

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CONNECTIONS IN McCULLOCH COUNTY

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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The start of the new year is the perfect time to establish new goals, habits, and a healthy lifestyle. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service recommends starting this year off on the right foot by getting active and eating right!

Lack of time or a busy life doesn't have to stand in the way of healthy habits. According to AgriLife Extension's Walk Across Texas program, 30 minutes a day is all it takes to start the journey of improving your health. Physical activities that increase your heart rate and get you moving can range anywhere from moderate to vigorous, depending on the level of intensity you want to achieve. Every-day activities such as cleaning, gardening, or taking the stairs counts as exercise!

Additional exercises include:

- Walking
- Mowing the lawn
- Water aerobics
- Biking on level ground
- Running or jogging
- Swimming laps

Besides aiding in weight loss, exercising regularly can increase energy levels and strength, and reduce stress, says Erica Reyes, health specialist with AgriLife

Extension Service. In addition to helping you feel better overall, exercise has also been proven to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke, while helping to maintain or reduce high blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes.

If you are new to the active lifestyle, remember to start slow and set manageable goals for yourself. Reyes recommends those just beginning their fitness journey to follow these simple steps:

Get out of your comfort zone  
Establish specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely goals. Try different workout activities to minimize boredom and increase muscle strength  
Keep your body fueled properly with healthy foods

- Stay hydrated
  - Dress for comfort
  - Learn proper form
  - Get up and stretch at work to prevent being sore or stiff
- In order to achieve maximum results and become healthier, supplementing your exercise with healthy and nutritious foods is key. AgriLife Extension Service's Dinner Tonight offers a variety of delicious snacks, meals and



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desserts that are low in calorie and high in nutrition. Sometimes even small changes in your favorite recipes make tremendous differences in terms of calories and fat. Eating healthy doesn't mean you have to give up flavor, which is why Dinner Tonight offers some substitutions for healthier ingredients:

- Replace butter with unsweetened applesauce
- Reduce sugar by 1/3 cup
- Use 2% or fat-free Greek yogurt instead of sour cream
- Use whole grain flour instead of all-purpose

To find more recipes and recipe substitutions, visit [dinnertonight.tamu.edu](http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu).

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## Real Christmas Trees are Recyclable



*After the holidays, don't throw your real Christmas tree in the trash or set it on the curb. Real Christmas trees are biodegradable, which means they can be easily reused or recycled for mulch and other purposes. Here are some recycling options and tips on what to do with your tree after the holidays. Every community is different, but in general, you have these options:*

### *Removing Your Tree*

*The best way to avoid a mess removing your tree is to place a plastic tree bag (available at hardware stores) underneath the stand when you set the tree up. You can hide it with a tree skirt. Then, when the holidays are done, pull the bag up around the tree, stand and all, and carry it outside. Obviously, you will want to remove the stand before recycling the tree. If some needles do scatter inside, it is better to sweep them up; needles can clog vacuum cleaners.*

*Curbside pick-up for recycling: Many providers will collect trees during regular pickup schedules on the two weeks following Christmas. There are often requirements for size, removing ornaments, flocking, etc.*

*Take your tree to a drop-off recycling center: Most counties have free drop-off locations. Usually, you may take up to*

*two trees to a drop-off location at no charge.*

*Yard waste: Cut the tree to fit loosely into your yard waste container.*

*Tree recycling/mulching programs: Tree recycling and mulching programs are a fast-growing trend in communities throughout the nation. Check with your local department of public works for information. They chip and shred the trees, then make the mulch available for use in your garden. Your hauler will notify you of pick-up dates in your area. Be sure to check with your local hauler.*

*Nonprofit pickup: Call for an appointment to have a nonprofit organization in your area pickup your tree. Some Boy Scout troops offer a pickup service for a small donation (often \$5).*

### *Other Recycling Options*

*Soil erosion barriers: Some communities use Christmas trees to make effective sand and soil erosion barriers, especially for lake and river shoreline stabilization and river delta sedimentation management.*

