

# Uh Oh, Company is af the Door... Organizing vs. Agonizing over your Gatherings

by Mary Dykstra, MBA CPO

hanksgiving is my favorite holiday in the entire year. When I was in Junior High School my Aunt Eileen from Chicago started a tradition of hosting the holiday at her home because she made the observation that the only time our extended family seemed to get together was at funerals. What a great tradition she started. We typically have 20 to 35 people every year coming in from various states with the sense of camaraderie and family community. It has truly strengthened with the addition of friends, spouses, children and new babies. So, even though hosting Thanksgiving can sometimes be stressful, it can also add a rich texture to life and long-term memories. To keep this holiday a joy, use a family team approach – even if it is a small gathering.

## Tips for the Host:

- Plan your strategy for the holiday well in advance so you can delegate tasks and purchase things when they are on sale.
- Get a head count for your gathering and inquire about any special dietary restrictions. Gluten-free requests are becoming more frequent.
- Consider inviting a 'new face' neighbor, college student, out-of-town friend, a newly widowed person to the table.
- Keep it simple; it is about the event and not the quantity of food choices.
- If you are primarily responsible for the meal preparation, choose food items that you can make or partially prepare ahead of time.
- Make a list of all the food items (i.e. mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie etc.) and divvy up the list so everyone brings something. For those who are

- not able to bring something, consider asking them to lend an extra hand on the day with setup, cleanup or babysitting.
- At least two days prior to the event, de-clutter the kitchen, dining room, living room and guest bath. Make sure you have room and hangers in coat closet or a tidy bedroom to place coats and purses.
- Make sure you have extra paper towels, toilet paper and washroom hand towels in place.
- If you are gathering earlier in the day and not planning on eating for a couple of hours (as the turkey can take a long time to cook) have snacks ready for children and for those with low blood sugar.
- Have resealable bags and disposable food containers on hand so you can send extra food home with your guests or freeze portions for later use.

There is often a guest who always run late to events. For those guests, give them an earlier start time and if they are still late, do not hold dinner for them. If you always wait, there is no reason for them to change and it compromises the food quality and puts everyone who was on time, on edge.

- Make sure you have available or request someone to bring extra serving ware.
- Ensure your kitchen towels are laundered and ready to go for the after dinner cleanup.
- Have activities to do for the kids.
- Handling a chronically late guest/family member is worrisome. There is always a guest who often arrives late. For those guests, give them an earlier start time and if they are still late, do not hold dinner for them. If you always wait, there is no reason for them to change and it compromises the food quality and puts everyone who was on time, on edge.

## Tips for the Guest:

- If you often over commit and disappoint people, stop over promising. It leads to hurt feelings and reduced trust. Realistically assess what you can do and be upfront about it.
- If you are tight on time, and have been asked to 'bring a dish', try to make a food item that takes minimal prep time or can be made or purchased ahead of time.
- If you are bringing a hot dish, bring it in something that will keep it warm and safe during transport and until it is ready to be served.
   If you are traveling in from a distance, bring a cooler with ice to keep cold things at the right temperature for transport and storage. When I come back from Chicago, I usually take the turkey carcass home to make soup, so a cooler is mandatory.
- Be on time.
- Be a great guest. Ask how you can help the host and visit with guests who may be shy.

For those who are neither a host nor a guest, consider volunteering at a local charity or church to serve a Thanksgiving meal to those in need. Volunteering can be a richly rewarding and humbling experience.

Remember, Thanksgiving is about taking the day to appreciate life's blessings and family. So, take a few deep breaths and allow yourself and loved ones to really enjoy the event by preplanning and organizing for success.



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// <u>Jomen's</u> LifeStyle







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## Faces & Places

The Spectrum Health Foundation honored volunteer and philanthropist Ethie Haworth as the 2011 recipient of its Art of Giving Award. The honor was presented at the foundation's annual celebration of philanthropy dinner. The Art of Giving Award is presented annually to an individual who has demonstrated uncommon service and leadership to Spectrum Health, its foundations and the West Michigan community.

