

Northwest Rural Public Power District

Hay Springs, NE 69347

February 2021

Gordon Couple Enjoy Their Packing Business

Operating a private packing business during the pandemic is one business that is in high demand. With the cost of beef in grocery stores skyrocketing, partially because big chain packing plants had to temporarily shut down their operations, CR Packing of Clinton is booked up until June 2022. Owner Ryan Gehrt said the ranchers and farmers started booking to secure that their beef could get processed locally over the next year.

Ryan and his significant other Cheriee took over Otte Packing in July 2019. They began operating under a new name "CR Packing". Ryan had worked for David Otte for about a year before taking over the business. Ryan grew up



Ryan Gehrt and his partner Cheriee Kershaw have operated their business, CR Packing of Clinton, for about 18 months.

in Gordon, graduating from Gordon-Rushville in 2009. He went to school in Sidney and studied Aviation Maintenance in which he completed in 2012. It was while he was in Sidney he met Cheriee. She had previously attended high school in Leyton before transferring her senior year to Sidney, graduating in 2011.

The couple live in Gordon with their eight year old daughter, Zaylee Gehrt. Cheriee

previously worked at Gordon Memorial Health Services from 2016-2019 as their Financial Counselor/Biller.

"I liked the idea of being my own boss and not having to answer to anyone else," said Ryan. This is one of the reasons they chose to start operating their own business. Ryan does a lot of the butchering while Cheriee handles the office and helps with wrapping.

CR Packing also employs two full time workers and one part time. Ryan's mom, Merrie Gehrt, and Eli Atchison are also butchers. Wanda Fochtman works part-time slicing bacon and wraps.

Not everyone is cut out for working with their significant other all day every day, but Cheriee says it works for them. "We both really enjoy processing together. Most couples are worried they won't get along with their spouse being around them all the time. We don't mind it. We are so busy doing our own thing to get the beef ready for the customer it doesn't bother us. We are a team!"

CR Packing processes most locally raised livestock. "We process cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats," noted Cheriee. "Along with our custom processing we offer retail meat such as beef and pork. CR Packing lets beef dry age for two to three weeks before it is processed. They have clients from several surrounding states including South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado. While they appreciate all their clientele, they mentioned



Ryan Gehrt, owner and one of the butchers, is keeping quite busy in their new business adventure.

(Continued on Page 2)

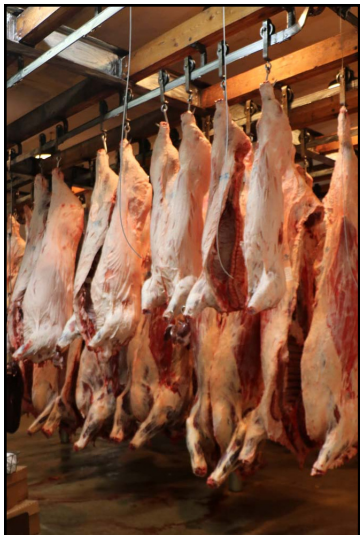
NORTHWEST RURAL NEWS

CR Packing-

(Continued from Page 1)

they do have a customer from Alliance that averages 50 beef a year.

CR Packing had 30 carcasses hanging in their cooler at the time of this interview. "On average we process ten a week," said Ryan. They are in the midst of putting in a new freezer and had Fire and Ice of Chadron working on the project.



CR Packing had a full locker of carcasses and looking forward to completion of a new freezer.

For those who do not raise their own livestock, they have retail meat available for purchase. "We have amazing jerky when we have it in stock. We also offer steaks, roast, hamburger, brisket, kidney, tongue, bacon, fresh side pork, sausage, sausage links, polish, slim jims, and more!" CR

Packing continues to use the same recipes handed down from Otte Packing which was started in 1958. David's father Carl started the business south of Gordon before moving the business to Clinton. For more information about CR Packing, visit their facebook page or call 308-282-0090.

