CCE
Cornell Cooperative Extension | Saratoga County
NEWSLETTER
February 9, 2026

CCE Saratoga County Receives Grant from New York Beef Council

Collaboration underscores our shared commitment to fostering healthy eating habits.

The Saratoga County Cornell Cooperative Extension's Family and Consumer Science Department is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded a grant from the New York Beef Council, aimed at enhancing youth nutrition education throughout the community. This exciting collaboration underscores our shared commitment to fostering healthy eating habits among young people in Saratoga County. With the support of this grant, we will be able to provide hands-on educational programming that utilizes ground beef, allowing students to gain a practical understanding of beef's vital role in a healthy, balanced diet.

Our Community Nutrition Educator will be visiting various schools to deliver engaging lessons that not only highlight the nutritional benefits of beef but also empower students to make informed dietary choices. We warmly invite local schools to join us in this initiative, as we believe that together we can create a supportive environment that promotes lifelong healthy eating habits.

This initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to empower individuals and families through practical learning, and we look forward to working collaboratively with the community to make a positive impact on our youth's nutritional knowledge and health.

With the support of this grant, we will be able to provide hands-on educational programming that utilizes ground beef, allowing students to gain a practical understanding of beef's vital role in a healthy, balanced diet. (Photo: Getty Images, Unsplash)

For more information, visit Cornell Cooperative Extension or contact Brenna Kavakos, bk375@cornell.edu or 518-885-8995.

Upcoming Nutritional Classes/Workshops offered by CCE Saratoga

1 NUTRITION WORKSHOP
Healthy Ingredient Swaps

Discover good-for-you ingredient substitutions that preserve the deliciousness of your favorite recipes!

DATE: Tuesday, February 10 | 11:30 AM
LOCATION: Ballston Community Public Library
2 Lawmar Lane, Burnt Hills

COST: Free

Contact Brenna Kavakos, M.S., Community Nutrition Resource Educator at bk375@cornell.edu.

2 *Partners in Parenting Support Group is hosting a* COOKING & NUTRITION CLASS

This class will focus on Family Planning and Child Nutrition. A bag of produce will be provided to each attendee.

Walk-ins are welcome; Registration is preferred.

DATE: Tuesday, February 24 | 9:30 AM—11 AM
LOCATION: MACSC, 6 South Main Street, Mechanicville

Contact Lisa to register at Lisay@macscinc.org or 518-335-9016 (call or text)

Capital Region Prism is HIRING!

JOIN OUR TEAM THIS SUMMER:
AIS Watercraft Stewards and Invasive Species Technicians!

As part of CCE Saratoga's Capital Region Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) program:

Invasive Species Technicians help prevent the spread of invasive species by conducting early detection surveys, collecting data, and by performing removal of invasive species and landscape restoration techniques. Technicians also assist in educating the public on invasive species topics.

Invasive Species Technicians typically work for 12-14 weeks between May and August; dates may vary depending on program needs. Typical work schedules are Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm with a 30-minute unpaid meal period; schedules can vary depending on the weather and travel time. Technicians work throughout the greater Capital Region including portions of the northern Catskills and Southern Adirondacks.

To learn more and apply to be an Invasive Species Technician, http://bit/ly/ISTechnicians

CR-PRISM Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Watercraft Stewards provide public education and outreach at boat launches regarding statewide Clean, Drain, Dry practices in order to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Watercraft Stewards collect research data daily from interactions with the public using the Survey 123 Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Application (WISPA).

Watercraft Stewards work independently at various boat launch locations throughout the Capital Region PRISM (including Albany,

Columbia, Greene, Herkimer, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Washington counties).

Season Employment & Work Schedule

Watercraft Stewards work on a full-time seasonal (temporary) basis from May through September. Work schedules are typically Thursday-Monday, including holidays, from 7:00 am—3:30 pm, though schedules may also vary depending on program needs.

The Watercraft Steward program runs from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, with several days of required programmatic training on May 14, 15, 18, and 19, 2026.

To learn more and apply to be an AIS Watercraft Steward, visit https://bit.ly/WatercraftStewards.

CAR SEAT CHECK

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County is partnering with New Country Toyota of Clifton Park for a FREE car seat check to insure your car seat is properly installed. Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors will be on site.

March (TBD) | 4 pm—8 pm
New Country Toyota of Clifton Park
202 Route 146, Mechanicville

For date and to schedule an appointment call 518-885-8995.

