



February 2024

THE EXTENSION CONNECTION

Wyandotte County K-State Research and Extension

Director's Note

Denise Dias

Wyandotte County Director

February is a leap year! I think you will find many new ideas that you can jump into as we look forward to spring. Our staff continues to offer programs and services that help improve your health, wealth and well-being. Many of our programs are offered at other locations across the county to make it easier for you to attend. If you want us to bring a program to your neighborhood, all you have to do is ask!

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WYCO 4-H HORSE QUIZ BOWL TEAM!

On January 5, 2024, the 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl Team represented Wyandotte County and Kansas 4-H by competing at the Western National 4-H Round Up in Denver, CO. The team won the title of National Reserve Champion! The WyCo 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl Team are all members of the Blazing Bridles 4-H Club. Team members include Delaney S, Paige M, Leah B, Madison B, and were led by their coach Mrs. Cara E.

A little bit about the Horse Quiz Bowl Contest:

Quiz bowl is a competition of questions and answers, played by teams with buzzers. Questions are read, and players buzz in (without consulting) when they think they know the answer. If they give a correct answer, they earn points plus a bonus question in which they can work with their team to earn additional points. At the Western National Round Up, each state is only allowed to enter one team into the quiz bowl competition. The Horse Quiz Bowl contest is run tournament style. Two teams compete head-to-head to answer questions about anything horse or equine related. The winning team moves on to compete against the next winning team until the final two teams compete against each other in the championship round.



Family and Consumer Sciences

FREE TAX FILING

The IRS has announced January 29 as the official start date of the 2024 tax season and expects more than 128.7 million tax returns to be filed by the April 15 tax deadline. Did you know that the IRS Free File Program is a public-private partnership between the IRS and many tax preparation and filing software industry companies that provide their online tax preparation and filing for free? This unique opportunity provides two ways for taxpayers to prepare and file their federal income tax in-person and online for free:

The first is a partner-supported tax preparation that provides free online tax preparation and filing at an IRS partner site. The partners deliver services at no cost to qualifying taxpayers. Taxpayers whose AGI is \$73,000 or less qualify for a free federal tax return.

The second provides Free File Fillable Forms, which are electronic federal tax forms, equivalent to a paper 1040 form. You should know how to prepare your tax return using form instructions and IRS publications if needed. It provides a free option to taxpayers whose income (AGI) is greater than \$73,000.

Benefits of Using the Free Tax Filing Services:

1. You can obtain a free federal tax return.
2. If you used IRS Free File last year, you will sometimes receive an email from the same company that you used, welcoming you back to their official IRS Free File services.
3. Fees to file your federal return are prohibited: No participant in the Free File Program will charge you anything to file your federal tax return if you qualify.
4. Bank products with fees are not a part of Free File.
5. Free state returns may be available
6. Each Free Filing Guarantees the Accuracy of the Return Calculations.
7. You have choices: If you don't qualify for an IRS Free File offer after visiting a company's Free File website, you can return to the IRS.gov Free File website to seek a Free File offer that may meet your needs.

For Local Free Tax filing needs please visit: <https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/urban-west-region/tax-prep>



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UTILIZING THE SLOW COOKER

The slow cooker...it's a timeless cooking appliance in my opinion. And, there's nothing like the inviting aroma of your evening meal wafting through the air, especially on a cold winter night. However, it's not just for the cold months. During the summer season, it reduces heat in the kitchen that an oven may create. And, it takes less electricity to use a slow cooker rather than an oven.

Other benefits:

- Slow cookers help tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat because of the longer cooking period and lower temperatures.
- They are usually a "one-step" preparation thereby minimizing the use of other dishes.
- You can cook almost anything from main dishes and sides to desserts.

Most slow cookers have two or three settings. When using the low setting, food will cook in six to 10 hours. Using the high setting allows food to cook for four to six hours. If possible, turn the slow cooker on the high setting for the first hour of cooking time and then use the setting that fits your needs.

As simple as it is to use your slow cooker resulting in delicious meals, there are several food safety steps to keep in mind before getting started. Because there are more than what I can include in this article, please refer to the [following link](#), from North Dakota State University Extension, Now You're Cookin', Slow Cooker Meals. Here you will find 11 tips on handling your slow cooker properly and safe steps when preparing ingredients. Also included is information on handling leftovers safely, converting recipes for the slow cooking and of course, recipes...Cowboy Beans, Chicken Curry, Vegetable Soup, Taco Soup and Easy Homemade Spaghetti.

Another [handout](#) from Michigan State University Extension, includes guidance on making sure your slow cooker is working adequately. You want to be certain it is reaching and maintaining proper temperatures to avoid time-temperature abuse thereby eliminating a potential foodborne illness.

Get ready to slow cook your winter away with healthy and tasty meals!



HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I AM HUNGRY OR FULL?

Going too long between eating and overeating at mealtimes makes it harder to know when you are hungry and when you are full.

During your meal or snack (at about halfway is best), take time out to check in with your body. Does the food still taste good? Do you want more? Are you still hungry? If not, then stop eating. Before, during and after a meal use this scale to help you know your hunger and fullness cues.