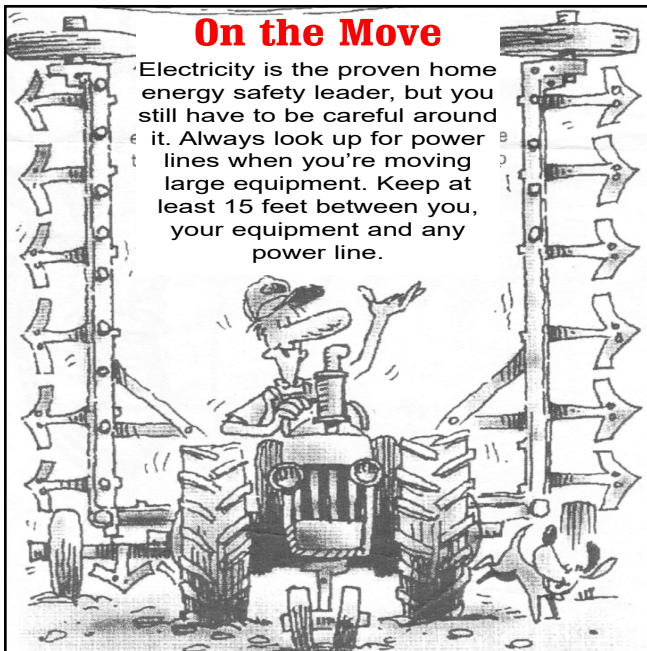


CR Packing's two full employees are both butchers, (above) Merrie Gehrt who happens to be Ryan's mom and Eli Atchison (left) was an acquaintance of Ryan's prior to the couple's ownership.



On the Move

Electricity is the proven home energy safety leader, but you still have to be careful around it. Always look up for power lines when you're moving large equipment. Keep at least 15 feet between you, your equipment and any power line.



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Along The Garden Path

-by Karen Runkle, Master Gardener

Medicinal Herbs" Calendula

We grow plants for a wide range of reasons. Some need a beautiful place to relax after a long day of work. Others need to dig in the soil as a way of feeling connected to the earth and the land in which we live. More often than not the response will be – to raise fresh wholesome vegetables for my family.

Whatever your reason – beauty, exercise, entertainment, food – GOOD FOR YOU!!

I want to introduce you to a flower that can cover several of these reasons for growing plants – Calendula often referred to as the “Pot Marigold.”

Planted in a pot on your patio, it can be a relaxing and a beautiful sight to enjoy. It is easy to grow and has the added benefit of being quite useful as well. Calendula is one of the most familiar and beloved herbs, earning our affection with its cheerful golden flowers. The petals are edible and the whole flower is an important medicinal herb for addressing skin conditions.

Calendula flowers including the bracts (green bottoms) are incorporated into topical oils and salves for healing wounds, rashes, burns, and dry skin. This plant holds an interesting claim to fame—it is the herb most likely to be found in diaper rash ointments and creams. Calendula is known for healing wounds, being anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, and antifungal.

You can create an oil to massage into the skin, create a salve for skin abrasions and rashes or use it for compresses, soaks, baths, and poultices. It makes me wonder why it isn't in every medicine cabinet in the country.

How do we do this?

It is easy to grow. Seeds can be sown directly in the garden, in the spring after danger of frost. Mark a row, and drop seeds every 6 inches, cover with ¼ - ½ “ soil, pat gently and water.



Seeds should germinate within a week, and plants will blossom 6-8 weeks later.

To prepare your product -

1. Harvest the flowers by cutting the blossoms right at the top of the stem. Then you will need to dry them thoroughly. You can do it naturally by spreading the flowers on a screen or cloth and letting nature take its course; or, dry them in your dehydrator.

2. Combine the 1 cup dried flowers with 1 cup oil of your choice in a blender, food processor or Bullet. I like to use olive oil; however, sesame, sunflower, or coconut oil will also work very nicely.

3. Heat the herb/oil mixture in a double boiler for four to eight hours. Heat slowly and keep on low heat for four to eight hours. Try not to let the oil get hotter than 110°F (a little warmer than bath water). Watch closely to make sure the water does not completely evaporate and the oil does not get too hot. You do not want deep-fried herbs!

4. Strain your oil. After your oil has infused for four to eight hours, strain it into a glass jar or measuring cup using a muslin cloth, fine-weave cloth or cheesecloth. If the oil is slightly warm, it will be easier to strain.

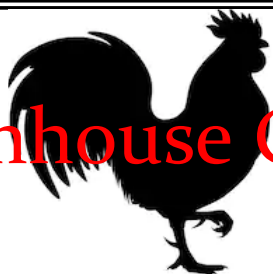
You have now created wonderful oil that your skin will love.

If you want to make this into a salve mix 4 oz. of your infused calendula oil with 1 oz. of grated or beaded beeswax in a double boiler. Heat the mixture until softened and blended together. Pour the mixture into salve jars or small ½ pint jelly jars and store. If desired you can add 1/4 teaspoon of liquid vitamin E oil to the mixture for an added benefit.