The Better Business Bureau of Western Michigan is pleased to welcome new President/CEO Phil Catlett. Catlett served as Vice-President and General Manager of area radio stations for more than 20 years, and recently has worked with public media development projects

Ready to WOW you, écouter Salon has added a location in Rockford. Lauren Cole, owner and Artistic Director of écouter, purchased an existing 10-year-old salon located at 6461 Belding Road. écouter is a Paul Mitchell® Focus Salon and its stylists proudly reflect this in all services from beautiful precsion cuts to luxurious and creative color.





Family Care Center is pleased to announce the addition of Elizabeth Harris, PA-C, to their staff. Elizabeth is trained in multiple areas of women's health including family planning and birth control options, abnormal pap smears and menopause treatment.

CWD Real Estate Investment announces Anthropologie, a women's apparel, accessories and home décor specialty store, as the latest addition to Breton Village, 1830 Breton Rd. The new 10,000-square-foot international retail chain will open its doors in fall 2011.

Twenty-two years after opening their first Chow Hound Pet Supply store in Grand Rapids, local entrepreneurs Greg and Tyson Keane are bringing their unique mix of pet food, supplies, expert advice and personal service to pet owners in Grand Haven and the Lakeshore. The brothers opened their seventh Chow Hound Pet Supplies at 628 N. Beacon Blvd. in Grand Haven.







Gaslight Village also offers the safety and convenience of snowmelt sidewalks!

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For more information visit our business association website at EGRGaslightVillage.com



# Sweet Potato

Courtesy www.sweetpotato.org

## Cream of Spinach and Yam Soup

8 servings

Spinach and yams join together to produce this sensational, creamy, rich-flavored soup.

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
  - 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
  - 2 tbsp. minced garlic
  - 1 cup all-purpose flour
  - 3 (16 ounce) cans fat-free chicken broth
  - 3 cups fresh yams (sweet potatoes), peeled and diced or 2 (15 oz.) can yams, drained
- 1 (10 ounce) bag fresh spinach leaves, stemmed and coarsely chopped

- 2 cups skim milk
- 1/2 cup sliced green onion stems (scallions) salt and pepper to taste

In a large heavy pot coated with nonstick cooking spray over a medium-high heat, cook the onion, celery, red bell pepper and garlic until the vegetables are tender, about 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the flour and gradually add the chicken broth, whisking until the soup is blended. Add the sweet potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cook approximately 20 minutes or until the potatoes are very tender. Add the spinach, milk, green onion stems, salt and pepper. Cook until spinach is wilted and soup well heated and thickened, about 5 minutes.

Note: If using canned yams, cut in small chunks and stir in at the end of cooking.

## Sweet Potato, Apple and **Walnut Muffins**

approximately 18 muffins

The tartness of apples and raisins combined with the sweetness of yams and flavorful walnuts create a moist muffin that will quickly become one of your favorites.

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
  - 1 tsp. cinnamon
  - 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar
  - 1 egg
  - 1 egg white
- 1 (15-oz) can sweet potatoes (yams), drained and mashed or 1 cup fresh sweet potatoes, cooked and mashed
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 1 3/4 cups chopped, peeled baking apples
- 1/3 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup golden raisins

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder and cinnamon; set aside. In another bowl, mix together oil, brown sugar, egg, egg white, mashed yams and milk. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add yam mixture, stirring until moistened. Do not over mix. Fold in the apples, walnuts and raisins.

Spoon batter into paper-lined or coated muffin tins, filling about three-fourths full. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until done.





## **Baked Sweet Potato Fries**

4-6 servings

A fantastic, healthier alternative to greasy fries, and they're just as good!

- 4 sweet potatoes (yams)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil salt and pepper to taste chopped parsley (optional)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Coat baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray or line with foil.

Cut sweet potatoes into 1/2-inch thick lengthwise strips, toss with oil. Arrange in single layer on baking sheet, bake 15-20 minutes.

