

FOOD FOR THOUGHT • CHASING WATERFALLS • PLANT-BASED DIET

MORSEL

neighborhood.coop

Spring 2021



FREE

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Spring 2021

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{CO-OP THROW BACK}

The Co-op has been sponsoring a 5K run/walk since 2000. Originally called the Nutrition Run, it was always held in March (National Nutrition Month) and took place on a course on the SIU campus. Pictured above are the top female and male finishers of the Y2K 5K, Chenoae Kim and a young man whose name has been lost to the mists of time. The event has always been a fundraiser for Good Samaritan Food Pantry and over the past 20+ years thousands of runners have raised tens of thousands of dollars for this important organization. In 2017, in order to highlight this connection, the event was renamed the Feed Your Neighbor 5K and the course start and finish was moved to Turley Park. We regretfully had to cancel the 2020 run/walk but are back in 2021 with a virtual version.

MORSEL

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF
NEIGHBORHOOD CO-OP GROCERY

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Morsel is a quarterly magazine produced by Neighborhood Co-op as a means to share news from the Co-op, promote local food, celebrate the seasons, and inspire our owners and patrons to enjoy a healthy lifestyle full of delicious and nutritious food. The views expressed in Morsel are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Co-op's directors, staff, or ownership. Health and nutrition articles are for informational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice.

SUBMISSION POLICY

Morsel accepts submissions on an ongoing basis. Letters, articles, artwork and ideas are all welcome! We reserve the right to edit content for brevity and clarity. Please send inquiries and submissions to amy@neighborhood.coop.

OUR STORE

1815 W Main Street, Carbondale, IL 62901

Neighborhood Co-op is a cooperative grocery store owned by members of our very own community. Most of our staff are even owners! We are a founding member of the National Cooperative Grocers, a network of more than 200 cooperative grocery stores all across America. We combine our buying power to bring you the best food at the best value while staying locally governed. We work hard to support our community and improve our local food system.

OUR MISSION

Neighborhood Co-op Grocery aims to serve the needs of its owners and patrons by providing wholesome foods, economically, in the cooperative tradition and in ways that best promote the health of the individual, the community and the earth.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Generally, meetings are held in the Co-op Community Room once a month at 6p.m.

Contact the Board at:

boardlink@neighborhood.coop

Margaret Anderson

Kristy Bender

Lauren Bonner

Leslie Duram

Ron Mahoney

Erika Peterson

Jak Tichenor

Richard Thomas

Barbara James

Secretary: Ginger Golz

QUESTIONS

Email: info@neighborhood.coop or call 618.529.3533 x201

ECO PRINTING

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Sales & Events

at the Co-op

APRIL

01

Red Cross Blood Drive
Co-op parking lot from 1-6pm.

03

Vote for Board Members
Owners vote between April 3-24.

07

Wellness Wednesday
10% off all wellness items!

09
16

Feed Your Neighbor Virtual 5K
Co-op annual 5K that raises money for Good Samaritan House. April 9-16.



APRIL

24

Owner Fest (Zoom Meeting)
Neighborhood Co-op's Annual Owners' Meeting (AOM)/Owner Fest will be conducted online this year on the Zoom digital platform.

The virtual meeting room will open at 5:30 pm to give you plenty of time to log in and get settled. Meeting starts at 6pm.

MAY

01
31

**OWNER APPRECIATION
MONTH**

Owner Appreciation
Owners receive a 10% off coupon good toward any one transaction they choose during the month of May.

05

Wellness Wednesday
10% off all wellness items!



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



FRANCIS MURPHY

Co-op's Annual Owners Meeting

For the second year in a row, the Co-op's Annual Owners Meeting (AOM) will be held via Zoom. The virtual format is necessary because as I write this at the end of March, we are still in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan which limits gatherings to 50 people or fewer. We typically get about 150 people at our AOM. Our bylaws state that we will have an annual meeting of owners within 180 days of the close of the fiscal year (roughly June 30). It seems unlikely that we will be able to have an in-person annual meeting before June 30 so we are going ahead with a Zoom meeting again this year.

Among the business to be conducted at the AOM is the election of directors. There was a bit of consternation on the part of the board and management last year about whether we could have a valid election without an in-person meeting. Fortunately, we do all of our voting online using a company called Votenet. We were particularly concerned about meeting the quorum requirement of 3% of owners necessary to conduct business at the AOM as stipulated in our bylaws. With an AOM to be conducted by Zoom and voting to be conducted by Votenet, we asked our attorney, who specializes in co-ops, whether it was proper for the quorum to be measured by participation in Votenet.

The bylaws obviously assume that there are no impediments to a physical meeting at which owners vote in person or by proxy. It certainly did not foresee a global pandemic of unprecedented scope.

During such times our lawyer felt it would seem proper for bylaw provisions regarding meetings to be leniently interpreted. The quorum requirement in the bylaws is only "for the transaction of business." Since business will only be transacted by Votenet, it is most reasonable for the quorum requirement to be measured by participation in the Votenet procedure. We continue to rely on this counsel for our annual meeting this year. However, we need at least 3% of owners (about 90 people) to vote in this year's board election.

