



**FAMILY AND  
CONSUMER SCIENCES**

# STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES

## Family and Consumer Science News

September/October 2021



### Gearing up for fall home energy management

Oklahoma residents know they'll be running the air conditioner and fans in their homes for several more weeks, but that doesn't mean fall energy management preparations should be put off.

Nearly half of the energy used in your home goes to heating and cooling, said Gina Peek, Oklahoma State University Extension housing and consumer specialist and interim associate dean. "Making smart decisions regarding your home's heating and cooling system can have a big impact on utility bills. A few simple steps around the home can pay big dividends when the weather cools down," Peek said. "Think back to the deep freeze Oklahoma experienced in February this year and remember how your utility bills reflected the increased energy usage."

The easiest and least expensive way to increase system efficiency is to change the air filter regularly. Check it once per month and change it, at minimum, three times per year. "A dirty filter slows down air flow and makes the system work harder to keep you warm or cool," said Scott Frazier, OSU Extension energy management specialist and associate professor in the department of biosystems and agricultural engineering. "A clean filter also will prevent dust and dirt from building up in the system, which could lead to a costly repair or an early system failure."

Just like people go to the doctor and get a yearly checkup or schedule their vehicle for a tune-up, it's important to do the same for your HVAC system. In the fall, check all gas or oil connections, gas pressure, burner combustion and heat exchanger. Improper connections can be a fire hazard and can contribute to health problems. Frazier said a smart thermostat is a great investment for homeowners to help lower utility bills.

"A smart thermostat lets you control the home's heating and cooling temperature settings from a smart device such as a cell phone, tablet or computer," he said. "These thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled, which allows access to its temperature and other features through an app downloaded on your smart device."

*Continued on Page 2*

### Okfuskee County Extension Office

#### Address

P.O. Box 107  
1201 E. Columbia, Suite A  
Okemah, OK 74859

#### Phone

918-623-0641

#### Fax

918-623-0103

#### Email

janelle.maples@okstate.edu

#### Website

<http://oces.okstate.edu/okfuskee>

#### Social Media

Facebook: OkfuskeeOSUFCS

### In this issue...

#### Page 2:

Teaching Caring by Sharing the Cleaning

#### Page 3:

September is National Food Safety Education Month: Prep Yourself—Food Is On The Way

#### Page 4:

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Recipes:  
"Beef & Bean Chili Verde"  
"Aunt Barbara's Chocolate Squash Cake"

#### Page 5:

Family and Consumer Science Programming  
County OHCE Updates

## Gearing up for fall home energy management, continued from page 1

Another option is a programmable thermostat that allows homeowners to set the temperature for different times of the day. For example, the heat can be set to automatically turn down to a specified temperature when everyone goes to bed and automatically turn up in the morning.

Another area to check on is the ductwork in the home. The ducts that move the air often can be big energy wasters. Sealing and insulating ducts can significantly improve the efficiency of your air system. Start with the ductwork that runs through unheated/uncooled parts of the home such as the attic, crawl spaces and garage, then move to heated/cooled spaces in the home.

If your heat and air system is older, or simply isn't heating and cooling effectively, have it evaluated by a professional, Peek said.

## Teaching Caring by Sharing the Cleaning



One thing the pandemic taught many households over the past year or so is that roles are fluid. Whether picking up new caretaking duties or household chores, many families needed to redistribute the load when outside support was unavailable. This included getting the kids involved in helping around the home, if they didn't already.

There are a lot of ways kids can help with tasks around the home and it's been shown to teach responsibility and build self-esteem. The most important element is assigning chores that are age appropriate. They must be able to complete it safely. Here are some ideas:

- Start small: Even a few tasks can help instill a sense of shared responsibility. Set kids up for success by identifying initial places to help, like sorting socks, and working up from there.
- Embrace imperfection: Especially when they get started, kids will not be good at certain tasks. Figure out what you can live with and assign things you won't get the urge to redo after they're done.
- Keep it light: Pitching in on chores is a fact of life when living in a family; however, it can quickly be a point of contention. Try to find ways to make it a neutral or even fun experience. It may help to offer a choice or build in an incentive.
- Be safe: Look for tasks where kids can be successful and keep young kids away from cleaning products. There are other places they can help, like picking up toys or putting clean clothes away.