Turn potatoes over, bake 15-20 minutes or until golden brown all over. Season to taste, sprinkle with parsley.

For a sweeter version, omit parsley, sprinkle with cinnamon and nutmeg before baking.

## Southwestern Pork Stew

8 servings

Pork, yams, and corn make this an eye catching easy one dish meal that will be repeated often at family dinners.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 lbs. pork tenderloin, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch pieces
  - 1/4 cup all purpose flour
  - cup chopped red onion
  - 2 cups fat free chicken broth, more if needed to thin stew
  - 1 (10-ounce) can chopped tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 1/4 lbs. sweet potatoes (yams), peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes or 2 (15 oz.) cans sweet potatoes drained
  - 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. cumin
  - (4-ounce) can diced green chilies, drained
  - (16-ounce) package frozen corn salt and pepper to taste



Toss pork with flour to coat. In a large pot coated with nonstick cooking spray, brown pork over medium heat about 5 to 7 minutes.

Add onions and cook until tender. Add broth, tomatoes and green chilies, sweet potatoes, chili powder, cumin, diced green chilies and corn.

Bring mixture to a boil, lower heat and simmer until potatoes are tender and pork is done, approximately 45 minutes.

If stew gets too thick, add more chicken broth. Season to taste.











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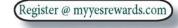






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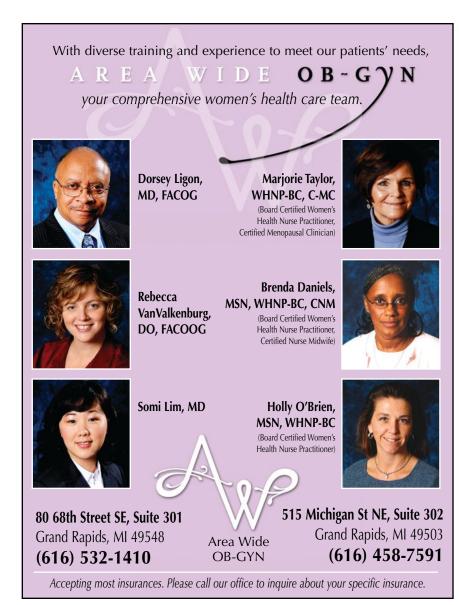
## **Giving Bowl**

The "Giving Bowl" and its hand printed bag were created by the artisans of Lorraine Oerth, potters from Alexandria, Virginia. The 2" bowls are embellished with textures and each has its own thoughtful inspiration, designed to uplift and cheer. 10% of the profits from the sale of the Giving Bowls are donated to animal rescue charities. Available in a variety of colors. \$8 at Spirit Dreams • 1430 Lake Drive SE, Grand Rapids www.spiritdreamsgr.com

## **Organic Cookware**

Oscuro handmade organic cookware from the Andes region of Columbia availabe in several styles and shapes. Safe to use on gas, electric or ceramic stovetop or in the oven. Prepare and serve in this updated version of classic cookware. Shown: Oval Roaster 3.5qt. \$98 at Wealthy at Charles • 738 Wealthy Street SE, Grand Rapids. www.wealthyatcharles.com









Momen's LifeStyle









# NOW TRENDING

by Latesha Lipscomb

his month, I set out to discover and indulge in local foods, drinks and destinations that set my soul on fire, inspired by the epicurean revolution happening right here in our own back yard. This season we have much to be thankful for as these ten tasty finds are notably worth the experience. After enjoying this month's trend adventures, there's no doubt in my mind that you'll thank me later.

#### Sietsema's Orchards & Cider Mill

They say an "apple a day, keeps the doctor away" but what if you could drink it? Sietsema's Apple Orchard and Cider Mill is a fifth generation family farm that harvests some of the most mouthwatering apples on this side of the state. Sietsema's 1/2 gallon apple cider can best be described as sweet, refreshing and nothing short of amazing. Beautifully packaged and full of flavor, I was astonished at its mesmerizing taste. This is a delightful, crisp, fresh and festive beverage. Serve it up this season, hot or cold, and experience "love at first sip".