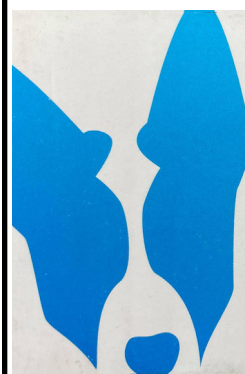
Beautiful to look at, connects you to nature, and a great addition to your medicine cabinet. What else could you ask for?

Safety and Contraindications: Do not use calendula internally during pregnancy since it has traditionally been used to bring on menses. As calendula is in the aster family, it may cause a reaction for people who are highly sensitive to plants like ragweed and chamomile. This possibility is rare, but sensitive individuals should proceed with caution when using calendula for the first time.

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In Winter Months, Dress for Extreme Cold With Layers

Before you head outside, take a few minutes and be sure you grasp the details of the job you'll be taking on. This way, you're going to be prepared for the job by knowing how to dress and what gear to bring. Here are a few tips to help keep warm:

Layer up. Layers give you options as you begin to warm up while working. So, if you will be moving bales of hay by hand, it may be smart to have several layers on rather than just an inner and outer shell. That way as you get moving and begin to sweat, you can peel off layers to stay cool.

Hood and hat first. Remember that you're going to be losing a lot of heat through your head in the extreme cold. Insulate first with a hat that covers the head and ears and then remember to put a jacket with a hood — one which will also protect your face. That way, when you begin to warm up, you can pull the hood down, lift up the hat's ear flaps and finally pull the hat off if you need to.

Protect the hands from cold weather. Keep in mind that frostbite often occurs first on the fingers, toes and nose. If you will be out in the field working with animals, you may need water-resistant hand protection. Operating farm implements may also be harder with thick gloves or mittens that protect from the cold, so be sure to work carefully.

Get the boots right. You should think about getting a good pair of extreme cold weather boots. These boots come with options for both safety and warmth. To reduce the risk of injury to the foot, some insulated boots have toe protection, either in steel, nylon or carbon fiber. The non-steel options can be a better choice for a number of reasons. First, they're more likely to return to their original shape if crushed, which can really help to free an injured foot from the boot. Secondly, these types of toe guards don't conduct the cold as much as a steel-toed boot does, so your feet are likely to stay warmer.

Keep informed. When the weather changes during the winter, a forecast that once called for half an inch of rain can turn into sleet, ice and then several inches of snow if the temperature drops more than a few degrees. When the temperature is hovering around freezing and rain's expected, be sure you're ready for anything. You may want to install a weather app on your smart phone in order to get alerts which will help you stay ahead of storms and changing weather.

Cold weather and safety gear. The winter months can make wearing safety gear tough, as you're already geared up just to keep yourself warm. One good way to deal with this issue is to allow yourself more time to get ready, both for the weather and the task at hand. Make sure you're wearing protective gear correctly before you head out into the field. This way, you'll stay warm, safe and you'll know that you're going to be working safely.



DIRECTOR VACANCY

Subdivision 3 currently has a Board of Director vacancy – this subdivision encompasses the following; shall be composed and consist of the following voting precincts within the County of Sheridan: Beaver, Extension, Milan, Hay Springs (excluding the election wards within the City of Hay Springs), Rushville, (excluding the election wards within the City of Rushville), Clinton, West Mirage, East Mirage, and Minnetonka.

Anyone having an interest in this position please submit a letter of interest to the
Northwest Rural Public Power District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

P.O. Box 249

5613 Highway 87

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by Feb. 18, 2021.

If you have general questions or need more information prior to submittal, please call 638-4445 or 800-847-0492 or email nrppd@nrppd.com

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15 Surprising Facts About Winter Weather

Whether you enjoy bundling up in your coziest gear or are already counting down the days until spring, here are 15 facts about what's happening outdoors this time of year.

1. It sometimes snows where you least expect it.

You wouldn't be shocked to see snow on the ground of Siberia or Minnesota when traveling to those places during the winter months. But northern areas don't have a monopoly on snowfall—the white stuff has been known to touch down everywhere from the Sahara Desert to Hawaii. Even the driest place on Earth isn't immune. In 2011, the Atacama Desert in Chile received nearly 32 inches of snow thanks to a rare cold front from Antarctica.

2. Snowflakes come in all sizes.

The average snowflake ranges from a size slightly smaller than a penny to the width of a human hair. But according to some unverified sources they can grow much larger. Witnesses of a snowstorm in Fort Keogh, Montana in 1887 claimed to see milk-pan sized crystals fall from the sky. If true that would make them the largest snowflakes ever spotted, at around 15 inches wide.