*Fish feeders: Sunk into private fish ponds, trees make an excellent refuge and feeding area for fish.*

*Bird feeders: Place the Christmas tree in the garden or backyard and use it as a bird feeder*

*and sanctuary. Fresh orange slices or strung popcorn will attract the birds and they can sit in the branches for shelter. (Make sure all decorations, hooks, garland and tinsel strands are removed). Eventually (within a year) the branches will become brittle and you can break the tree apart by hand or chip it in a chipper.*

*Mulch: A Christmas tree is biodegradable; its branches may be removed, chipped, and used as mulch in the garden.*

*Paths for hiking trails: Some counties use shredded trees as a free, renewable and natural path material that fits both the environment and the needs of hikers.*

*Living, rooted trees: Get a rooted (ball and burlap or containerized) tree and plant it in your yard. (It's a good idea to dig the hole in the late fall while the soil is still soft, then plant the tree into that hole immediately after Christmas.) Living trees have a better survival rate in mild climates.*

*Important: Never burn your Christmas tree in a fireplace or wood stove.*

*<http://www.realchristmastrees.org/dnn/All-About-Trees/How-to-Recycle>*

## New Year's Eve Traditions from Around the World

All over the world, people join together on New Year's Eve to share hope and good company. Most cultures have rituals intended to usher in positivity for the year to come.

These unique traditions, most of which involve spending time with loved ones and setting goals, also provide fun teachable moments for the kids – and plenty of inspiration for the grown-ups.

**Japan: Ring A Bell 108 Times To Banish Unhappiness** - The Japanese Buddhist tradition holds that there are 108 obstacles to happiness. For the new year, a bell is rung 107 times on Dec. 31, and then once – just after midnight – on Jan. 1. The sound from one strike has to die down before you strike the bell again. Each sounding of the bell symbolizes getting rid of the problems associated with a given obstacle over the past year – and moving into the new year free and clear.

**How to bring this tradition home:** Spend a little time as a family reflecting on the past year's challenges. Try ringing a bell together to clear the air and promote serenity.

**Colombia: Carry A Suitcase To Ensure A Year Full of Travel** - At midnight on New Year's Eve, the people of this South American country run around the block with a suitcase. The idea is that this ushers in an adventurous year to come. Plus, it starts the year off with an energetic bang.

**How to bring this tradition**

**home:** Gather your gang to talk about dream trips. Tuck something that symbolizes a special journey into your pocket on New Year's Eve. Or grab your suitcases (they can be empty) and make it a family outing around the block.

**Denmark: Break Dishes For Good Luck** - In Denmark, people smash plates against their friends' doors to bring good luck. Over the course of the year, any chipped dishware is set aside for the big day. Then, on New Year's Eve, families travel around scattering crockery shards – and spreading positivity. Having lots of broken stuff on your doorstep in the morning is considered a great New Year's omen.

**How to bring this tradition home:** Try paper plates – you could even draw and write messages on them. Or plan a real plate-smashing – but with willing friends and neighbors, so that everyone's in the loop before the fun starts.

**Greece: Use Onions To Symbolize New Growth** - In Greece, one New Year's tradition is to hang onions on

your door to invite positive growth in the months ahead. On the first day of the new year, children are awakened with a ceremonial tap on the head from that onion to bring them longevity and health. Why onions? Because some of them keep growing even when they're removed from the soil, symbolizing the generative instinct in the depths of winter.

**How to bring this tradition home:** An onion is easy to find wherever you are. (And be sure to tap the children gently.)

Alternatively, you can buy a nice, healthy onion plant and set it where it's likely to be seen by all. Either an edible version, which you can use in the kitchen, or an ornamental one will do the trick.

