



Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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April 2019

Ask the Agent

Q: I can't get food to stop sticking to the surface of my cast iron skillet. I haven't had troubles with it before. Is there anything I can do?

A: It sounds like you need to season it. Some higher-end cast-iron skillets are sold pre-seasoned, but most often you need to put the skillet through the process at home. "Seasoning" a cast iron pan or skillet means that you create a slick and glassy coating by baking on multiple thin coats of oil. Check out the inside article that outlines the steps for seasoning a new (or used) cast iron piece of cookware.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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The Paper Trail...

April 2019

Nearly every day, I am getting bludgeoned with paper! It comes from the mail, my kids' schoolwork and even the print-offs I get when I go to the doctor or have a tune-up done on my car. If I'm not careful, I could easily get hijacked on the paper trail created by this influx of paperwork.



As part of the Essential Living Skills series published by K-State Research and Extension, a helpful list of suggestions for taking control of the paper trail in our homes is offered. Here is an excerpt from the Controlling Paper Clutter section:

- ◆ Designate a file (such as an accordion file) or a computer file, as a set of folders, or large envelopes to store paper items that you need to keep.
- ◆ Label one folder "bills to be paid this month." Check it every week to make sure that bills due that week are paid. When they are paid, mark the stub with the date paid and move it to the next folder.
- ◆ Label the next folder as "receipts." Store the stubs from paid bills in this folder.
- ◆ Another folder should be labeled "family records" for important credit card information, insurance policies, family health records, bank statements, a household inventory, and tax records. Keep this folder handy to help you keep the folder up to date.
- ◆ A new folder can be labeled "things to read." This can contain items such as this newsletter, letters in general, or invitations from family and friends. Make a commitment to read the items in this folder, take action on them (post dates from newsletters on your calendar, answer a letter, respond to an invitation, etc.), and then discard** them.
- ◆ When you bring in the mail, or when your children bring newsletters or notices home from school or club meetings, look at the items quickly if you don't have time to read them carefully now. Do not put them down in a pile – put these items in the appropriate folders and commit to reading them later in the evening or the next day.
- ◆ Immediately throw away** advertisements and junk mail you don't want – do not put them in a pile for later consideration!
- ◆ Sort through old catalogs and magazines and throw them away, give them away, or recycle them. Catalogs and magazines that come in the mail can be put aside for reading later, but, for every catalog or magazine that you save, decide that an old catalog or magazine must be discarded** - and do it!



**Set up a good location for recyclable papers. The #1 type of trash that ended up in U.S. landfills in 2015 was paper (25.9%). Paper outpaced the #2 contributor (food) by over 10%. Instead of discarding or throwing paper in the trash, put it in a plastic tote that can be easily placed in the back seat of your car to drop by the recycling center on your way to or from work or the grocery store. Make it part of your monthly, if not weekly errands.

**Source: <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling>

Want more great ideas on how to declutter your house? Check out the "Cut the Clutter" bulletin that can be found on our Geary County K-State Research and Extension website at: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/>

Look inside this FCS Connection issue to see more about spring cleaning, too!

How to Season Cast Iron Cookware*

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Wash the skillet in warm soapy water to remove manufacturing residue.
3. Use a paper towel to apply a thin layer of vegetable shortening to both the inside and the outside of the pan.
4. Place the skillet upside down in the oven.
5. Place a sheet of aluminum foil on the rack below the pan to catch drips.
6. Bake for an hour.
7. Turn off the oven.
8. Allow the skillet to cool in the oven before removing.
9. Repeat this process 3-4 times and you will have a well-seasoned pan!

