

SPICING UP THE WATER

The holidays are here, and you know what that means: Salmon are swimming around in swirls of cinnamon and vanilla.

Everything people consume, from Prozac to artificial sweeteners, sooner or later flushes back into our water supply. This means that those Christmas snickerdoodles that you're eating for the next couple weeks are sooner or later going to wind up back in the water.

So far there's no proof that spicing up the salmon and other aquatic dwellers causes them any harm, and no reports of fish getting high on nutmeg. But scientists at the University of Washington measuring cinnamon, vanilla, all-spice, thyme, rosemary, caffeine and theobromide from chocolate in the Puget Sound say they see the amounts of cookie ingredients like vanilla and cinnamon spike during mid-December — the start of holiday office party season — and drop again after New Year's Day.

Converting the amount of spices they found in the water to "home-baked cookie equivalents" the UW aquatic organic geochemists found that during the holiday season of 2006 the Puget Sound was getting about 250,000 cookies per day, "roughly 2/3 butter or chocolate chip and 1/3 snickerdoodle or similar cinnamon-containing cookies such as gingerbread."

The UW team noted that ethyl vanilla, a petroleum derivative, shows up the most in

the water. The group has started a nonprofit group, soundcitizen.org that provides testing kits to get Seattlites more involved in how their activities affect their environment.

Eugene's wastewater winds up back in our rivers after treatment too, so remember that as you bite the head off that gingerbread person this week. — Camilla Mortensen

THE CASE FOR CHANGE IN OREGON

A report from the Obama administration late last month outlines what the impact for Oregon will be if meaningful health insurance reform does not pass. The report is now available at www.HealthReform.gov and is titled, "The Case for Change."

"Families, seniors and businesses are all suffering under the health care status quo," says Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Department of Health & Human Services. "Our new reports demonstrate how health insurance reform will improve health care for all Americans."

Under health insurance reform in Oregon:

- An estimated 715,000 residents who do not currently have insurance and 257,000 residents who have nongroup insurance could get affordable coverage through the

health insurance exchange.

- About 378,000 residents could qualify for premium tax credits to help them purchase health coverage.

- Some 580,000 seniors would receive free preventive services.

- About 103,000 seniors would have their brand-name drug costs in the Medicare Part D "doughnut hole" halved.

- An estimated 58,300 small businesses could be helped by a small business tax credit to make premiums more affordable.

The report also notes that "if we do nothing, by 2019 the number of uninsured people will grow by more than 30 percent in 29 states and by at least 10 percent in every state. Without reform, the amount of uncompensated care provided will more than double in 45 states. Additionally, businesses in 27 states will see their premiums more than double and fewer people will have coverage through an employer if the status quo continues."

ACTIVIST ALERT

- The debut viewing of **Global Trends – Local Choices**, a narrated slide show DVD by Jan Spencer of Eugene, will be at 7 pm Thursday, Dec. 17, at Tsunami Books. The video is a timely look at global trends and what people can do about them, from home scale to bio-region, says Spencer. The free presentation "encourages taking action at home, the neighborhood and community

using green assets, models and resources, already available," he says. "Downsizing will become the defining characteristic of this period of history." Copies of the DVD will be for sale for \$5 at the showing.

- For those who missed the **Mad As Hell Doctors** event in Eugene Nov. 19, a video of the speakers will be shown at 1 pm Thursday, Dec. 17, on the "Ugeen Seen" program on public access Channel 29. The event was sponsored by Health Care for All-Oregon. More information at <http://hcao-eugene.org>

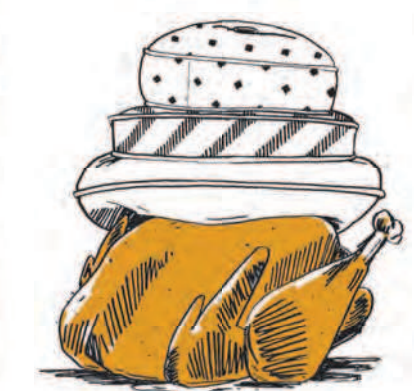
- The film **Occupation 101** about the Palestinian struggle will be shown at 8:30 pm Thursday, Dec. 17, at Cozmic Pizza. The event is a fundraiser for LCC student activist Michael King, who is one of about 500 activists from around the world who will be traveling to Gaza to join the Dec. 31 Gaza Freedom March. Donations can be made at apps.facebook.com/causes/389302

- The **Democratic Party of Lane County** is hosting its semi-annual Platform Convention to come together to ratify the local party platform and create the legislative action items that will set the agenda for the party. The event begins at 9 am Saturday, Dec. 19, at the Presbyterian Church, 216 S. 3rd St. in Cottage Grove. Pre-register by emailing your name and address to organize@dplc.org. Voting delegates to the convention must be registered Democrats living in Lane County. Pre-registrants will be able to purchase a lunch for \$5 and will be contacted once registration is confirmed. More information at www.dplc.org

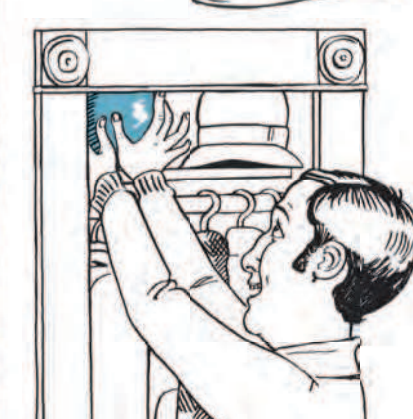
BE THE LIFE OF THE HOLIDAY PARTY



Step 1: Approach buffet table when other guests aren't looking.



Step 2: Remove turkey from platter and hide under sofa cushions.



Step 3: Find a suitable replacement entree in closet or garage.



Step 4: Garnish with canned cranberries. Let the guffaws begin!

On second thought, give the Life of the Holiday Party Scratch-it.SM

For just \$2 apiece, it's an unexpected way to spread some holiday fun without resorting to mischief and tomfoolery.

Visit lifeoftheholidayparty.com for a chance to win up to \$4000 in cash.



playtime



Lottery games are based on chance and should be played for entertainment only, not investment purposes.