What to bring to your car seat check:

- Your child (if possible)
- Your car seat manual
- Your vehicle owner's manual
- A cleaned-out vehicle (remove other items for easier access)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for **February 25, 2025 | 7 pm** at the Extension Office.

CCE Saratoga's Board of Directors
John Mancini - *President*
Liz Newsom - *Vice President*
Mark Preissler - *Secretary*
Jim Pettis, Jr.—*Treasurer*
Tom Venditti
Alex Guilmette
Ian Murray—*Board of Supervisors Representative*
Danielle Hautaniemi - *Cornell Representative*

NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

2026 Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) - Enrollment

Enrollment for the 2026 Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) is currently underway and open through February 26, 2026. Dairy operations, large and small, that produce milk commercially are eligible to participate in the program for a premium. Participating dairy producers have the flexibility to select coverage levels best suited for their operation and have the option of adjusting that level during the open enrollment period each year.

More information about the DMC and how to apply is available here: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/dairy-margin-coverage-program-dmc

CORNELL IPM

Cattle and Equine IPM Winter Webinar Series

FLIES & BITING INSECTS ON HORSES - MANAGING THE PERSISTENT

Thursday, February 12 | 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm EST
Registration Link: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cCHmCyeGVe5tHJs

Webinar Topic:
Filth flies and biting insects are among the most common and persistent pests around horses and stables. This session will cover the identification, biology and management of key species. Learn practical, integrated pest management (IPM) strategies to reduce pest pressure, protect horse health, and improve comfort and productivity through sustainable control approaches.
Presenter: Dr. Erika Machtinger

MANAGING TICKS ON HORSES

Thursday, February 19 | 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm EST
Registration Link: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3ad8DGueDZAIvl4

Webinar Topic:
Ticks are a major concern for horse owners and managers due to their role in transmitting diseases and causing irritation and blood loss. This webinar will discuss the most common tick species affecting horses, their seasonal activity, and habitats. Participants will learn how to reduce tick exposure through habitat management, host protection, and other integrated control tactics that minimize risk to horses and humans alike.
Presenter: Dr. Erika Machtinger

TICK IPM & NEW APPROACHES TO FLY THRESHOLDS ON CATTLE

Thursday, March 5 | 10:00 am - 11:00 am EST
Registration Link: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bpIWkbckNsGo0gm

Webinar Topic:
This webinar will explore two timely livestock IPM topics: managing ticks on cattle and rethinking traditional fly thresholds. With changing tick pressures and new insights into cattle behavior and pest impacts, this session offers updated, practical guidance to help producers make more effective, evidence-based management decisions.
Presenter: Dr. Cassandra Olds

NCAT

Get Paid to Improve Your Wool!

Are you a producer in California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, **New York**, South Dakota, Utah, or Wyoming**?**

Are you interested in getting paid to improve the quality of your wool?

The Wool Quality Improvement Program is a multi-state initiative designed to strengthen U.S. wool markets by supporting sheep producers with direct funding, technical assistance, and market-building resources.

The Wool Quality Improvement Program supports producers in improving wool quality, strengthening supply chains, and increasing access to domestic and direct-to-consumer markets. By investing in on-farm infrastructure, conservation practices, and value-added processing, the program helps American wool compete more effectively in global and domestic markets while increasing producer income and resilience.

The program serves wool producers across nine states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New York, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

The program will work with 100 wool producers until March 31, 2028, providing funding and technical support to implement practices, improve fiber quality and develop market-ready wool and wool products.

Montana Kings of the Mountain. (Credit: Macy Collins)

Producer Funding Opportunities

To ensure direct investment in producers, program funds are distributed through three complementary funding opportunities:

Wool Quality Improvement Stipend

The Wool Quality Improvement Stipend supports producers in improving wool quality at the shearing and handling stage. Funds may be used to enhance shearing infrastructure, increase labor for sorting and classing wool, and access quality testing and education. The stipend is designed to help producers produce cleaner, more consistent wool that meets market standards.

Implementation Fund

The Implementation Fund provides cost-share assistance for producers to implement NRCS-approved conservation and land management practices. These practices support healthy grazing systems, improved forage, and long-term land stewardship while enhancing the conditions needed to produce high-quality wool.