*Mississippi State University Extension: Extension for Real Life Blog posted September 12, 2018; <http://extension.msstate.edu/blog/how-season-cast-iron-skillet>

**Vicki S. Lofty, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent, Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension, "Healthy Cast Iron Cooking"

Skillet Chili with Cornbread Topping**

Ingredients:

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 (15 oz.) can pinto beans, undrained
- 2 (14 1/2 oz.) cans Mexican or chili seasoned tomatoes, drained
- 1 cup Self-Rising White Cornmeal Mix
- 1/2 cup lowfat shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup Crisco® Pure Vegetable Oil
- 3/4 cup skim milk

Preparation: Heat oven to 425°F. Brown ground beef in 10-inch cast iron or ovenproof skillet; drain. Add beans and tomatoes. Simmer 10 minutes. Beat egg in medium bowl. Stir in cornmeal mix, milk, cheese and oil until smooth. Pour over meat mixture in skillet. BAKE 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Makes 4 to 6 servings

Food Waste Awareness

According to the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), about 90 billion pounds of edible food goes uneaten each year in the United States. You might initially focus on the money that is lost in this wasted resource, which equates to about \$370 for each individual annually, but there is much more at stake than your food dollars. Over one-third of all available food goes uneaten in our country – wasting a valuable resource that represents a significant part of our economy.

Another impact is the size of our growing municipal waste disposal sites. Food waste is the largest contributor to the amount of trash taken to disposal sites. Wholesome edible foods end up as "trash" instead of using it to help feed the 40 million US citizens going hungry each day. The more "trash" we generate, the more full our landfills must become to accommodate our waste while many stomachs remain empty.

The good news is that each of us can make daily decisions to reduce food waste and loss while also reducing the various negative impacts noted above.

What You Can Do:

- ⇒ Use basic food management skills to control your home's food waste. Plan you meals, build a grocery list around those meals, and purchase only those items you need (those you put on your list.) If you stick to your list, then you won't get drawn in to the sales gimmicks used in our stores that tempt us to blow our budget.



- ⇒ Manage food storage. Place a refrigerator thermometer in your fridge to make sure it is cooling to temperatures of 40 F or below. This will keep your food fresh for a longer period of time.

- ⇒ Watch the dates marked on your food containers. In your pantry, rotate your previous purchases to the front so that they will be used before those purchased more recently. For cold storage, mark your leftovers with the date the food was packed and placed inside the refrigerator. A good rule of thumb is to use leftover food within 3-4 days. Some foods can be stored longer, such as margarine or hot dogs. If you aren't sure how long you can refrigerate food safely, refer to *Safe Food Storage: The Refrigerator and Freezer (MF3130)*, a free K-State Research and Extension publication available at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office.
- ⇒ Put storage reminders on your phone or under a magnet on your refrigerator. In 2015, USDA's Food Marketing Institute at Cornell University, released a new app to help reduce food waste due to poor food management habits. The FoodKeeper application offers users valuable storage advice about more than 400 food and beverage items, including various types of baby food, dairy products and eggs, meat, poultry, produce, seafood, and more. If you're not interested in the app, then go back to a more conventional method of food management – the refrigerator door magnet. Use a dry-erase marker to note foods that are in the refrigerator with a short "use by" date. List the food and the last day you should serve it. Simply wipe the item off the list once the food is consumed.

The USDA estimates that 36 pounds of food per person is wasted each month at the retail and consumer levels. The use of wise food management skills can significantly reduce the amount of "trash" that goes into our landfills. You can find these tips and more at www.choosemyplate.gov/lets-talk-trash or check our food storage guideline publications online at <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/>.

Family Environment

Spring is In the Air!

The sun is shining and a soft breeze lilts through the open windows of your house. The fresh scent of spring seeps in and you've caught the spring cleaning bug. But now what? The prospect of spring cleaning takes a bit of planning and forethought. Here are a few pointers on what NOT to do as you get ready to dive in!

Slipup #1: Cleaning Around Clutter – Much of what makes a home look messy is the accumulation of stuff you don't use or need. Clothes you haven't worn in years, extra knick-knacks that are in the way, books you've already read, toys the kids outgrew...the list can go on and on. Why waste time dusting or washing the things that are just taking up space? Spring is a great time to purge, purge, purge. Here are some great ways to unclutter easily.

