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FOOD TIPS

When freezing soup stock, pour it into loaf pans, freeze, and then remove and wrap in freezer paper or plastic bags. The blocks will take up less space in the freezer and you'll have your pans to use.

Save leftover pie crust for a cheese stick snack. Roll out leftover pie crust, then cut into strips. Sprinkle with cheese and bake in oven.

Prevent lumps when cooking hot cereal by starting with cold water. The texture will be smoother.

Put flour in your freezer or refrigerator to keep from getting bugs in it.

Save money by shredding your own cheese. Buy cheese in bulk pieces and shred it yourself.

Keep cereal longer by storing it in your refrigerator.

Here is some instruction on how to recycle cooking fat and to feed birds at the same time. While cooking, pour off excess cooking fat into an empty coffee can. For every cup of fat, you'll need 1/2 cup bird seed. Slowly remelt fat and add seed. After stirring the combination together, put into paper cups and refrigerate. When mixture is hard, remove paper cups and tie string around mixture. Now you are ready to hang it in your trees and watch the different birds eat.

Does your salt shaker get plugged up? To prevent this put 5 to

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10 grains of rice inside the shaker.

Add a few peppercorns to your pepper shaker to keep holes from plugging and for a fresher ground pepper taste.

While broiling food, to avoid smoke add a cup of water to the bottom of broiling pan before putting into oven. The water will absorb the smoke and grease.

To prevent food from sticking in a new frying pan, boil some vinegar in the pan before using.

For a pleasant smelling kitchen, combine a few teaspoons of sugar and cinnamon in an empty pie tin and slow simmer on stove.

Simmer vinegar in a small pan while cooking vegetables that leave unpleasant odor.

While cooking spaghetti, noodles or rice, add a little cooking oil to the water to prevent water from boiling over.

Keep salt near stove in case of a grease fire. Salt will drown flames and help soak up the grease. Works great on the inside of your oven for food that boils over. Sprinkle salt on the food to keep it from smoking.

Keep a fire extinguisher near the kitchen for any fire that can't be contained quickly.

To cook hamburgers in a hurry: when shaping the burger, poke a hole in the middle. The center will cook quicker and the holes will disappear while cooking.

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Make hamburgers on a cookie sheet, freeze, then store in plastic bags until ready to use.

Spread foods that stick together when freezing (berries, peas, etc.) out on a baking sheet and place in the freezer. When frozen, place in a freezer bag, label, and put back in the freezer.

Freeze foods quicker in your freezer by placing frozen food on top.

For a different taste in pancakes, make with fruit-flavored yogurt instead of milk.

When baking a cake and you don't have a toothpick to test it, use a piece of uncooked spaghetti.

Remove cakes from pans easily by lining the cake pans with wax paper. Grease and use flour as normal then insert wax paper.

When icing a cake, dust a little corn starch on the cake first. This will keep the icing from running off the cake.

Store cheese in a glass jar to keep it from getting moldy.

Freeze bacon in small portions by placing strips between waxed paper that has been accordion-pleated. Wrap in freezer wrap and freeze.

Beat egg whites in glass or metal bowls, not plastic. Plastic bowls can prevent whites from whipping, as they tend to retain grease.

Eggs warmed to room temperature will beat to a greater volume.

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When sauteing with butter, add a small amount of oil to the butter. The combination will prevent the butter from burning.

If you peel more potatoes than you need, cover the extra potatoes with cold water (immersed completely) and add a few drops of vinegar to the water. Refrigerate and they'll keep for several days.

Marinade meat in beer for a few hours if you're out of wine.

If browning meat in a microwave, brush with either soy sauce or Worcestershire sauce. This will improve the taste and appearance.

Add coarsely chopped carrots to peanut butter. It will make the peanut butter crunchier and add a little extra nutrition to your sandwich.

Cheese and meat sandwiches are easier to cut if cheese is placed under the meat.

Use a pizza cutter to cut homemade bar cookies for a smoother edge.

Use leftover pumpkin pie filling to make a pumpkin pudding dessert. Place cupcake liner in a muffin tin, fill with leftover pumpkin filling and a few chopped nuts. Bake it the same time with the pie.

Fill an icing bag by placing the pointed end of the bag in a tall ice tea glass. Icing bag should be easily filled this way.

When decorating a cake, use a toothpick to trace the message or

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design you want. Then frost the outlines.

Use an empty mustard squeeze bottle filled with colored frosting for decorating cakes and cupcakes.

Use a plastic cutting board instead of a wooden one. Wood cutting boards can harbor bacteria.

When making soup, make extra and freeze for a later meal. It doesn't take much more time to make double and you'll have a second meal.

Date all frozen food so you'll be able to see what needs to be used first.

Freeze left over tea in ice cube trays. You can use this the next time you have ice tea.

Spices should be stored in cool dark places. Write the purchase date on the bottom of cans or bottles.

Remove peach skins with a potato peeler.

Tomatoes will ripen more quickly if placed in a plastic or brown bag. Place bag out of direct sunlight.

Lettuce and celery will keep longer in your refrigerator if stored in paper bags instead of cellophane. Don't remove leaves until ready to use.

Remove carrot tops before placing in the refrigerator. The tops will drain moisture and the carrots will become limp.

Rid bugs in leafy vegetables by soaking them in cold water. Add

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a few tablespoons of salt or vinegar to the water and let soak for about ten minutes.

To clean your grill easily, coat it with vegetable oil before cooking food, and then clean as soon as it has cooled.

When cooking over an open fire, coat the underside of the pans with shaving cream or liquid detergent. Pans should clean up a lot easier.

On the inside of a cupboard door, hang useful information. This could be calorie chart, cooking equivalents, etc.

Save time grocery shopping by doing your's early in the morning or late in the evening. The stores are less crowded during these times.

Stores usually have the best selections the days that the stores' ads come out.

Early morning shoppers can save money on marked-down produce and breads.

Another way to preserve recipe cards is to store them in flip-top photo albums. You won't even have to remove them while using your favorite recipe.

To keep spills and splatters off cookbooks, after finding the recipe you want to use, slide the open cookbook into a clear, large plastic bag. You'll be able to use the recipe and keep the cookbook clean.

Here's a few tips for brown sugar:

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If it's hard as a rock and you need it in a hurry, simply grate what you need with a hand grater.

Brown sugar can be softened by placing a slice of soft bread in the package and closing tightly. In a couple hours, the sugar should be soft again.

You also can put brown sugar and a cup of water next to it in a covered pan. Turn your oven on low and put in the oven for a while.

For cookies, you can combine the brown sugar and water from the recipe and put it in the microwave for a few seconds. This will dissolve any lumps.

Would you like to chop onions without crying? Try these hints.

Refrigerate or freeze onions for fifteen minutes before chopping.

Run cold water over onions while peeling.

If you cut the root end of the onion off last you should shed fewer tears.

While chopping, periodically rinse hands under cold water.

Remove onion smell from your hands by wetting hands, then sprinkle with salt. Rub hands then rinse and the onion smell should be gone.