



# Connections Newsletter

**Henry/Stark Counties**  
358 Front St. Galva, IL  
(309) 932-3447  
Tues, Wed, Thur. 8 am - 4 pm

**Mercer County**  
910 13th St. Viola, IL  
309-513-3100  
Tues, Wed, Thur. 8 am - 4 pm

**Rock Island County**  
321 W 2nd Ave. Milan, IL  
(309) 756-9978  
Mon-Fri. 8am - 4 pm

Visit our website: [extension.illinois.edu/hmrs](http://extension.illinois.edu/hmrs)

## A FRESH START: CLEAN FRIDGES, AND SMART LEFTOVERS

*Kristin Bogdonas, and Lisa Peterson, nutrition and wellness educators.*

As the holiday season approaches, it's a time for gathering with loved ones and enjoying delicious meals. But with festive feasts comes the challenge of managing leftovers and minimizing food waste.

### Did you know Thanksgiving is the #1 food waste holiday?

By planning ahead and managing your pantry and refrigerator, you can make sure good food feeds people—not landfills.

### Leftovers: Love Them, Don't Waste Them

November 29 is Throw Out Your Leftovers Day! Keep these tips in mind:

- **Store Smart:** Use airtight containers and refrigerate promptly. Toss food left out for more than 4 hours—it's not worth the risk.
- **Know Your Limits:** Most leftovers are safe for 4 days, but gravy and raw turkey should go within 2 days, while cranberry sauce lasts up to 2 weeks.
- **Freeze for Freshness:** Freeze leftovers for longer storage. For best quality, use turkey and gravy within 3 months.

### Fridge Freshening Made Simple

1. **Clear It Out:** Use a cooler to store perishables during cleaning.
2. **Wash and Sanitize:** Clean shelves and drawers with soapy water; sanitize with 1 tablespoon bleach per gallon of water. Air dry.
3. **Scrub the Interior:** Mix 2 tsp baking soda with 1 quart of water to clean inside surfaces. Follow with bleach solution and leave doors open for 15 minutes to air dry.

### Odor Busters

- **Vinegar Solution:** Scrub with a 1:1 vinegar-water mix.
- **Absorb Smells:** Use coffee grounds or baking soda in a shallow dish.
- **Vanilla Refresh:** Leave a vanilla-soaked cotton swab in the fridge for 24 hours.



### Food Safety: Leftover Storage Times 🕒

Keep your holiday leftovers safe with these quick guidelines!

Cooked Food Item	Refrigerator Storage Time
Roast Turkey	3 to 4 days
Stuffing	1 to 2 days
Giblet Gravy	1 to 2 days
Canned Cranberry Sauce	5 to 7 days
Homemade Cranberry Relish	5 to 7 days
Roast Pork	2 to 4 days
Roast Beef/Veal/Lamb	3 to 4 days
Baked Ham	3 to 5 days
Meat with Sauce or Gravy	1 to 2 days
Cooked Vegetables	3 to 5 days
Pumpkin Pie	2 to 3 days
Fruit Desserts/Pies	3 to 5 days
Seafood	1 to 2 days
Gumbo	1 to 2 days
Soups	2 to 3 days
Restaurant Carry-out Entrees	1 day

# Workshops and Webinars



## **Festive Favorites: Create, Craft, and Celebrate the Season, Dec 16, 1 - 2:30 PM, Milan, IL**

This interactive workshop blends gardening, crafting, and mindful eating for a unique celebration of the holidays. Whether you're looking to spruce up your winter décor or discover new recipes for your seasonal gatherings, this program has something for everyone.

Here's what to expect:

- **Plant and Learn:** Grow your own stunning Amaryllis bulb—perfect as a gift or an uplifting midwinter bloom. Learn expert tips from horticulture educator Emily Swihart to ensure your flower blooms beautifully just in time for the new year.
- **Hands-On Crafting:** Create a traditional pomander ball, blending the scents of the season into an aromatic holiday decoration.
- **Tasty Festive Treats:** Enjoy sampling healthier holiday drinks and desserts that are as delicious as they are nutritious from Kristin Bogdonas, nutrition and wellness educator.

Spaces are limited! Register now to secure your spot in this holiday-inspired workshop.

Register at [go.illinois.edu/Festive](https://go.illinois.edu/Festive)



## **Gifts from the Heart: Homemade Holiday Workshop Sat., Dec. 7, 9 AM- Noon, Rock Island, IL**

Get into the holiday spirit with 4-H's festive Holiday Make-and-Take! Youth and teens ages 5-18 are invited to join us for a morning of creative fun, crafting hand-made gifts that they can share with loved ones this season.

Youth will enjoy six unique crafting stations, including:

- Wrapping station & cardmaking
- Snowman salt & pepper shakers
- Ornaments
- Food Gifts: BBQ rub and chai cookie mix
- Holiday sock hot/cold packs
- Decorated tote bags and tea towels

The cost is \$5 per youth to cover supplies, with scholarships available upon request. Don't miss out on this chance to create memorable holiday gifts and celebrate the season with us!