- **Sell.** Drive around town on a sunny spring weekend and you'll find dozens of garage sales. Why? It's the perfect way to get rid of small appliances, clothes, toys, books, jewelry, housewares and more. Keep in mind, one man's junk is another man's treasure. This is certainly true when it comes to yard sales. If you don't have time to host a sale, consider taking your items to a consignment store.
- **Donate.** If you don't want to have a yard sale or open a booth at a consignment shop, consider donating your items to charities. Local resale/charity shops will take donations any day of the week. You can drop off donations at your local charity, church or shelter. It makes you feel good and helps you to get rid of stuff.
- **Recycle.** For all those things that can't be donated or sold, make sure you dispose of them properly. Recycle newspapers and mixed papers in a designated bin. Condense the contents of nearly empty plastic containers and take to our local recycling center.

Slipup #2: Sparse Supplies

So, you've cleared out the clutter and you're ready to go. But are you? What about cleaning supplies? Make sure you have the right tools for the job. Some necessary cleaning supplies include:

- All-purpose cleaners
- Chlorine bleach
- Abrasive and non-abrasive cleaners
- Glass cleaner
- Furniture polish
- Vacuum cleaner bags
- Trash bags

You can purchase cleaning supplies or make your own by following recommended recipes. For cleaning supply recipes, contact the Howard County Extension Service and ask for a handout which has several different recipes for making your own "green" cleaners at home.

Slipup #3: Plan? What Plan?

Do you do your weekly grocery shopping without a list? Would you head out on a road trip without directions? Map out your cleaning tasks and

create a schedule. This will make the job run smoother and go faster.

- **Determine your cleaning style.** Some people prefer to clean one room at a time; others prefer to do one task at a time. Which one works for you?
- **Prioritize.** If you do choose to clean one room at a time, decide on the best order. Dinner guests coming soon? Perhaps the living room and dining room might be a higher priority than, say, the upstairs bathroom.
- **Clear out the Big Stuff.** Do items such as bed linens, area rugs and curtains need to be laundered? If so, remove them from the room. It will be much easier to clean the rest of the space when those larger items are gone.

Slipup #4: Going at It Alone

"If you want all the days of your lives to seem sunny as summer weather, make sure when there's housework to do, that you do it together!" It's been 40 years since Carol Channing said this on *Free to Be You and Me*, but it still holds true.

- **Enlist Family or Friends.** Everyone above the age of two can help out in some way, big or small – whether that's putting blocks back into a bin or scrubbing the toilet bowl. Assign tasks according to age and ability.
- **Make it Fun.** Let's face it – housework is no day at the beach. But it doesn't have to be pure drudgery either. Put on some lively music, create built-in rewards for tasks completed or make a game out of it. Hide surprises in places that need cleaning, or create a contest to see who can put away the most things that are green, or shaped like a circle.



• **Plan Ahead.** Cleaning burns calories, so make sure you have snacks or lunch readily available to provide boosts of much-needed energy. And if you have asked a friend for help, think about ways you can say thank-you – either a token of appreciation or a promise to return the favor.

- **Outsource.** If time is a constraint and your budget allows, call in the pros on places you can't clean; such as carpet, windows, etc. Just be sure to straighten up and remove clutter before hired help arrives. You don't want them to vacuum up tiny toys or misplace important papers that were lying around. Finally, keep in mind the end reward. A clean house! Think about how much better you will feel and how great it will look once you are finished.

The information for this article was adapted from information from the American Cleaning Institute. Check out their website at www.cleaninginstitute.org for more information or contact the Geary County K-State Research & Extension Office at 785-238-4161.

Geary County

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Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

April

26 Medicare Basics**— This FREE 2 hour program is being offered at the Dorothy Bramlage Public Library in Junction City from 2-4pm. Please call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office by April 19 to reserve your seat 785-238-4161.

May

17* **Strengthening Families 7-17—Meeting weekly on Fridays from 9:30—11:00 May 17 thru July 26. Class sessions focus on building communication, bonding and resiliency within a family. Promotes the use of bonding, boundaries, and monitoring to support family members in resisting the use of drugs and alcohol and teaches alternative positive coping skills. Call the Geary County K-State Research and Extension Office for more information at 785-238-4161.

Check out next month's newsletter for information about our special Open Class events at this year's Geary County Free Fair which runs Monday, July 22 thru July 25, 2019. Mark your calendars!



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