Market Innovation Fund

The Market Innovation Fund supports producer-led investments that expand market access and add value to wool. Producers may use funds to purchase specialized equipment, improve processing and handling infrastructure, develop value-added wool products, or strengthen marketing and sales efforts. This fund encourages innovation and helps producers reach new buyers, mills, and consumers.

APPLY HERE

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION | Livestock Program Work Team

Deerworm and Flukes for Small Ruminants

February 25, 2026 | 6:00 pm
via Zoom

Featuring Guest Speakers:
Dr. Mary Smith, DVM, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine
Dr. Rachel White, PhD, UMaine Cooperative Extension

Registration: https://tinyurl.com/DeerwormFluke
Presentation to be recorded for future viewing.

Topics:

- Common parasite signs and lifecycles
- Prevention and Management
- Resources

Questions? Contact Rachel Moody at ram72@cornell.edu
(518) 272-4210

Saratoga County 4-H Announces 2026 Youth Shooting Sports Course

Saratoga County 4-H is pleased to announce the start of its annual 4-H Shooting Sports Course, **beginning March 10, 2026**, and meeting every Tuesday evening through April 14, 2026. This program is open to **all youth ages 12 and older**.

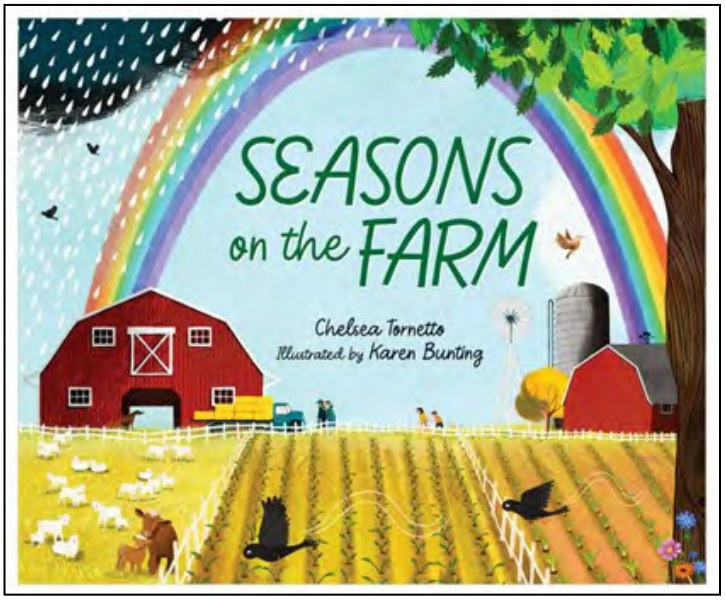
Participants will learn the safe and ethical use of firearms and shooting equipment across multiple disciplines, including Home Firearm Safety, Shotgun, Smallbore Rifle, Muzzleloader, Archery, Air Pistol, and Hunting & Outdoor Skills. Sessions will be **held at the 4-H Training Center, located at 550 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa, NY.**

All equipment, ammunition, and personal protective equipment are provided. Youth must be current Saratoga County 4-H members or enroll prior to participating. The course **fee is $50, with an additional $5 enrollment fee for new 4-H members**.

Youth can register online CLICK HERE

Saratoga County 4-H Seeks Volunteers for Ag Literacy Week
March 16 –20

Calling all community champions and agri-enthusiasts! Saratoga County 4-H is rolling out the red carpet for volunteers during Agricultural Literacy Week, happening from March 16-20, 2026! We invite you to dive into the delightful world of "Seasons on the Farm" by Chelsea Tornetto, as you take a journey with second graders through the vibrant seasons of farming.



This is not just a reading session; it's an opportunity to sow the seeds of agricultural knowledge and nurture a love for farming in young hearts! With each reading session lasting about 30 minutes you'll share the magic of what farmers do throughout the year, followed by an engaging activity that will make those farming concepts come alive.

Whether you're an agriculture aficionado or simply a community service superstar, your enthusiasm is the fertilizer we need to help this event bloom! So come on, let's cultivate some fun and make a meaningful impact together!

To volunteer, please contact Kailey by emailing kek255@cornell.edu or calling the office at 518-885-8995.

