



Tree Trimming Time!

Invite friends over to bring an ornament and help trim the tree. Then afterwards, let them help themselves to an informal, delicious buffet. For dessert, feature a continental chocolate fondue. Make it quickly from sweet cooking chocolate and apricot flavored brandy. For dippers, arrange a platter of dried fruits and nuts. Dried apricots give the perfect flavor combination, and they're nutritious, too.

FESTIVE CHOCOLATE 'N' APRICOT FONDUE
(Makes about 1 1/2 cups)

- 1/2 cup milk
- 3 tablespoons apricot flavored brandy
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Dash salt
- 12 oz. sweet cooking chocolate

Place all ingredients in top of double boiler over simmering water. Cook, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Place in fondue pot over candle warmer or other warming device. Serve fondue with a plate of dried apricots and other dried fruits and nuts, as desired.

Preserve Onions

Onions are similar to potatoes in at least one respect. Like potatoes, onions are ready for harvest when their tops have withered and turned completely brown.

"Pull the onions, shake the dirt off them and lay them out in the garden to dry," says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent. "A week of drying is usually enough to prepare the onions for storage."

Leaving the onions outside to dry is usually no problem in Eastern Oregon, but in Western Oregon fall rains of heavy night dew can cause problems. To avoid these difficulties, McNeilan suggests taking the onions indoors and placing them in a dry, warm and airy place. Lay the onions on racks or screens so dry air can circulate around the bulbs.

When the onion's neck has withered and the outer skin is dry and shiny, the bulb is ready for storage, says McNeilan. If the onions are stored before their tops are dry, a gray, fuzzy mold may grow on them.

The storage location should be a dry, dark place where the temperature ranges from 35-50°F. Pull the dry tops off and put the onions in mesh bags of slatted crates. An alternative to mesh bags is to weave the dry tops of the onions through the mesh of a piece of chicken wire suspended above the floor of the storage area. If the chicken wire method is used, be sure to leave space for air to circulate between the bulbs.

Onions don't keep well in paper sacks or cardboard boxes, McNeilan cautions.

Storage conditions are too moist if roots reappear on the onions in storage, if sprouts appear, the temperature is too high. In both cases, if the onions aren't relocated, they will deteriorate.

In less than ideal conditions, stored onions will keep no more than three to four months. The storage period is shorter for Sweet Spanish and Bermudas than for small, globe-type onions.

Grapes put punch in your party

If you're looking for a super holiday punch, here's your answer! Holiday Fruit Punch looks colorful, festive and has a sparkling flavor that's a party-pleaser.

A day before the party prepare an ice ring by arranging clusters of table grapes in a ring mold with water, and freeze. At the same time, combine more grapes, fresh pineapple chunks, wine, cranberry and lemon juice and chill overnight to let the flavors blend. Then just before party time, add soda water or champagne to the punch, unmold the ring and enjoy!

Grapes add a festive flair to all

sorts of holiday foods. Use them as a garnish around roasts, poultry or desserts. Mold them into gelatin salads, or toss with a variety of fresh fruits. They're a perfect accompaniment to wine and cheese, and of course make great snacks for in-between meal nibbling.

HOLIDAY FRUIT PUNCH

- 2 pounds red, green and blue/black grapes
- 1/2 pineapple, peeled and cubed
- 3 cups each white wine and cranberry juice cocktail
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice



- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 quart club soda, lemon-lime soda or champagne
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Fill ring mold (any size that fits into punch bowl?) with 1 to 1 1/2 pounds of grape clusters of all colors. Barely cover with water; freeze. Halve and seed remaining grapes. Put into large refrigerator container, along with pineapple. Add remaining ingredients except soda or champagne. Cover and chill 2 hours or overnight. At serving time, dip ring mold in hot water for 10 sec-

onds; remove ice ring. Put into punch bowl: Pour in fruit-wine mixture. Add soda water or champagne. Ladle punch and some fruit into cups. Makes about 3 quarts.

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