Register by December 4 at [go.illinois.edu/4-HGifts](https://go.illinois.edu/4-HGifts)



## **December 6, Noon- Sourdough Bread Making Essentials**

Rise and Shine! Sourdough Bread Making Essentials Why is sourdough bread so popular? Learn the benefits of sourdough and explore the fundamental steps to making your own sourdough bread. We'll talk about gluten development, bulk fermenting and hydration. Plus, we'll demonstrate proper shaping for the best oven rise that will impress your friends!

Sign up at [go.illinois.edu/SourdoughSeries](https://go.illinois.edu/SourdoughSeries)

**Wellness Fair, Thurs. Dec 12, 8:30 -11:30 AM**  
**SouthPark Mall, at Quiet Strength, Moline, IL**  
next door to the RiverBend Food Pantry near Von Maur



Don't miss the launch of a new monthly Nutrition and Wellness Fair at South Park Mall inside Quiet Strength. This family-friendly event offers hands-on activities, taste tests, physical activities, and more—all designed to make wellness education fun and accessible! Stop by during food pantry hours to explore Illinois Extension and SNAP-Ed resources, try new foods, and discover ways to support healthier living for your family and community.

Details at [go.illinois.edu/WellnessFair](https://go.illinois.edu/WellnessFair)





## Give the Gift of Wellness

By Kristin Bogdonas, nutrition and wellness educator

The holiday season is a time for generosity and celebration, but it's also the perfect opportunity to encourage healthy habits that can last well into the new year. By choosing gifts that promote wellness, mindfulness, and self-care, you can inspire your loved ones to prioritize their health and happiness in meaningful ways.

### Wellness Gift Ideas

- **Fitness and Wellness Gear:** Give gifts that promote physical activity, like a yoga mat, resistance bands, or a fitness tracker. These items can inspire a regular workout routine and motivate recipients to set fitness goals.
- **Healthy Cooking Tools:** Kitchen gadgets, like an air fryer, blender, or spiralizer, can make cooking healthier meals easier. Pair these with a recipe book focused on nutritious, whole foods to encourage healthy eating habits.
- **Self-Care and Mindfulness:** Support mental health with gifts such as journals, guided meditation apps, aromatherapy diffusers, or spa sets. These promote mindfulness and stress reduction, essential components of a balanced lifestyle.
- **Subscription Services:** Consider gifting subscriptions to wellness platforms like online workout classes, healthy meal delivery services, or meditation apps. These can help recipients stay consistent in their health journeys.
- **Outdoor Adventure Gear:** Encourage time spent in nature with hiking gear, a camping set, or a picnic kit. These gifts promote outdoor activities, which are great for both physical and mental health.
- **Workshops or Classes:** Offer experiences rather than material items by gifting vouchers for fitness, cooking, or wellness workshops. These can inspire personal growth and development in a fun and interactive way.
- **Sleep Aids:** A good night's sleep is essential for overall health. Consider gifts like weighted blankets, sleep masks, or white noise machines to help improve sleep quality and create a restful environment.
- **Sustainable Wellness Products:** Eco-friendly water bottles, reusable grocery bags, or organic skincare products are great ways to promote both personal health and environmental well-being.

Inspire health with gifts that encourage positive habits!



## Natural Christmas Trees: A Festive and Sustainable Tradition

By Emily Swihart, horticulture educator

Each year, about 25–30 million natural Christmas trees are sold in the U.S., providing a renewable, eco-friendly alternative to artificial trees made from petroleum-based plastics. These trees are grown specifically for harvest and replanting, making them a sustainable holiday choice.

### Choosing Your Tree

Popular species include Balsam Fir, Fraser Fir, White Fir, Scotch Pine, White Pine, and White Spruce. Select a tree based on fragrance, needle length, branch stiffness, and color—or simply follow your family traditions!

### Caring for Your Tree

1. **Protect During Transport:** Secure the tree to prevent damage.
  2. **Prepare the Base:** Make a fresh cut for better water absorption.
  3. **Use a Sturdy Stand:** Ensure it holds plenty of water.
  4. **Place Wisely:** Keep the tree away from heat and direct sunlight.
  5. **Water Often:** Check daily to keep the base submerged.
- 💡 **Safety Tip:** Always turn off lights when away or asleep.

### Maximizing Freshness

- **Species Matters:** Firs like Fraser and Balsam retain needles longer; pines last the longest.
- **Buy Local:** Pre-cut trees from local lots are fresher than those shipped from afar.
- **Cut Your Own:** For the freshest tree, cut your own!

### Recycle & Repurpose

- **Compost or Mulch:** Check local recycling programs.
- **DIY Projects:** Use branches for mulch or turn the trunk into craft materials.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Create bird feeders or sink the tree in a pond for aquatic habitats.

Celebrate sustainably with a natural tree and contribute to an eco-friendly holiday tradition!

## Healthier Holiday Drinks



### Savor the Season with Healthier Holiday Drinks

By Kristin Bogdonas, nutrition and wellness educator

The holiday season is filled with gatherings, celebrations, and a touch of chaos. Why not bring a little calm—and a lot of flavor—to your festivities with these healthier holiday drink recipes? Get some of the recipes below or download the complete list of [Healthier Holiday Drinks recipes here](#).