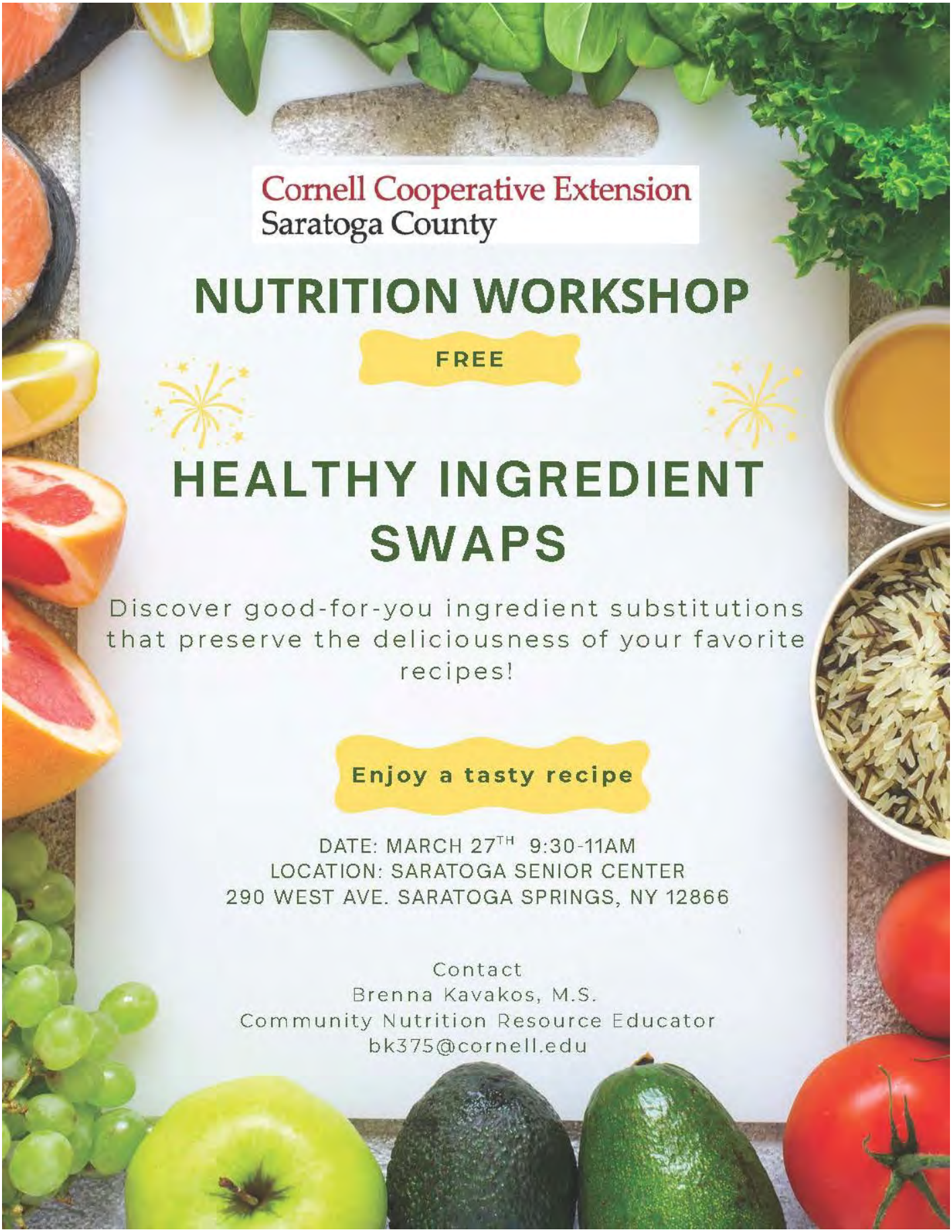
25th Annual 4-H Leaders Scholarship Golf Classic

Mark your calendars and get ready for a fantastic day of fun and philanthropy! We're thrilled to announce the 25th Annual 4-H Leaders Scholarship Golf Classic is now set for **Saturday, May 30** at the beautiful Fairways of Halfmoon, located at **17 Johnson Road, Mechanicville, NY.**

This is your chance to swing into action for a great cause, as the event now boasts a new date and venue, making it even more exciting! Join us in our mission to uplift the incredible youth of Saratoga County and help us create unforgettable experiences that will shape their futures.

4-H GOLF CLASSIC

Your participation is key, and together, we can make a huge impact! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to Greg Stevens at the 4-H office at 518-885-8995 or grs9@cornell.edu. To register or for more information: **https://sc4h.org**.


Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County
NUTRITION WORKSHOP
FREE
HEALTHY INGREDIENT SWAPS
Discover good-for-you ingredient substitutions that preserve the deliciousness of your favorite recipes!
Enjoy a tasty recipe
DATE: MARCH 27TH 9:30-11AM
LOCATION: SARATOGA SENIOR CENTER
290 WEST AVE. SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866
Contact
Brenna Kavakos, M.S.
Community Nutrition Resource Educator
bk375@cornell.edu

The Great Backyard Bird Count
February 13-16

The Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 13-16. Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days, people are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them to the Lab of Ornithology. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations.

https://www.birdcount.org/

Webinar: How to Participate in the 2026 Great Backyard Bird Count

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 | 7:00 pm ET

Embrace the joy of birds by participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) taking place February 13-16, 2026. This lively, beginner-friendly webinar will inspire you to deepen your connection with birds while joining a worldwide count.

Join this one-hour live event to discover tips, tricks, and ideas to prepare for the GBBC, a fun and impactful global community science event! GBBC team members will share how to participate with confidence, while special guest and author Julia Zarankin explores beginner birding and the love and joy of backyard birds.

Click here to register for a webinar.

CORNELL IPM Program

What's Bugging You?

Not all things that buzz, crawl or slither are pests. Figuring out WHAT is bugging you is the first step.

Each month at New York State Integrated Pest Management's "What's Bugging You? First Friday" events, experts share practical information and answer questions on using integrated pest management (IPM) to avoid pest problems and promote a health environment where you live, work, learn and play. We end with an IPM Minute, and cover a specific action you can take in the next few days to help you avoid pest problems. **Events take place online from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm.**

MARCH 6: Here come the Jorō Spiders! | Lookout for termite swarms
Should you be worried about the Jorō spider invasion? *(spoiler alert: no)* Learn the facts about this new-to-NY spider and relevant IPM strategies. And learn about appropriate IPM responses if you see winged termites inside this spring. Register here.

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION—PITT COUNTY CENTER, Written by Taneisha Armstrong and last updated by Jamie Carlson

Economically Friendly Valentine's Dinner

Love is in the air… and so is the smell of a budget friendly recipe! Valentine's Day is here! Instead of spending money on taking your loved ones out for dinner, why not have an intimate budget friendly homemade dinner? Spend time with your loved ones, save money and prepare a simple one pan meal with a little clean up. Home is where the heart is, but also where you'll save the most money!

Of course, a Valentine's dinner is not complete without dessert. Complete your meal with Sweet Potato Brownies, a healthy spin on traditional brownies. All ingredients listed in both recipes are SNAP eligible.

One-Pan Chicken and Potato Bake

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 1 hour

Ingredients:

- 4 bone-in chicken pieces (1½ lb.)
- 1½ lb. baking potatoes (about 3), cut into thin wedges
- ¼ cup Zesty Italian Dressing
- ¼ cup Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1 tsp. dried Italian seasoning

Calories	370
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	15%
Saturated Fat 4g	20%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 110mg	37%
Sodium 350mg	15%
Total Carbohydrates 33g	12%
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
Sugars 2g	4%
Protein 33g	66%
Vitamin A	2%
Vitamin C	10%
Calcium	10%
Iron	15%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 400°F.
2. Place chicken and potatoes in 13x9-inch baking dish.
3. Top with dressing; sprinkle with cheese and seasoning. Cover.
4. Bake 1 hour or until chicken is done (165°F), uncovering after 30 minutes).

Sweet Potato Brownies

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup sweet potato puree (from fresh or canned)
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- ¼ cup + 2 tbsp flour (flour of your choice)
- 1½ tsp baking soda
- 1/8 tsp salt

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Line an 8-inch pan with parchment paper or grease well.
2. Gently heat peanut butter until easily stir-able.
3. Whisk peanut butter, sweet potato, and vanilla extract in a large bowl. Stir together the remaining ingredients, make sure the baking soda is evenly incorporated.
4. Pour dry ingredients into wet, and smooth into the prepared pan, scooping out all traces of batter and using a second sheet of parchment to really smooth it down evenly.
5. Bake on the center oven rack for 20 minutes. The brownie will look a little undone, but it firms up as it cools. (Place in the refrigerator to achieve more firmness).

