

For Immediate Release



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles

www.eatrightmontana.org

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December 1, 2009

Simple Gifts of Food and Nutrition: Good for the Body, Easy on the Budget

Even during the best of times, holiday gift giving can get complicated. Who should be on your gift list? How much should you spend on each person? What about charitable giving? How much should you give and to what groups? When the times are tough and the economy uncertain, all of these questions can become overwhelming, especially if your own budget has taken a hit in the downturn.

“Holidays are a time for generosity and there are many ways to give even when our budgets are tight,” says Dayle Hayes, MS, RD (Registered Dietitian), and President, Nutrition for the Future, Inc. in Billings. “Nourishing gifts of foods are always welcome. They help shift the focus from the typical holiday overeating to sharing with those who may not be eating well. If you want to make a generous donation of food and nutrition this year, there are ideas to fit every wish list and every pocketbook.”

The most direct way to make a nutrition donation is to invite someone to share food with you – in your home, in their home, or at a restaurant. Consider an invitation to a neighbor or to someone from church. Be especially generous to those who may have limited income, mobility, or social contacts. If you don't have extra money to spend, offer to take someone shopping or to prepare a meal for them.

According to Hayes, there are several simple ways to give generously on a limited budget. “As you consider how best to give individuals on your list and to charities in your community, remember that gifts from the heart are more powerful than fancy packages and large checks.”

- **Give things you make:** If you're a crafty person, you've got plenty of ideas for inexpensive gifts. Not crafty? No worries! Bake a loaf of whole grain bread or make friendship soup in a jar. Not a cook? Burn a CD of your favorite holiday music and listen while you cook a meal with friends or family.
- **Give your time:** In our busy world, time is a truly generous gift. Not able to make a usual financial contribution to your food bank or soup kitchen this year? Donate time throughout the year. These organizations may have lots of volunteers over the holidays but need help on a regular basis.
- **Give your compassion:** There is no more powerful gift than compassion, something which money can't buy. Share holiday companionship with those who may need a smile, some help with eating, or a conversation. Ask how to help your local hospice, children's hospital, or nursing home at mealtime.
- **Give your expertise:** All of us have special skills. For organizations that feed the hungry, your skills may fill a serious need. If you're not in a position to donate money, consider giving your expertise in planning meals, cooking, or finding simple, delicious recipes that use donated food.

“A sense of community is one of the strongest ways to celebrate the special meaning of the holidays in our lives,” says Dayle Hayes. “By joining with others around a table and enjoying a meal together, we can all take comfort from the blessings of nourishing food and simple companionship.”

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm

Going Green: Simple Steps for Healthy Families 2009