**Spain: Eat 12 Grapes To Bless The Whole Year** - In Spain, people eat one grape for each stroke of the midnight bell to bless each month of the coming year. Since the act of swallowing the grapes is time-sensitive, the tradition involves a lot of messy eating, along with ribbing and laughter.

**How to bring this tradition**

**home:** Eating 12 grapes is a highly realistic New Year's goal. Don't forget to cut those grapes in half for the little ones – and definitely buy seedless.

**Post-Soviet Countries: Decorate A Different Kind Of Holiday Tree** - Ukraine, Russia and other former Soviet countries have a New Year tree tradition. Decorated with treats, tangerines and special toys, these trees illuminate the long winter night and delight children of all ages.

**How to bring this tradition home:** Haven't taken your tree down yet? That's because it's a New Year tree, of course. And if your family doesn't do a Christmas tree, you might all enjoy this secular tree-decorating activity.

**Brazil: Jump Over Seven Waves, Make Seven Wishes** - In Rio, ocean-related New Year's traditions abound. Millions of beachgoers throng the shore on New Year's Eve to make offerings to the sea and wish upon waves, for example. You're usually supposed to jump seven waves, since seven is considered a lucky number.

**How to bring this tradition home:** If your family loves to splash around, find a body of water (the tub works) and wish away.

Everyone loves a good New Year's Eve celebration. Add a little something novel to your festivities this year – and set the tone for a remarkable new year.

–Jennifer Brunton



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/capitalone/2018/12/19/new-years-eve-traditions-from-around-the-globe/#5ffa85bd7e06>

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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WE'RE ON THE WEB

[HTTPS://  
MCCULLOCH.AGRILIFE.ORG](https://mcculloch.agrilife.org)

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## McCulloch County News

We are pleased to announce the addition of Haley White to our McCulloch County Extension staff! She will be the Assistant County Agent for FCH and 4-H. Haley just graduated from Tarleton State University in Stephenville. Please come by the office and give her a welcome hello!

New classes will be offered in the Helping Hand meeting room at 9:30 every Thursday in January. The name of the class is Be Well, Live Well. At each lesson, participants will receive incentive prizes such as veggie peeler/brushes, measuring equipment, can openers, colanders, etc. Call the extension office for more information: 325-597-1295

Ingredients:	1/2 inch pieces
6 skinless, boneless chicken thighs (about 1 3/4 lbs), trimmed	1 10 oz package frozen whole baby okra, thawed
Kosher salt	Juice of 1 lime
1 tbsp vegetable oil	1/4 c fresh cilantro
1 link andouille sausage (about 3 oz), chopped	Directions:
1 tbsp all-purpose flour	Cut each chicken thigh into quarters (or 1 1/2 in pieces if large). Pat dry and season with 1 tsp salt. Heat the vegetable oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring, 1 min. Add the
1 3/4 c low sodium chicken broth	
3 medium potatoes, cut into	

chicken in a single layer and cook undisturbed until browned, about 4 min. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the chick is golden brown all over, about 5 more min. Sprinkle the flour over the chicken and cook, stirring, 1 min.

Stir in the broth and potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the potatoes are just tender, about 10 min. Stir in the okra and cook, covered, until the chicken and potatoes are cooked through, 5 to 10 more min. Remove from heat and stir in the lime juice and cilantro.



*This hearty dish incorporates chicken thighs with chunks of andouille sausage. Fill up on the stewed okra before you chow down on the meat.*

*Family and Community Health "Connections" is provided by the following Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Family and Community Health Agents:*

Courtney Parrott, Brown County

Linda Wells, Burnet County

Vacant, Coke/Sterling Counties

Janet Nelson, Coleman County

Milissa Wright, Concho County

Vacant, Irion/Schleicher Counties

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Karen DeZarn, Lampasas County

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Kandice Everett, Runnels County

Kailey Miller, San Saba County

Jane Rowan, Taylor County

Courtney Redman, Tom Green County

Mandi Seaton, D7 Regional Program Leader

## Stewed Chicken with Andouille