3. A little water can add up to a lot of snow.

The air doesn't need to be super moist to produce impressive amounts of snow. Unlike plain rainfall, a bank of fluffy snow contains lots of air that adds to its bulk. That's why what would have been an inch of rain in the summer equals about 10 inches of snow in the colder months.

4. You can hear thundersnow when the conditions are right.

If you've ever heard the unmistakable rumble of thunder in the middle of a snowstorm, that's not your ears playing tricks on you. It's likely thundersnow, a rare winter weather phenomenon that's most common near lakes. When relatively warm columns of air rise from the ground and form turbulent storm clouds in the sky in the winter, there's potential for thundersnow. A few more factors are still necessary for it to occur, namely air that's warmer than the cloud cover above it and wind that pushes the warm air upwards. Even then it's entirely possible to miss thundersnow when it happens right over your head: Lightning is harder to see in the winter and the snow sometimes dampens the thunderous

sound.

5. Snow falls at 1 to 6 feet per second.

At least in the case of snowflakes with broad structures, which act as parachutes. Snow that falls in the form of pellet-like graupel travels to Earth at a much faster rate.

6. It doesn't take long for the temperature to drop.

Don't take mild conditions in the middle of January as an excuse to leave home without a jacket. Rapid City, South Dakota's weather records from Jan. 10, 1911, show just how fast temperatures can plummet. The day started out at a pleasant 55°F, then over the course of 15 minutes a wicked cold front brought the temperature down to 8 degrees. That day still holds the record for quickest cold snap in history.



7. The earth is closest to the sun during the Winter.

Every January (the start of the winter season in the northern hemisphere) the Earth reaches the point in its orbit that's nearest to the Sun. Despite some common misconceptions, the seasonal drop in temperature has nothing to do with the distance of our planet to the Sun. It instead has everything to do with which direction the Earth's axis is tilting, which is why the two hemispheres experience winter at different times of the year.

8. More than 22 million tons of salt are used on U.S. roads each Winter.

That comes out to about 137 pounds of salt per person.

9. The snowiest city on earth is in Japan.

Aomori City in northern Japan receives more snowfall than any major city on the planet. Each year citizens are pummeled with 312 inches, or about 26 feet, of snow on average.

10. Sometimes snowballs form themselves.

Something strange happened earlier this year in northwest Siberia: Mysterious, giant snowballs began washing up on a beach along the Gulf of Ob. It turns out the ice orbs were formed naturally by the rolling motions of wind and water. With some spheres reaching nearly 3 feet in width, you wouldn't want to use this frozen ammunition in a snowball fight.

(Continued on Page 8)

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Northwest Rural Territory Activities

Gordon-Rushville Mustangs

Mon., Feb. 1 B BB (MS) vs. Chadron, 4 p.m.
G&B BB "C" at Valentine, 5 p.m.

Thurs., Feb. 4 WR WTC/SPVA, 9:30 a.m.
WTC Basketball
WR (JV-V) at Hill City, 6 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 6 Speech Chadron Invite
WTC Basketball
WR (JV-V) at Black Hills Classic at Hill City, 9 a.m.

Mon., Feb. 8 G&B BB (C) at Alliance, 4:30 p.m.

Tues., Feb. 9 B BB (MS) at Valentine, 4 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 10 Speech WTC at Bayard
Noon Dismissal

Thurs., Feb. 11 B BB (MS) vs. Cody-Kilgore, 4 p.m.

Feb. 12-13 District Wrestling

Fri., Feb. 12 G&B BB (JV-V) at Bridgeport, 4 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 13 Speech at Gering Invite
G&B BB (JV-V) vs. Morrill, 1 p.m.

Feb. 15-16-18 G BB Sub Districts

Mon., Feb. 15 No School - Professional Development

Feb. 18-20 State Wrestling

Fri., Feb. 19 B BB (JV-V) vs. Valentine, 5 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 20 Speech - G-R/Hemingford/Ainsworth
B BB (MS) GR Invite, 9 a.m.

Mon., Feb. 22 FFA Week - local activities during school

Wed., Feb. 24 Noon Dismissal

Thurs., Feb. 25 Boys BB Sub-Districts

Fri., Feb. 26 Girls BB District Finals

Sat., Feb. 27 Boys BB District Finals

March 1-3 District Speech - Class C1
Mon., Mar. 1 Spring Practice Begins
Wed., Mar. 3 FFA CDE 3 at Kimball
March 4-6 Girls State Basketball

Crawford Rams

Mon., Feb. 1 B BB (JH) PanCo at Morrill, 9 a.m.