#### Holiday Chaos Calmer

This chamomile-cider blend with warming spices is perfect for unwinding after holiday prep.

Ingredients: ½ cup cider, ½ cup water, 1 chamomile tea bag, lemon peel, 1 cinnamon stick.

Directions: Simmer water and cider, then steep tea bag for 3–5 minutes. Add lemon peel and cinnamon stick, steep 3 more minutes. Remove cinnamon and peel before serving.

#### Raspberry Mocha Smoothie

A creamy, antioxidant-packed treat for coffee lovers.

Ingredients: 1½ cups milk, 1 cup raspberries, 1 tbsp almond butter, 2 tbsp cocoa powder, 4 coffee ice cubes (or 1 tsp instant coffee + 4 ice cubes).

Directions: Blend all ingredients until smooth. Tip: Freeze brewed coffee in ice cube trays for bold flavor.

## Eggnog Dessert Dip



### Festive Eggnog Dip with a Healthy Twist

Enjoy the creamy, spiced flavors of eggnog without the guilt! With chickpeas, almond butter, and a touch of maple syrup—you'll love this a wholesome alternative.

#### Eggnog Dessert Dip

Ingredients

- 1 15-oz can cooked chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup quick oats
- ¼ cup almond butter
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- ¼ cup eggnog (dairy-based or dairy alternative)
- 1 tsp baking soda

Directions

1. In a blender or in a food processor, combine all the ingredients except eggnog.
2. Puree until the mixture is smooth, about 30-60 seconds, adding eggnog 1 Tbsp at a time to create the desired consistency.
3. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. Allow to sit in the refrigerator for 1 hour before serving with sliced apples, pears, vanilla wafers or graham crackers.

### Sip Smarter This Holiday Season

Holiday cocktails can be a festive delight, but they often come with extra calories. With a few easy swaps, you can enjoy your favorite drinks while making lighter choices. Check out the chart for simple substitutions that save calories without sacrificing flavor.

**[Download the chart and a recipe for Brandy and Skinny Homemade Eggnog here.](#)**

HOLIDAY COCKTAILS WITH A HEALTHY <i>Twist</i>		
INSTEAD OF... (Cal)	TRY THIS. (Cal)	CALORIES SAVED!
Mixing with Sprite (148)	Mixing with club soda (0)	148
Vodka & tonic (221)	Vodka & water with lemon (98)	123
Sweet dessert wine (330)	White wine spritzer: wine + club soda (121)	209
Mimosa (145)	Blood-orange juice + champagne (105)	40
Brandy & eggnog (478)	Brandy & "skinny" homemade eggnog (273)	205





# Illinois Extension



## Invest in the Future of 4-H: Support Our Foundations This Giving Season

This time of year is a perfect opportunity to support the vital programs and resources provided by our 4-H Foundations in Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark counties. Each Foundation plays a unique role in empowering youth, cultivating leadership, and strengthening communities through 4-H and Illinois Extension programs. Your contribution makes a lasting difference, and with matching gift opportunities, your impact is greater than ever!

### Henry County 4-H Foundation

Henry County 4-H fosters life skills, leadership, and community involvement among local youth. Your generosity helps fund \$3,500 in annual 4-H program support, (matched to \$7,000), college scholarships for graduating members, special requests from 4-H clubs, and other needs.

Donate by mail: 358 Front St., Galva, IL 61434  
or online: [go.illinois.edu/HenryCo4-HFoundation](http://go.illinois.edu/HenryCo4-HFoundation)

### Mercer County Extension & 4-H Foundation

Mercer County 4-H shapes future leaders through community clubs, Teen Federation, Community Service, Fair Shows, Special Interest Clubs and more. Your gift supports current program needs, scholarships, and the endowment—ensuring 4-H’s impact for generations. Endowment donations are matched by the state, doubling their power!

Donate by mail: 910 13th St., Viola, IL 61486  
Questions? Call 309-513-3100

### Rock Island County Extension & 4-H Foundation

Support programs that create lasting opportunities in our community. Your donations help provide \$7,000 in annual program support (matched to \$14,000), fund scholarships, recognize outstanding 4-H members, and sustain special initiatives like the 4-H Horse Bowl, Cloverbud Academy, and Master Gardener scholarships.

Donate by mail: 321 W 2nd Ave., Milan, IL 61264  
or online at: [go.illinois.edu/RI4-HExtFoundation](http://go.illinois.edu/RI4-HExtFoundation)

### Stark County 4-H Foundation

Stark County 4-H builds tomorrow’s leaders by providing programs that inspire confidence, responsibility, and a passion for learning. Support the Annual Drive, Scholarship Fund, or the Dale and Hester White Endowment, which also receives state matching funds. Your contribution ensures a brighter future for Stark County youth.

Donate by mail: 358 Front St., Galva, IL 61434

**Thank you for your support of 4-H and Illinois Extension programs in our communities.**

Together, we can cultivate strong leaders and create a lasting legacy of growth and opportunity!  
Contact Jenny Garner, County Director at (309) 756-9978 or email [jsgarnr@illinois.edu](mailto:jsgarnr@illinois.edu) with an questions.