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 39 g

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 148	Calories from Fat 75
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8.3g	**13%**
Saturated Fat 1.6g	**8%**
Trans Fat 0.0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 26mg	**1%**
Potassium 83mg	**2%**
Total Carbohydrates 15.0g	**5%**
Dietary Fiber 1.9g	**7%**
Sugars 10.0g	
Protein 5.6g	
Vitamin A 1% •	Vitamin C 5%
Calcium 0% •	Iron 15%

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

Tips to extend the life of Valentine's Day roses

Many people will receive Valentine's Day gifts from loved ones, especially roses, but those blooms often fade shortly after February 14. Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham offers guidelines to help extend the life of floral arrangements and loose stems.

For floral arrangements, keep the vase filled or the floral foam well soaked with warm water. Fresh, warm water should be added daily, and if the water becomes cloudy, it should be replaced immediately.

Loose stems should be recut by removing one to two inches with a sharp knife while holding the stem under water. This allows the stem to draw in water rather than air.

Flowers should be kept in a cool location, ideally between 65 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit, and away from direct sunlight, heating or cooling vents, ceiling fans, or radiators.

If a rose begins to wilt, remove it from the arrangement and recut the stem under water. Submerging the entire rose in warm water can help revive it within one to two hours.

For loose stems, start by filling a clean, deep vase with water and adding the flower food provided by the florist. Any leaves that will sit below the waterline should be removed, as submerged leaves encourage bacterial growth.

If flowers cannot be placed in a food solution right away, keeping them cool will help preserve their freshness.

THE NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION, By Shila Patel

Seeds for Salad Sprouts

They became popular in the 1970s and since have become a salad bar staple. But somehow, sprouts just haven't been able to shake their fad food reputation, until now at least. Certainly they add flavor as well as numerous vitamins and minerals to meals. But it's the recent definitive research establishing some sprouts' cancer-protecting properties that may finally push them to the center of the dietary stage.

Last year, reports from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine indicated that broccoli sprouts may offer protection against cancer. This good news, which created a frenzy when it was announce, overshadows a recent advisory from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warning health-compromised groups to avoid raw alfalfa sprouts. Are sprouts a magic bullet or a health threat? There's no simple answer, but here we describe some recent research on sprouts and how you can get the maximum health benefits. Growing your own sprouts is a simple way to add fresh greens to your diet, especially in winter.

Seeds for Sprouts

Seeds of many different vegetables can be sprouted, but the most popular green leafy kinds such as alfalfa, broccoli, cabbage, kale, radish, and onion. All sprout readily in water and are best eaten soon after the first leaves (cotyledons) sprout. These are best enjoyed raw because they are so tender and delicate. Other tasty seeds to sprout include various kinds of beans and lentils: adzuki, kidney, lentil, mung, pinto, and soy. They are best harvested before leaves emerge and are generally eaten cooked.

Most vegetable seeds germinate in three to six days. Flavor is variable, but assume it will be milder than the mature vegetable. Beans require only one to three days to produce a root, but some seeds, such as onion and garlic, may need up to two weeks to produce edible sprouts.

Seed companies and health-food stores sell many kinds of sprouting seed. Sprouting seed differ from garden seed in that it has not been treated with fungicides. Generally, it also germinates well, is open-pollinated, and is cheap. However, any untreated seed can be sprouted. Use seeds with the highest germination rates because ungerminated seed is more likely to spoil during the sprouting process.

If you want to sprout a specific variety for its taste, you'll probably have to buy seed intended for the garden. Just make sure it is not treated. Varieties well suited to sprouting include 'Saga' broccoli, 'Red Russian' kale, and 'China Rose' radish.

For sprouts of kidney, mung, and other common beans, use fresh, whole dried beans from the grocery store.

Seed mixes. To meet consumer demand, some retailers have created mixes of seeds that combine well and produce more flavor variety in a single harvest. Mixes may also take advantage of differing sprouting times to extend the harvest. In the latter case, pluck off and enjoy the longest sprouts first while the others continue growing.

There's no secret to creating a seed mix. Some good ones include alfalfa, radish, and clover; broccoli and kale; or mung beans and lentils. Experiment with proportions until you find an appealing combination.