Fri., Feb. 5 Wrestling Sub-District, tbd
G&B (JV-V) at Cody-Kilgore, 4 p.m.

Mon., Feb. 8 B BB (JH) at Hay Springs, 3 p.m.

Tues., Feb. 9 G&B BB (JV-V) at Sioux County, 3 p.m.

Thurs., Feb. 11 G&B BB (JV-V) vs. Hay Springs, 4 p.m.

Feb. 12-13 WR Districts, tba

Mon., Feb. 15 No School - Staff In-Service

Feb. 15-18 G BB Subdistricts, tba

Feb. 19-20 State Wrestling at Omaha

Fri., Feb. 19 B BB (JV-V) vs. Hemingford, 6 p.m.

Feb. 22-25 B BB Sub-Districts, tba

Fri., Feb. 26 Girls BB District Finals

Sat., Feb. 27 Boys BB District Finals

Thurs., Mar. 4 No School - Spring Break

March 4-6 Girls State BB at Lincoln

Hemingford Rams

Mon., Feb. 1 B BB (JH) PAC Tourney at Morrill

Wed., Feb. 3 FFA CDE Contests at Gordon

Thurs., Feb. 4 WR at SPVA/WTC at Bridgeport

Feb. 4-6 G&B BB WTC Tourney

Sat., Feb. 6 WR at State Duals in Kearney
Speech at Chadron Invite

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NRPPD AREA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Mon., Feb. 8 B BB (JH) vs. St. Agnes, 4:30 p.m.
Tues., Feb. 9 G&B BB vs. Morrill, 2 p.m.
Wed., Feb. 10 Speech - WTC at Bayard
Thurs., Feb. 11 B BB (JH) at Alliance, 4 p.m.
Fri., Feb. 12 **Mid-Winter Break**
G&B BB vs. Kimball, 2 p.m.
Feb. 12-13 Wrestling Districts
Sat., Feb. 13 Speech at Gering Invite, 8 a.m.
 B BB (JH) at Bridgeport, 9 a.m.
Mon., Feb. 15 **Mid-Winter Break**
Feb. 15-16-18 G BB Sub-Districts
Feb. 18-20 State Wrestling at Omaha
Fri., Feb. 19 B BB at Crawford, 6 p.m.
Sat., Feb. 20 Speech at Hemingford Invite, 8 a.m.
 B BB (JH) at Bayard Tourney, 8:30 p.m.
Feb. 22-23-25 B BB Sub-Districts
Fri., Feb. 26 G BB Districts
Teacher Inservice 2-4 p.m.
Sat., Feb. 27 B BB Districts
Wed., Mar. 3 FFA CDE Contests at Kimball
March 4-6 Girls State Basketball at Lincoln
Sat., Mar. 6 Speech WTC at Bayard, 8 a.m.

Chadron Cardinals

Mon., Feb. 1 B BB (7th-8th) vs. Gordon-Rush.,
 4 & 5:30 p.m.
Tues., Feb. 2 G&B BB (JV-V) vs. Alliance,
 4, 4, 5:30 & 7 p.m.
Thurs., Feb. 4 G&B BB (C) vs. Gering, 5 & 6:30 p.m.
Fri., Feb. 5 G&B BB (JV-V) vs. Rapid City Christian,
 4, 4, 5:30, 7 p.m.


Sat., Feb. 6 **Musical Production, HS Aud., 7 p.m.**
Speech at Chadron Invite
 WR at Districts, tba
 G&B BB (JV-V) at Valentine,
 3, 4:30 & 6 p.m. CT
Sun., Feb. 7 Musical Production, HS Aud., 2 p.m.
Mon., Feb. 8 B BB (7th) vs. Scottsbluff, 4 p.m.
 B BB (8th) at Scottsbluff, 4 p.m.
Feb. 12-13 **District Wrestling, tba**
Fri., Feb. 12 **G&B BB (JV-V) vs. Sidney,**
4, 4, 5:30 & 7 p.m.
Mon., Feb. 15 G BB (C) at Gering, tba
B BB (C) vs. Alliance, tba
 B BB (7th) at Mitchell Tourney, tba
 B BB (8th) at Scottsbluff Tourney, tba
 G BB (C) at Gering Tourney, tba
 G BB Sub-Districts, tba
 B BB (C) at Alliance Tourney, tba
 B BB (7th) at Mitchell Tourney, tba
 B BB (8th) at Scottsbluff Tourney, tba
Feb. 16-18 State Wrestling at Omaha
 B BB Districts, tba
Feb. 18-20 G BB District Finals, tba
Feb. 23-25 B BB District Finals, tba
Fri., Feb. 26 Girls State Basketball at Lincoln
Sat., Feb. 27 **Musical Production, HS Aud., 7 p.m.**
March 4-6 **Musical Production, HS Aud., 2 p.m.**
Mar. 5-6
Sun., Mar. 7