At 0, you are starving. You've gone too long without eating (6-8 hours) and are possibly irritable and grumpy. You might be feeling nauseous or dizzy, or you may have a headache.

At 1, you are ravenous. All you can think about is how hungry you are. You can only think about what you want to eat. When you do eat it is likely that you will overeat.

At 2, you are too hungry. You are probably irritable. You may have a headache. Your stomach might be aching by now. It has probably been 4 or more hours since you last ate.

At 3, you are having hunger pangs. It's time to eat. Your body is giving you the natural signals that it needs food. This is a good number to start eating—wait any longer and you will be too hungry. It has probably been about 2-3 hours since you last ate.

At 4, your hunger is just starting to awaken. There is a sense of emptiness in your stomach. This can also be good time to eat. You may have eaten about 2 hours ago.

At 5, you are neutral. You aren't hungry or full—this sensation exists between mealtimes. If you feel this and want to eat, it is not due to hunger—you may want to eat out of boredom or stress.

At 6, you are just satisfied. You aren't hungry anymore, but probably will be in about 2 hours. There is definitely more room for food, and you still feel light and energized. This is a good place to finish a meal or snack.

At 7, you are 'just right'. You have had your fill of the food you wanted. You are no longer hungry, and you probably won't need to eat again for approximately 3 hours. This is also a good place to finish a meal or snack.

At 8, you had a few too many bites. You ate a few more bites because it was there or tasted good. You might feel a bit bloated like you need to undo the top button of your pants. You may not be hungry for another 4-5 hours.

At 9, you are stuffed. You have gone overboard. Your meal has gone past the point of pleasure, and you now feel uncomfortable. You may feel a bit numb or sleepy. You will not be hungry for approximately 6 hours.

At 10, you feel sick. You feel uncomfortable to the point of pain. You may need to lie down until you feel better. You can expect to be hungry again in another 7-8 hours.

ORDERING FROM MAIL ORDER CATALOGS

At this time of the year, seed catalogs fill our mailboxes and cover our coffee tables. With the many new varieties and old favorites, it can be difficult to choose what to purchase. Here's how I do it.

Plan--I usually start by reviewing my current garden space--annual, perennial and vegetable beds. Photos taken on a monthly basis in my garden are reviewed to look at color, texture, heights, etc. I jot down what I planted last year, what grew well, what didn't survive, and what might make the garden more interesting or attractive this season. I then plan how the space will be used this year. For my vegetable garden I consider rotating crops to discourage disease and insect problems.

Select--One key factor I use in selecting plants is finding disease-resistant and insect-repellent varieties. Most catalogs do a nice job of describing the varieties and noting their favorable attributes. Be sure the catalog indicates the hardiness range for perennial plants (plants grown for more than one year). Because Kansas City is in zone 5, select plants rated for that zone. Evaluate different varieties, being cautious of claims that say, "repels mosquitoes," or "grows well in any soil." If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The words, "vigorous grower" also may be a warning; it probably will outgrow your garden quickly.

Order from reliable companies. Become familiar with the guarantee and return policy of the mail-order company. Order early! Many companies have limited supplies and substitution policies, allowing the company to replace plants that run short. They normally ship seeds and garden supplies immediately upon processing your order. Most ship plant materials at the proper planting time for your area. Although many plants you receive will arrive in dormant condition (or emerging from dormancy), this is natural to the plant. Simply plant according to the directions included with your order.

Now you're ready to plan, select and order your gardening supplies. Why not try something new this season and share your success with friends.

Community Development

FRESH IDEAS FOR START-UP

BUSINESS: WILDCAT CONSULTING

Wildcat Consulting is a new service offered by K-State's College of Business. Students gain valuable experience in solving business challenges by consulting on projects for Kansas businesses. Businesses can propose a project via the program's [website](#). From there, consultants work in teams and follow deadlines you set with the student project manager.

Projects

Our consultants will work in teams and follow deadlines set by you and the student project manager. Because we recognize that entrepreneurially minded businesses come in all shapes and sizes, our program is designed to be flexible and cater to your needs. We ask that you come to us with a general idea for a project, or a set of specific challenges that our students can help explore in further detail. We will work with you to agree on a focused project scope beforehand.

Cost

Projects for Kansas-based businesses are offered at no charge. If you are satisfied with the project deliverables and impact to your business we ask you to consider a \$500 donation to the program to help us continue our work; however, thanks to our program sponsors, we are also able to complete projects pro bono for businesses unable to contribute at this time.

Contact information:

If you are a business owner and would like additional information, please contact us at entrepreneur@ksu.edu. Or [check us out!](#)

The program is in partnership with the K-State College of Business, the Kansas Masons, and others.

Upcoming Events



February

Feb 1: Growing, Drying,
Preserving Dried Flowers

Feb 6: Stay Strong Stay Healthy

Feb 7: K-State Garden Hour

Feb 14: ServSafe Course

Feb 28: Hypertension

Awareness Prevention Program

Connect with us!



K-State Research and Extension is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means for communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American Sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact Jo McLeland two weeks prior to the start of the event (insert deadline date) at (913-299-9300 or jo1@ksu.edu). Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

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