Basic Sprouting

The method for successful sprouting is the same whether you use a traditional canning jar or cheesecloth bag, or a fancy European sprouter. Most packets of sprouting seed include specific instructions, but here are guidelines for sprouting in a 1-quart jar.

Place 1 to 2 tablespoons of seed in a medium bowl. Remove any loose hulls and visible debris, and rinse seed several times to wash away any surface contaminants. Soak overnight in tepid water to enhance germination. After soaking, smaller seeds, such as alfalfa and broccoli, can expand up to four times in volume, but larger seeds, such as mung bean and lentil, will only double in size.

Place the presoaked seeds in a clean jar covered with fine mesh screen or cheesecloth. (If you use a canning jar; use the screw lid to hold the screen in place; otherwise a rubber band will do.) Fill and drain the jar with cool water several times, then prop the jar top down at a 45-degree angle. Using cool water, rinse and drain the sprouts two or three times a day, until roots sprout for bean seeds and cotyledons emerge for vegetable seeds.

Best conditions for sprouting are temperatures from 60-75°F, high humidity, good air circulation, and frequent rinsing to deter spoilage. Most sprouts do well in indirect light, but bean sprouts prefer the dark.

To sprout different kinds of seeds simultaneously, consider using a multilevel plastic seed sprouter. Mail-order seed companies offer several kinds. These have two or three levels, a watering tray at the top, and a water collection tray on the bottom. Because water flows down through all the levels, one rinse cleans all the seeds. If you select a model with a broad, flat germination tray, you can harvest the tallest sprouts first, leaving the others undisturbed until they are mature.

Harvesting and storing

As a practical matter, you can consume vegetable sprouts for several days after harvest, so long as they haven't developed a sour odor, wilted, turned yellow, or become slimy. To get maximum health benefits from broccoli sprouts, consume them three to four days after they start to germinate and before they have green leaves. Use bean sprouts when the roots are plump and crisp, and before the cotyledons appear.

Before serving sprouts, wash and rinse away the seed hulls. Refrigerate harvested sprouts, and rinse them daily to preserve freshness. Most sprouts can be stored safely for up to a week.

For Alfafa Advisor and full article, click here.

CCE Albany County

Raising Honey Bees for Fun and Profit

Friday, February 13, 2026 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
CCE Albany County, 24 Martin Road, Voorheesville
Cost: $10 per person

This class will cover the basics of raising honey bees:

- The benefits of pollinators
- Equipment needed
- Hive set up
- Honey harvesting

Guest Speakers:
Lifelong beekeepers, Tom Della Rocco and Stephen Wilson

- Coffee and light refreshments will be available -

Please register by February 11:
https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events_landing.cfm?event=raisinghoneybees_201

For questions, please contact: Tom Gallagher
tjg@cornell.edu | 518-765-3511

Edited from Hello Homestead, by Sam Schipani, 2018

How A Cooperative Extension Can Help Your Homesteading Efforts

If you are new to farming or homesteading, you may have heard neighbors—or your favorite homestead blog—mention Cooperative Extension and wondered what it actually is. These organizations can sound almost mythical, like endless sources of farming know-how, but they are very real and especially valuable for homesteaders.

Cooperative Extensions serve many roles, but at their core they exist to support people working with land, food, and natural resources. They are part of each state's land-grant university system, which was established in the mid-1800s to focus on agriculture, science, and engineering education. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created the Cooperative Extension System to connect university research and education directly to communities. Today, every state has a Cooperative Extension system, with about 3,000 local offices nationwide.

For homesteaders, Cooperative Extensions offer credible, research-based information to help meet practical goals. Many people are surprised by the depth and range of resources available once they begin using Extension services. Programs vary by location, since Extension educators regularly assess local needs to determine what information and education will be most helpful.

Common offerings include classes, publications, and events on gardening, beekeeping, food preservation, livestock care, food safety, and related topics central to homesteading. Youth programs such as 4-H are also run through Cooperative Extensions, making them a resource for entire families.

Cooperative Extensions can be a lifeline for new homesteaders. In addition to educational materials, local Extension agents and educators are available to answer questions about gardens, animals, soils, and farm management. In some cases, they can visit a property to conduct soil tests, recommend crops suited to the site, and help develop a basic management plan. Because Extensions work across the food system, they can also connect homesteaders with other agencies and local resources.