(Continued on Page 8)



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NRPPD AREA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Hay Springs Hawks

Mon., Feb. 1	B BB (JH) PanCo at Morrill, 9 a.m.
Tues., Feb. 2	G&B BB (V) at Hyannis, 4:30 p.m.
Thurs., Feb. 4	G&B BB (V) vs. Lakota Tech, 3 p.m.
Sat., Feb. 6	WR at Hill City Invite, 9 a.m.
	G&B BB (V) vs. Bennett Co., 2 p.m.
Mon., Feb. 8	B BB (JH) vs. Crawford, 3 p.m.
Tues., Feb. 9	G&B BB (V) at Minatare, 4 p.m.
	B BB (JH) vs. St. Agnes, 5 p.m.
Thurs., Feb. 11	G&B BB (V) at Crawford, 4 p.m.
Fri., Feb. 12	G&B BB vs. Garden Co, 3 p.m.
Sat., Feb. 13	Gering Speech Invite
Sat., Feb. 20	Speech at Hemingford Invite
	B BB (JH) at Gordon-Rushville
	Tourney, 9 a.m.

Reminder - -

**Northwest Rural
Scholarship Applications**
are due February 15
in the NRPPD Office.



Winter Weather Facts--

(Continued from Page 5)

11. Wind chill is calculated using a precise formula.

When the weatherman reports a "real feel" temperature of -10 degrees outside, it may sound like he's coming up with that number on the spot. But wind chill is actually calculated using a complicated equation devised by meteorologists. For math nerds who'd like to test it at home, the formula reads: Wind Chill = $35.74 + 0.6215T - 35.75(V^{0.16}) + 0.4275T(V^{0.16})$.

12. Cities are forced to dispose of snow in creative ways.

When snow piles up too high for cities to manage, it's usually hauled away to parking lots or other wide-open spaces where it can sit until the weather warms up. During particularly snowy seasons, cities are sometimes forced to dump snow in the ocean, only to be met with criticism from environmental activists. Some cities employ snow melters that use hot water to melt 30 to 50 tons of snow an hour. This method is quick but costly—a single machine can cost \$200,000 and burn 60 gallons of fuel in an hour of use.

13. Wet snow is best for snowman-building, according to science.

Physics confirms what you've likely known since childhood: Snow on the wet or moist side is best for building your own backyard Frosty. One scientist pegs the perfect snow-to-water ratio at 5:1.

14. Snowflakes aren't always unique.

Snow crystals usually form unique patterns, but there's at least one instance of identical snowflakes in the record books. In 1988, two snowflakes collected from a Wisconsin storm were confirmed to be twins at an atmospheric research center in Colorado.

15. There's a difference between freezing rain and sleet.

Freezing rain and sleet can both have scary effects on driving conditions, but their formations differ in some key ways. Both types of precipitation occur when rain formed in warm air in the sky passes through a layer of cold air near the ground. Thicker layers of cold air create sleet, a slushy form of water that's semi-frozen by the time it reaches the Earth. Thinner layers don't give rain enough time to freeze until it hits the surface of the ground—it then forms a thin coat of ice wherever it lands.

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Beef Stroganoff for Instant Pot

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ½ onion, diced
- 2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 2 lbs. beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 cups chopped mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 (16 oz.) package wide egg noodles
- ¾ cup sour cream, or to taste

Turn on a multi-cooker (such as Instant Pot®) and select Sauté function. Heat oil for 1 minute. Add onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt; cook and stir until onion begins to soften, 3 to 4 minutes.

Season beef with 1 teaspoon salt and pepper. Add to the pot. Cook and stir until browned evenly on all sides, about 2 minutes. Add garlic and thyme; cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Pour in soy sauce.

Stir mushrooms into the pot. Stir in flour until evenly incorporated. Pour in chicken broth and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Close and lock the lid. Set timer for 10 minutes. Set to high pressure according to manufacturer's instructions, 10 to 15 minutes.

