. If they're not, give them a few more minutes.
4. Remove the lid to finish cooking (another 5-10 minutes). At this point, you want some liquid to evaporate so you end up with a syrupy glaze.
5. Remove from heat, and serve with a side of beef or pork.

Salad



Lots of salad dressing recipes call for apple cider vinegar, but food and lifestyle writer Julie Blanner adds an equal amount of regular apple cider to her apple cider salad to balance out the tangy vinegar with a touch of sweetness. Blue cheese, walnuts, apples and butter lettuce make it filling—after all, as she points out, fall meals don't have to be heavy.

Fall Apple Cider Salad | Apple Cider Vinaigrette

Author: Julie Blanner

Recipe type: salad

Prep time: 5 mins

Total time: 5 mins

Ingredients

- Apple Cider Vinaigrette:
- 1 tsp dijon mustard
- ¼ c apple cider vinegar
- ¼ c apple cider
- ½ c olive oil
- fresh lettuce {shown: mixed greens, but butter lettuce is also fabulous}
- apple
- fresh bleu cheese
- candied walnuts
- fresh cracked pepper

Instructions

Combine vinaigrette ingredients in a jar with a lid, shake well.

Toss with lettuce and top with my favorite combination above!

Don't have apple cider? You can increase vinegar to ⅓ c and eliminate apple cider. It's a little more tart, but delightful!

That apple you just bought might be a year old – but does it matter?

Alice Dubin and Chris Serico TODAY



The leaves are changing, the temperature is dropping, and as we slide fully into fall, the shift in season means one very important thing for foodies: It's apple season.

But did you know that the apples on the shelves of your supermarket might be nearly a year old? Here's why — and why it doesn't necessarily mean you should panic.

Lauren Sucher, a spokeswoman for the Food and Drug Administration, confirmed to TODAY.com that apples on store shelves aren't always as fresh as they seem.

“A number of commodities, including apples, may be stored to extend their availability for marketing,” she said. “In controlled temperatures and low humidity, apples can be stored for months before being consumed.”

According to the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's website](#), freshly picked apples left untreated will last a few weeks before they turn soft and rot, so they're often stored under temperature-controlled conditions that allow them to last up to 10 months. Once they're removed from storage, however, the clock starts ticking again.

“To slow the proverbial sands of time, some fruit distributors treat their apple bins with a gaseous compound, 1-methylcyclopropene,” the USDA states. “It extends the fruits' post-storage quality by blocking ethylene, a colorless gas that naturally regulates ripening and aging.”

The same chemical is used to lessen the “de-greening of broccoli, browning of lettuce, and bitterness in carrots,” according to the USDA.

But even if this fact is surprising, it shouldn't be scary. Although antioxidants and taste may wane over time, experts tell TODAY.com that such treatments are perfectly safe.

For starters, off-farm facilities that store food for consumption in the U.S. must register with the FDA, and must comply with related safety requirements, Sucher says.

Prolonging the life of produce isn't a new concept, either. “Before the current technology, people had root cellars to extend the shelf life and availability of food commodities such as apples,” Sucher added. “This common, widespread practice allows consumers to eat a wider variety of produce items for more months of the year now than in decades past.”

Phil Lempert, a consumerologist who's also known as the [Supermarket Guru](#), told TODAY.com via email that while apples can exist in cold storage for a year before being shipped to supermarkets, their shelf life once they're in stores usually is "only days to a couple of weeks."

Martin Lindstrom, author of "Truth and Lies About What We Buy," told TODAY.com it's more common for international supermarkets to sell apples that have been picked more than a year earlier, but that that's less often the case in the United States.

Of course, not all harvested apples go into long-term storage. Many are delivered to fresh markets. In addition, not all apples from storage appear in the produce section. They may be used to make juices, frozen pies and other types of processed foods, Sucher says.

But even if extending the life of apples is safe, a store-bought apple may not be the healthiest option.

"A fresh-picked apple is always going to have the optimal nutrient profile of vitamins and minerals," said Madelyn Fernstrom, a diet and nutrition editor for TODAY. "Apples are especially rich in polyphenols, a type of antioxidant."

Those antioxidants appear to disappear over time. The website [Food Renegade](#) cites research that claims a year-old apple may retain close to none of its antioxidant properties.

Fernstrom said there may be truth to the correlation between age and decreasing antioxidant value, but stated the use of ethylene doesn't appear to be the reason for it.

"A recent study suggests that the amount of antioxidants in apples might drop with extended storage," she added, "because these antioxidants are found in the peel, not the flesh of the apple."

Although it's often difficult to determine which supermarket apples are freshest until after they're bought, Lindstrom said some markets are working to provide better information about each apple. "Some retailers are now offering 'footprints,' telling [shoppers] when it was grown and when it was picked," he added.

And if you don't want to play that kind of guessing game? "Your best bet is to buy apples seasonally and locally," Fernstrom said.