Kate Garland horticulturist at the University of Maine Cooperative Extension plants a tomato seedling into a bucket while talking about container gardening. | Gabor Degre

Homesteaders can find their local Cooperative Extension through their state's land-grant university or by searching online for their county Extension office. Each state system maintains a website with contact information and educational materials.

Even urban and suburban homesteaders can benefit. While the system was created when most Americans lived in rural areas, Cooperative Extensions now serve communities of all sizes, including major cities. Grounded in local needs, the Cooperative Extension System continues to adapt and remains a relevant, trusted resource for today's homesteaders.

The Freshest Herbs

As with vegetables fresh from the garden, it's hard to beat homegrown herbs for your culinary delight. However, for most of us winter cold puts an end to the outdoor harvest season. Fortunately, if you've got a sunny window it's not hard to grow your own fresh herbs indoors in winter. You won't be harvesting on the same scale as you might from an outdoor garden, but it's still delightful to be able to pick a few sprigs of fresh herbs to liven up your dishes this winter.

To grow your own herbs indoors, in addition to plants you'll need space, growing media, containers, fertilizer, water, and light - lots of light. Light is probably the most limiting factor for indoor herb growing, especially during the short, dark days of winter. For the best light place your herbs in windows facing south or southwest. East or west facing windows may provide enough light for some herbs. If you don't have enough sunny windowsill space, consider providing extra light to your herbs with fluorescent grow lights.

How much space will you need? With regular harvesting, you can get by with an area eight to twelve inches each way for a single plant. The more space you have, the more or larger plants you can grow. If you have very limited space, choose one or two herbs you will use most often.

Growing Media: Start with a high quality potting soil formulated for indoor plants. It should hold enough water for optimum plant growth, but should also drain well as most herbs do not like wet feet. Some potting soils come with fertilizer mixed in that will provide the needed nutrients for a limited period of time, usually at least a few months. When that time runs out, or if the soil does not contain fertilizer each time I water so I don't have to remember when to fertilize and when not to. But be careful not to over fertilize. In winter, your herb plants won't be growing as actively as at other times of the year and will need less frequent feeding.

Containers: You can use just about any container you'd like as long as it has drainage holes. Bigger is better than too small for good growth. Clay pots are suitable, but plants growing in them will need more frequent water than those grown in plastic pots. It is most important that the container has proper drainage. Excess water needs to drain away from the roots. Because water is going to come out through the drainage holes, you'll need some type of saucer to catch that excess water. Keep in mind that clay saucers let moisture escape so another waterproof barrier should be placed under them to protect the surface they're sitting on.

Water: How frequently you'll need to water will depend on several factors. Your herb plants water needs will vary depending on temperature, amount of light available, and how actively plants are growing. Make sure you're watering only when the plants need it, not on a fixed schedule. Allow the top inch or two of soil to dry out between waterings. To decide if it's time to water you can use the finger method, poking into the soil up to your second knuckle to see if the soil is still moist. You can also use the weight test by lifting the pot. As you do this before and after watering, you'll learn how light the pot should feel when it is ready for watering.

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum* 'Lemon')

Uploaded by Newyorkrita

Light: While most culinary herbs need at least five to six hours of light (more is better, especially in winter), mint, parsley, and chives can get along with four or five hours. Plants should be close to windows but not touching. If the window is too cold, move plants a little further away. If you are growing your herbs under fluorescent lights, keep lights on 14 hours a day, with bulbs hung 6-8 inches above the tops of the plants.

Temperature: Most herbs prefer daytime temperatures of 65 to 70 degrees F. with nighttime temperatures at least 10 degrees lower. Rosemary will do best indoors over the winter in a cooler spot (60-65 degree days would be ideal) that also gets plenty of direct sun.

Some of the herbs that do best indoors include chives, mint, parsley, Vietnamese coriander, oregano (the Greek variety is easiest), thyme, rosemary, dwarf sage, and dill. Basil is a little harder to grow, but is one of my favorites for flavoring. You will have better results with basil if it is kept away from cold windows, but in a location with plenty of sun. It likes day and night temperatures in the 70s.

One advantage of growing mint indoors is that you don't have to worry about it getting out of control and taking over the garden. Peppermint will provide more flavor per leaf than spearmint. Peppermint also requires less light than spearmint. If you have room there are numerous mint varieties from which to choose.

Enjoy your fresh herbs in your favorite dishes, teas, and other drinks.

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