Release pressure carefully using the quick-release method. Open pressure cooker; stir in egg noodles. Seal and bring to high pressure again, about 5 minutes; cook for 5 minutes.

Release pressure naturally according to manufacturer's instruction for 5 minutes. Release remaining pressure using the quick-release method. Open pressure cooker; stir in sour cream.

* * * * *

Instant Pot Pork Chops

- 4 pork chops
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 (1 ounce) package dry onion soup mix (such as Lipton®)
- 1 cup apple juice

Place pork chops in a multi-functional pressure cooker (such as Instant Pot®); top with butter. Sprinkle onion soup mix over pork chops. Pour in apple juice.

Close and lock the lid. Select high pressure according to manufacturer's instructions; set timer for 5 minutes. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for pressure to build.

Release pressure using the natural-release method according to manufacturer's instructions, 10 to 40 minutes.

* * * * *

Valentine's Day Strawberry Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1 (18.25 ounce) package strawberry cake mix
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 large eggs
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ¼ cups semisweet chocolate chips, or more to taste

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Mix together cake mix and baking powder in a large bowl and set aside.

Whisk together eggs, oil, and vanilla extract in a smaller bowl. Add egg mixture to cake mixture and stir vigorously to form a dough; be sure to incorporate all pockets of dry cake mix. Gently mix in chocolate chips.

Drop rounded balls of dough, about 2 1/2 tablespoons each, onto the prepared baking sheet; make balls taller than they are wide. Add 1 or 2 additional chocolate chips onto each cookie, if desired.

Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes; do not let cookies brown.

Allow the soft cookies to cool on the baking sheet for 3 minutes. Cookies will sink as they cool; you can press down gently with your fingers if necessary. Transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

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Consider This Guide to Energy-Efficient Refrigerators

The refrigerator is one of your home's hardest working appliances, typically making up 13.7 percent of a home's energy usage, according to the Department of Energy. In other words, owning energy-efficient refrigerators makes good financial sense!

The question, though, is which energy-efficient refrigerator model should you choose? What are the best fridges on the market? And what should you look for when buying a refrigerator? We're here to help break it all down for you.



passed energy-efficiency guidelines set by energystar.gov.

5. Cost range to help better understand where the refrigerator's cost lands in the average usage cost bracket.

6. Lists the make, model, and refrigerator's capacity size.

What to look for when buying a new energy-efficient refrigerator

ENERGY STAR® offers the following 6 tips for shopping for an energy-efficient refrigerator.

1. Measure the space for the fridge. Leave at least a 1-inch clearance around the unit for adequate airflow. Don't forget to factor in how much space the door needs to swing open in relation to adjacent walls, cabinets and appliances.

2. Consider your family's needs, and get the right size. What is the standard size of a refrigerator in cubic feet? Fridges come in many different sizes, but the most energy-efficient refrigerators are usually 16-20 cubic feet.

3. Consider opting out of the icemaker and dispenser. Yes, they're convenient and reduce the need to open the door, which in turn helps the freezer maintain a consistent temperature more easily. But they do increase a refrigerator's energy use by 14-20 percent and usually increase the purchase cost of the fridge as well.

4. Look for a fridge with an "energy saver" switch. This switch lets you turn down or off the heating coils that prevent condensation. This enables you to better control the anti-sweat heaters in the fridge, which can lower your refrigerator energy costs by 5-10 percent.

5. Consider an ENERGY STAR®-certified refrigerator. Turn your energy-efficient refrigerator search into an easier task — make a beeline to ENERGY STAR® fridges. These models typically exceed general appliance efficiency standards and often qualify for rebates.

6. Compare the actual energy use number on EnergyGuide labels so you can find the most efficient refrigerator.

How to read a refrigerator's EnergyGuide label

Look for the bright yellow EnergyGuide label on an appliance to compare energy-efficient refrigerators and how much energy they use. We've put together an EnergyGuide label cheat-sheet based off of the most commonly used metrics on EnergyGuide labels.

1. Specific features of the refrigerator model.
2. Projected cost of running the refrigerator for a year, based on the nation's average usage.
3. Estimated amount of kWh used yearly for the refrigerator.
4. An ENERGY STAR sticker signifies that the refrigerator has

Which refrigerator style is most energy efficient?

