



HOLIDAY MYTH BUSTERS

by Jenna Mears

Among the secret that Santa Claus isn't real, the holidays are full of myths. Here are some of the top myths debunked!

1. **Weight gain is inevitable.** Americans believe they gain up to five pounds throughout the holiday season from all the sweet treats and meals. In reality, the average person only gains one pound. The real problem is Americans don't lose the weight after the holidays.
2. **Poinsettias are toxic.** Some people believe this festive plant contains toxic petals. Although the sap might cause a rash to people with latex allergies, the average child would have to eat 500 poinsettia leaves to reach a dangerous dose.

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3. **We lose heat through our head.** We all have heard our parents harp on us to wear a hat during the winter. We believe that we have to keep our heads warm because most of our body heat is lost through them. But scientists have discovered that your head only loses about 7% of your body heat.
4. **Tryptophan makes you sleepy.** Tryptophan is blamed for making people sleepy after a hearty portion of turkey. While turkey does contain the chemical, other foods contain much more. The real cause for sleepiness is due to the carbs you consume. ☞

Source: Live Science. livescience.com/42034-biggest-holiday-myths.html. Accessed 13 November 2015.

SMART FACTS

\$2.4 BILLION

The amount of money spent online on Black Friday in 2014.

67%

The percentage of consumers who have purchased a gift they saw on social media.

40%

The percentage of holiday shopping done online in 2014.



PRACTICING GRATITUDE

by Jenna Mears

The holiday season is full of joy, giving, and cheer. Oftentimes, the season is also full of stress, traveling, and a jam-packed schedule; it is very hard to stop and think what we are grateful for and appreciate in our lives. Here are some tips for how to practice gratitude:

1. Keep a gratitude journal and write down what you are grateful for each day. This will force you to appreciate something in your life every single day.
2. If you identify something or someone with a negative trait, switch that in your mind to a positive one. This will allow you to have a more positive and grateful outlook on life.
3. Give someone at least one compliment a day. This will not only make you feel good, but it will make others feel good and appreciate you, too.
4. When you find you're in a bad situation, ask yourself: "What can I learn?" It will make the bad situation a learning experience that you will be grateful for later.

FINANCIAL CORNER WITH PETE THE PLANNER

What would your financial life look like if you practiced gratitude daily? Would you struggle to budget or have debt? If we practiced gratitude daily and it became our mindset, our behavior would naturally follow. Grateful people don't take more than they need, they don't spend more than they make, but they do give to those in need. During the holiday season, it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of spending that has become the main focus of the season. This year I challenge you to give to those in need. It is perfectly acceptable to spend money on those you love, but this year be open to sharing your love and money with those who have very little. Better yet, gather up your loved ones and volunteer together. Practice gratitude this season, and I think you'll find the benefits last much longer than anything money can buy. ✧

5. Become involved in a cause that is important to you. You can donate time, money, or a talent you have. By joining, you will have greater appreciation for the organization and feel good about yourself for the contribution. ✧

Sources: Unstuck. unstuck.com/gratitude.html Live Science. livescience.com/42034-biggest-holiday-myths.html. Accessed 18 November 2015. HAP. hap.org/health/topic/safetoymonth.php. Accessed 18 November 2015.



NATIONAL SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS MONTH DECEMBER

National Safe Toys and Gifts Month happens each December and is a time to remind American families of safe toys to buy children. This year's month will focus on balloons, magnets, and scooters and other riding toys. More information can be found at child-familyservices.org.

HARVEST OF THE MONTH: MUSHROOMS

by Mechelle Meadows

Mushrooms often get a bad rap in the food world. Don't let the fact that they are a fungi fool you into thinking they are unsafe to eat or have no taste to add to your favorite pizzas, soups, pastas, or meat dishes. They contain high levels of antioxidants and other nutrients such as vitamin D, folate, and potassium. Mushrooms are a superfood just like more glamorous fruits and vegetables; studies have linked them to improved blood sugar and insulin levels, and also play a role in DNA repair, which can prevent growth of certain cancer cells.

How to select

Regardless of the type of mushroom, select ones that are smooth to the touch, firm, and clean. If they appear slimy or very brown, they have already started to go bad. It is normal for mushrooms to have an earthy smell.

How to store

While many people store mushrooms in the original container that they were purchased in, they will actually last longer if you put them into a separate plastic bag wrapped in a paper towel or a brown paper bag. Dry conditions are key since moisture makes mushrooms turn bad very quickly.



How to prepare

Since mushrooms are very porous, the best way to clean them is by gently rubbing them with a damp paper towel. If they are going into a soup or salad, it's ok to rinse them in water. Mushrooms can then be sautéed, grilled, roasted, or even eaten plain as part of a vegetable tray. ♪

Sources: Food Network. foodnetwork.com/how-to/packages/help-around-the-kitchen/photos/how-to-clean-and-store-mushrooms.html. Accessed 12 November 2015.

Medical News Today. medicalnewstoday.com/articles/278858.php. Accessed November 2015.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: *Chicken with Mushroom Sauce*

Ingredients

4 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
2 teaspoons canola oil
¼ cup chopped shallots
½ teaspoon salt, divided
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 (8-ounce) package pre-sliced mushrooms
2 minced garlic cloves
½ cup dry white wine
1 ½ teaspoons all-purpose flour
¾ cup fat-free, lower-sodium chicken broth
2 Tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme

Makes 4 servings (½ chicken breast and ⅓ cup sauce)

Nutritional Info

PER SERVING: 290 calories, 10.5g fat, 5.5g carbohydrates, 42g protein, 526mg sodium, .8g fiber

Directions

1. Place each chicken breast half between 2 sheets of heavy-duty plastic wrap and pound to ½-inch thickness.
2. Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add canola oil to pan; swirl to coat. Sprinkle chicken with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper. Add chicken to pan; cook 3 minutes on each side, or until done. Transfer chicken to a serving platter; keep warm.
3. Add shallots and mushrooms to pan; sauté for 4 minutes or until browned, stirring occasionally. Add garlic; sauté for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in wine, scraping pan to loosen browned bits; bring to a boil. Cook until liquid almost evaporates. Sprinkle mushroom mixture with remaining salt and flour; cook 30 seconds, stirring frequently. Add broth to pan; bring to a boil. Cook 2 minutes or until slightly thick. Remove pan from heat; add butter and thyme, stirring until butter melts. Serve with chicken immediately.

Source: My Recipes. myrecipes.com/recipe/chicken-with-mushroom-sauce-0. Accessed 12 November 2015.