#### **Dave's Sweet Tooth Candies**

It's toffee and it's amazing. The label boasts: "real butter, real sugar, real milk chocolate and hand sliced almonds prepared with love, one batch at a time, every time" While Toffee is an age-old recipe that has probably been passed down in many families for generations, Dave's Sweet Tooth surpasses them all. The repurpose ball jars are packaged simply but beautifully and makes for great gifts during the holidays. The sweet buttery crunch of this toffee comes in four delicious flavor combinations: Original, Dark Chocolate, Cookies & Cream and Coffee Toffee. Dave's Sweet Tooth is available locally at Forest Hills Foods, Grand Central Market & Deli, The Shaker Messenger and John Russo's Wine Warehouse. You should also keep your eyes peeled for a sweet tooth booth at local holiday craft & trade shows. Savor the flavor with Dave's Sweet Tooth exquisite toffee candies.



#### Beanilla **Premium** Vanilla

Specializing in vanilla beans from around the

world, this company provides the most pure and wholesome form of vanilla possible. Beanilla vanilla beans are of the highest possible quality and can be... no, - "must be" used in some of your family holiday recipes that call for vanilla extract. Not only is the packaging impeccable for trendy gift-giving this season to your foodie friends but the difference in taste, when using Beanilla, is astonishing. The Tahitian Vanilla Sugar is organic cane sugar infused with select tahitensis vanilla beans from Tahiti and Papua New Guinea. It's perfect for warm drinks like coffee or chai tea. The Vanilla Fleur de Sol is a sea salt scraped from rocks off the coast of France and combined with premium ground vanilla beans. When sprinkled on meat before grilling, this sea salt adds incredible flavor to your entrée. For more information on this hidden gem in Comstock Park, please visit them on-line at www.beanilla.com

#### **Nourish Organic Market**

With the tag line, "The little food market with the big idea," Nourish offers delicious foods, samples and information about how local farmers cultivate the food we eat. And if you're a transplant here in Grand Rapids whose been looking for a Trader Joes or Whole Foods market, look no further than this ultra-hip neighborhood establishment in Uptown. Nourish carries a complete line of

traditional foods; including vegan, gluten free and organic options to suit your dietary needs. You seem to "feel better" the moment you



walk through the door to peruse an array of specialty finds that range in variety from hand-crafted breads, pastas and jams to locally harvested honey and syrup. Nourish is less than one-month old and is located at 634 Wealthy Street. For great "comfort food," that's wholesome and simple, nourish your mind, body and soul by shopping local.

#### Dorothy & Tony's **Gourmet Kettle Corn**

Snap - Crackle - Pop - into something good and indulge in a yummy bag of gourmet kettle corn from Dorothy and Tony's. Derived from a secret family recipe, their gourmet kettle corn is 100% natural with no preservatives or saturated fats. Located on Plainfield Ave, Dorothy and Tony's reminds you of the sweet sensation you get from home-made goodies during the holidays. One of the best parts about this experience is not only the sweet aroma exuding from the gigantic melting pots but also the way it warms your heart to watch them make the popcorn right before your eyes. Grab a bag of kettle corn for you or someone you love by stopping in the store or ordering online at www.dorothyandtonys.com. You'll be left holding the bag, but in this case, it's totally worth it.

#### Raspberry Chocolate Silk Wine

A delicious and intense specialty wine, Raspberry Chocolate Silk is to die for. This delectable drink is a full-body wine, rich in chocolate and raspberry flavors. Created right here in town, Cascade Winery has been crafting fine wine for the last 9 years. You can sample their award winning variety at the tasting bar, pick up a few recipes or even create your own customized bottle of wine. Join them for a special event like the Winemakers Dinner or pick up a bottle of Raspberry Chocolate Silk for a swanky, private dinner party at home. This luxurious local find retails for the delightfully low price of \$15.50 and can be purchased at Cascade Winery on 44th Street and the East Beltline. Ooh La La... drink Raspberry Chocolate Silk and be merry!