When buying a refrigerator, energy efficiency is achieved best when considering freezer placement. In the energy efficiency battle of bottom-mount freezer vs. side-by-side fridges or top-mount freezer vs. side-by-side fridges — yes, it does matter where that freezer sits: The most energy efficient refrigerator style is a top-mount freezer refrigerator. The variation in how much energy savings can be achieved with a top-mount freezer refrigerator depends in part, ENERGY STAR® states, on whether it has an ice dispenser. Generally a top-mount freezer refrigerator that has earned ENERGY STAR® certification uses less energy than a 60-watt light bulb.

Why the top-mount freezer refrigerator is the most energy-efficient refrigerator

While it might seem as if having a fridge with the freezer on the top or the bottom is really just about whether or not you want to stoop to get out your ice cream, it is the placement of the freezer in relation to the compressor that makes the energy difference. The compressor — which is near the bottom — generates heat. This heat makes it harder for the bottom freezer to achieve and maintain ideal temperatures. The top freezer models are farther away from the compressor and therefore can maintain ideal temperatures using less energy.

More tips for saving on a new refrigerator:

The best time to get a deal on an energy-efficient refrigerator is during holiday events such as Presidents Day or Black Friday.

To find the newest refrigerator technologies, manufacturers release their new models September, October, and January.

When buying a refrigerator, look for appliance tax rebates from manufacturers.

Another point to keep in mind when buying a refrigerator is their potential for costly repairs, says Consumer Reports. Side-by-side refrigerators with icemakers are more than twice as likely to need repairs as those with freezers either on the top or bottom. One Consumer Reports study found that side-by-side refrigerators with an icemaker had a repair rate of 36 percent. This contrasts with a 28 percent rate for top or bottom mount freezer refrigerators with an icemaker, and a 15 percent rate for top or bottom freezer refrigerators without an icemaker.

Save Energy with the Thermostat

- You can save as much as 10 percent a year on your heating bill by simply turning your thermostat back 10 percent to 15 percent for eight hours. You can do this automatically without sacrificing comfort by installing an automatic setback thermostat (also known as a clock or programmable thermostat). You can set this type of thermostat to automatically turn down or up during certain times of the day.
- A good rule of thumb is to set the temperature as low as you can and still be comfortable. Each degree you lower your heat in the 60-70 degree range will save 2 percent on your heating costs. The ideal temperature would be around 68 degrees.
- Adjust your thermostat in the morning and evening. If you don't have a clock thermostat, at least turn down your thermostat regularly. Set it at about 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and three to five degrees lower at night or if you're leaving your home for more than four hours.
- Locate your thermostat on an inside wall where it won't be affected by the sun or a heat source
- Check with your heating contractor or local hardware store for costs involved in the installation of programmable thermostats.

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Bits 'n Pieces...

Older then Dirt Quiz.... Do you remember?

1. Blackjack chewing gum and Teaberry.
2. Wax Coke-shaped bottles with colored sugar water.
3. Candy cigarettes.
4. Soda pop machines that dispensed glass bottles.
5. Coffee shops or diners with table-side jukeboxes.
6. Home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers.
7. Part lines on the telephone.
8. Newsreels before the movie.
9. P.F. Flyers
10. Butch wax.
11. TV test patterns that came on a night after the last show and were there until TV shows started again in the morning. (There were only three channels, if you were lucky).
12. Peashooters.
13. Howdy Doody.
14. 45 RPM records.
15. S&H green stamps
16. Hi-fi's
17. Metal ice trays with lever.

* * * * *

Marriage is hard. Divorce is hard.

Choose your hard.

Obesity is hard. Being fit is hard.

Choose your hard.

Being in debt is hard. Being financially disciplined is hard.

Choose your hard.

Communication is hard. Not communicating is hard.

Choose your hard.

Life will never be easy. It will always be hard.

But we can choose our hard.

* * * * *

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For Valentine's Day...

*Love thy neighbor -- and if he happens to be tall, debonair
and devastating, it will be that much easier*

--Mae West

*Love can change a person the way a parent can change a
baby, awkwardly, and often with a great deal of mess.*

--Lemony Snicket

Love is telling someone their hair extensions are showing.

--Natasha Leggero

*A girl can wait for the right man to come along but in
the meantime that doesn't mean she can't have a
wonderful time with all the wrong ones.*

--Cher

*All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then
doesn't hurt.*

--Charles M. Schulz

*Love is a lot like a backaches: it doesn't show up on X-rays,
but you know it's there.*

--George Burns

*I love being married. It's so great to find one special
person you want to annoy the rest of your life.*

--Rita Rudner

*Marry a man your own age; as your beauty faces,
so will his eyesight.*

--Phyllis Diller

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