*Source: American Cleaning Institute*



### Remember the Okfuskee County Free Fair, September 8th—11th, 2021 Okfuskee Co. Fair Building, Okemah!

All of the inside exhibits must be entered between 4—8 p.m. Wednesday night, September 8th or from 8 a.m. — 12 noon Thursday, September 9th and will not be released until 12 noon Saturday, September 11th. The County Fair is held in the Okfuskee County Fair Building, 1201 E. Columbia, Okemah. Come by the Okfuskee County OSU Extension Center to pick up fair books, entry tags, and get your exhibitor number. The public is encouraged to view the fair exhibits at the following times: Thursday, September 9th: 3:00—7:00 p.m.; Friday, September 10th: 8:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.; and Saturday, September 11th: 8:00 a.m.—12 Noon.



Whether you use meal kits, restaurant delivery or grocery delivery, home food delivery gives us great food options! With so many more ways to bring food into our homes, our role in keeping great food SAFE has never been more important.



## BE DELIVERY SMART

Food delivery, which includes meal kits, restaurant delivery and grocery delivery, is on the rise! As food delivery becomes more a part of your life, food safety remains important for you and your family!

**Before ordering, take steps that will help ensure the food you want to enjoy stays safe.**

Ask questions. Understand the delivery company's safety standards and how they respond if food is delivered at an unsafe temperature or appears to have been tampered with. Ask!

Arrange for delivery when someone is at home so food can be refrigerated or stored quickly instead of being left outside until someone is at home.

Find a safe space for delivery if no one will be at home when food arrives. This space should be cool, shaded and secure from pests and rodents. Include this location in your order.



## KNOW YOUR ROLE

As the way we receive food changes, the core food safety practices remain essential to protecting our health and the health of those we love.

**Follow three simple steps to fulfill your role!**

- 1 Wash counters.** Cleaning surfaces with hot, soapy water can reduce the spread of harmful bacteria in your kitchen. You can't see, taste or smell the bacteria that cause food poisoning. These germs can make you sick if ingested, and they spread through contact with surfaces, utensils, and food.
- 2 Wash hands.** Washing your hands is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- 3 Cook, serve or save.** When food is delivered, serve ready-to-eat foods immediately, cook raw foods you are ready to prepare now, and properly store foods you plan to eat later. Refrigerate or freeze any raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables that arrive in your grocery order within two hours. Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods.



## REPORT ISSUES

As the way we receive food changes, the core food safety practices remain essential to protecting our health and the health of those we love.

**Reporting illness due to foods is a critical part of keeping food safe for everyone.**

Notify the company if you suspect tampering or that perishable food was left out too long. Don't eat the food, or even taste it to see if it is safe.

If you or a family member experience symptoms of a serious foodborne illness, seek medical attention and contact your local health agency.

The CDC public health gateway can help you locate your local health agency. (<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/>)

Questions? Try these toll-free federal food safety hotlines. For meat, poultry, or pasteurized egg products, call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). For all other food products, call FDA's Food and Cosmetic Information Center at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366).



*Even though summer is nearing an end, some of the gardens are still producing seasonal vegetables. For this Labor Day weekend, you may want to try these recipes from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.*

### Beef and Bean Chile Verde

#### Ingredients

- 2/3 pound ground beef (90% lean)
- 1 bell pepper, large (chopped)
- 1 onion, large (chopped)
- 6 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 can diced tomatoes, low-sodium (14.5 ounces)
- 1 3/4 cups green salsa (or enchilada sauce, 1-16 ounce jar)
- 1 can pinto or kidney beans (rinsed and drained, 15 ounces)

#### Directions

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Place meat, bell pepper, tomatoes, and onion in large sauce pan. Heat on medium 8-10 minutes, stirring frequently until the meat is browned; drain fat.
3. Add garlic, chili powder and cumin, cook until fragrant (15 seconds).
4. Stir in salsa and bring to a boil.
5. Reduce heat and simmer; cover and cook 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add beans and cook until heated.



*For nutritional information on this Beef & Bean Chili recipe go to: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/beef-and-bean-chile-verde>*

---

### Aunt Barbara's Chocolate Squash Cake

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 package cake mix, dark chocolate
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1 cup squash (shredded or finely chopped)
- 1/4 chopped walnuts (1/4 cup, optional)

#### Directions

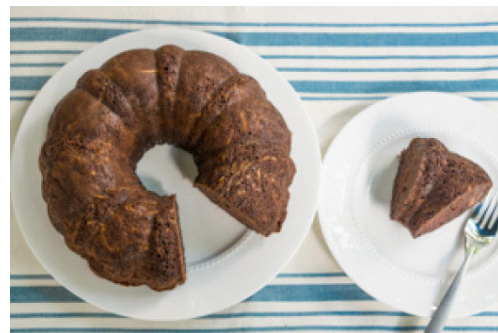
1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 10" tube or bundt pan.
2. In a large bowl, combine cake mix and cinnamon.
3. Add eggs, water, and oil. Blend until combined, then beat with an electric mixer for 2 minutes on medium speed.
4. Fold in squash. Add nuts if you like.
5. Pour into prepared pan. Bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, until cake springs back when lightly touched.

