

Simple and fun—healthy gifts for everyone on your Christmas list

Looking for simple gifts for your holiday shopping list? Here are some ideas from Ellen Schuster, OSU Extension Nutrition and Foods specialist, about kitchen items that will encourage health food preparation.

Consider the following kitchen equipment that will help that special someone prepare low fat and healthy dishes at home for stocking stuffers:

1. An egg separator can make separating the egg white from the yolk much easier.

2. A clay cooker, when dampened, allows meat to simmer slowly in its own juice without adding any fat or other liquid.

3. A vegetable steamer lets you prepare vegetables without sauces, cheese or butter.

4. A good quality, non-stick pan or skillet can make sauteing without fat or oil a snap.

5. A cast-iron skillet with a ridged bottom keeps fat away from cooking food and can be used for grilling.

6. A gravy separator makes it much easier to separate fat from liquid in soups and sauces.

7. A spaghetti measurer en-

able you to cook only as much spaghetti as you want. That way, you don't make too much and either overeat or waste food.

Here are a few suggestions for more expensive, but useful gifts for the kitchen to include on your holiday shopping list:

1. A blender can help puree vegetables to thicken soups with no added fat. It can also be used to prepare quick, refreshing, low fat drinks made from fruits and milk or fruit and ice.

2. A spice rack keeps spices readily available. Experience exotic flavors from around the world and cut down on the

amount of fat, sugar and salt you add to foods at the same time.

3. A wok allows you to stir fry foods with little fat.

4. A subscription to a magazine that features low fat recipes.

5. A cookbook that features healthy recipes.

6. A book that provides accurate nutrition information.

7. Registration in a local community education healthy cooking class.

So, the next time you want to give a gift from the heart, consider one of the items mentioned above. It's a gift that will keep on giving all year long.

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Root vegetables moving back to center of the plate

In a time when root cellars were more common than refrigerators, sturdy roots like parsnips, turnips and rutabagas were everyday fare. Their popularity declined, however, as modern farming and transportation methods added more variety to family meals. Once relegated to the grocers back bins, root vegetables are now moving to the center of the plate.

For many years, root vegetables were rarely seen on menus, but a renewed interest

by chefs throughout the country has put them in the spotlight again. This is good news to Carolyn Raab, Foods and Nutrition Specialist with the OSU Extension Service. Root vegetables like beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabagas and turnips have nutrients that promote good health.

Root vegetables can be very economical because there is very little waste in preparation. And because they can be stored for long periods of time, there is also very little waste

due to spoilage.

Buy root vegetables that are fresh looking, firm and without cracks, cuts or mold spots that can hasten spoilage. Most roots can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks. Without refrigeration, they should be used within a week or so.

Just before peeling or cutting, wash roots thoroughly with cool, running water to remove bacteria or other contaminants that might be on the skin.

Prepare root vegetables by steaming or boiling until tender. They may also be cut into chunks and cooked in the microwave for 5 to 7 minutes per

pound. Oven-roasted root vegetables develop a sweet, caramel flavor.

You can add parsnips, rutabagas, turnips and carrots to stews, ragouts and casseroles. Add interest to mashed potatoes by mixing in a little parsnip or rutabaga. Parsnips and rutabagas can also be steamed, coarsely mashed or formed into patties and fried. For a main dish, add bits of cooked meat to the mixture. Raw carrots, turnips and cold cooked beets served with a low calorie dressing dip are a good health snack to keep on hand.

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