#### Notes

#### Other Ideas:

- Use a greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake for 45 minutes.
- To lighten cake, try 6 egg whites in place of whole eggs.
- Replace 1/2 cup oil with 1/2 cup applesauce.

*Source: Connecticut Food Policy Council. Farm Fresh Summer Recipes  
Makes 12 servings.*



*For nutritional information on this Chocolate Squash Cake recipe go to: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/aunt-barbaras-chocolate-squash-cake>*



**FAMILY AND  
CONSUMER SCIENCES**

**Okfuskee County FCS Programming...**

**\*\*Take note**, the following programs and meetings may be held in a variety of ways—in-person and/or virtually.

**Please register with the Extension Office whether attending virtually or in-person.**

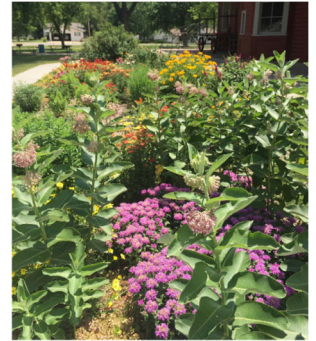
Feel free to contact the Extension Office at 918-623-0641 if you have any questions.



**“Attracting Pollinators for the Home Garden” – September 21st**

Pollinators are crucial to the production of most fruits, nuts, and berries but are in decline. Providing the right conditions in the garden can attract and support these important pollinators. This lesson will provide important elements needed to support and preserve the various pollinators important to the production of food and other consumer products. Participants will understand who the pollinators are and why they are important, know the elements necessary to attract and protect pollinators in your garden, and become familiar with some of the common plants grown to support our pollinators. This upcoming leader training lesson will be held Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. in the OSU Extension Center Conference Room; as well as virtually using the Zoom conferencing platform. Zoom information may be obtained upon registration.

The public is welcome to attend. Registration is encouraged.



The Okfuskee County Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE) Executive Committee will meet at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, immediately follow the “Attracting Pollinators” lesson. It will also be held via a “hybrid” format, using the same Zoom link and phone number. One of the items to be discussed is the County Fall Meeting.

**Favorite Food Photos from OHCE Members Wanted!  
Deadline October 13th.**

Okfuskee County OHCE members are asked to prepare their favorite food (whatever it is). Display it on a corresponding table setting. Then take a photo and send it to Jan. Along with the photo, provide a little information for example “Why is that your favorite food?” or “Those dishes/tablecloth/etc. is meaningful to me because...” A compilation of our Favorite Food photos will be put in a slide show as well as a pamphlet for distribution to members.



**2022-2023 OHCE Leader  
Lesson Ballot**

Members were sent a ballot for helping determine the 2022-2023 OHCE leader lesson topics. As an individual OHCE member, please fill out the ballot and return it to me at the Extension Office before Friday, October 1st. These ballots are a way members can be involved in choosing the lesson topics.



**2021 Oklahoma  
FAMILY CAREGIVERS  
Conference  
Embracing Hope!**

**JOIN US VIRTUALLY**  
Wednesday, November 10, 2021  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Register Here:**   
<https://okcares.org>



OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION SERVICE

Okfuskee County Cooperative Extension Service  
Oklahoma State University  
P.O. Box 107  
Okemah, OK 74859-0107



*Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and state wide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best. [www.OHCE.okstate.edu](http://www.OHCE.okstate.edu)*



*Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.*



**“Like (Follow, or Share)” our Okfuskee County  
Family & Consumer Science Facebook page!  
Okfuskee County OSU Extension FCS  
or OkfuskeeOSUFCS**

***Strengthening Oklahoma Families*** is published by the Okfuskee County OSU Extension Center—Family and Consumer Science Programs. This newsletter is one way of providing educational information to interested citizens of Okfuskee County. ***Editor: Jan Maples, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H***

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eeo.okstate.edu>. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President for Agricultural Programs and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 39 cents per copy.