For those able to attend the Zoom meeting, you can expect to hear reports about the year just past, including the progress the Co-op is making to further our shared values. We also have excellent financial results to report. There will be an Owner Open Mic portion of the program and a drawing with a virtual spinning wheel for Co-op gift cards. Balloting for the board election closes during the meeting and the results will be announced at the end of the meeting. And, as long as you provide them, you can expect good food and drinks, as well! Please sign up on our website: neighborhood.coop. I hope to see you there.

— **SAVE THE DATE!** —

Saturday, April 24
6 pm on Zoom



Tickborne Diseases and Alpha-gal Allergy

by **Erika Peterson**

Spring is a wonderful season in Southern Illinois, but as you head out on that hike to enjoy the bright sun, bird song, and beautiful wildflowers, take a moment to think about tick bite prevention. Ticks are more than just an itchy nuisance; tick bites can lead to several different life-threatening complications, and although the chances of any single bite posing a problem are low, you never know when you might be unlucky.

There are a number of different tickborne illnesses present in our region, such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and ehrlichiosis. Any signs of fever or rash following a tick bite should send you straight to your doctor's office, because these illnesses can progress rapidly and it's much better to treat them early. But the strangest complication of tick bites is called alpha-gal syndrome. As unbelievable as this may sound, getting a tick bite can cause you to become allergic to beef, pork, and any other food product that comes from a mammal.

If it's been a while since your last biology class, mammals are those animals with fur that produce milk for their young. And all types of mammals other than monkeys and apes produce a carbohydrate in their tissues that's called "alpha-gal" for short. No one is entirely sure how a tick bite triggers alpha-gal allergy; there might be a compound in the tick's saliva that is similar enough to confuse the immune system, or there might be exposure to blood left over from the tick's previous meal. Either way, the body suddenly begins overreacting to an otherwise harmless compound.

But alpha-gal allergy differs from typical food allergies in a number of interesting ways. First off, the allergic reaction is often delayed until 3-6 hours after eating the problematic food. Most food allergies are allergies to proteins, and the immune system identifies them and begins to react within seconds of consuming the food. But alpha-gal isn't usually available for the immune system to recognize until the food

is well on its way to being digested. For many people, their first experience of the allergy may be waking up at midnight covered in hives or suffering from terrible nausea.

Another unusual feature is that the reactions can be maddeningly inconsistent. One person might react to beef but not pork, even though both meats might have equal amounts of alpha-gal in them. Another person might react to pork, but not beef. Many people with the allergy can consume dairy products with no problem, while others are violently allergic to dairy. And reactions can change over time; a person who can enjoy cheese or milk today might experience anaphylaxis after a slice of pizza tomorrow. And one last oddity: for some people the allergy fades away over time, while other people are stuck with it for life.

Alpha-gal allergy is becoming increasingly common in Southern Illinois. Local allergists are familiar with it and can diagnose it with a simple blood test. It's far better, though, to prevent it in the first place. In addition to using topical insect repellants, people who spend a lot of time outdoors may want to invest in permethrin-treated clothing. You can buy pre-treated clothes or get permethrin spray to treat your own favorite gear. And if you want to minimize exposure to ticks in your yard, the CDC offers a downloadable handbook with landscape management suggestions. With many tick species expanding their ranges and new tickborne illnesses being identified each year, ticks are a challenge that can't be ignored.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Tick Resource Hub: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Alpha-gal Overview: <https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/library/allergy-library/alpha-gal>

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Wooden Nickels has temporarily been suspended

The COVID-19 virus has been challenging in many ways. Sometimes we don't think about all the different ways germs are spread. So many of our customers support the initiative to reduce waste by bringing in their own bags. Therefore we have temporarily suspended our Wooden Nickles program.

Have no fear, instead we are taking cash donations for organizations that the Co-op will match dollar for dollar up to \$250! This means a non-profit could earn up to \$500!! Double from before!

We are always looking for organizations to support! Visit www.neighborhood.coop/community if you know of an organization that could benefit from our program.



Co-op Donation

2020 was a unique year that has shifted much of what the Co-op does, but it hasn't changed who we are. As much as we can, we still give back to the community when possible. One of the ways we do this is by supporting local nonprofits. The Co-op created a unique program that was intended to help the environment, as well as grow awareness of causes in our area. Our Wooden Nickel program was developed to encourage shoppers to bring in reusable bags in lieu of using and throwing out store bags. As an incentive, we gave each shopper a wooden nickel to put in one of two donation boxes dedicated to two local nonprofits. These nonprofits are chosen quarterly from suggestions made by staff, customers, owners, and community members.

Due to COVID and the concern for spreading germs, we temporarily halted the use of wooden nickels and reusable bags. "Much to our surprise, at the same time not surprised, our wonderful customers instead started putting money in the boxes," said Amy Dion, Brand Manager for the Co-op. She continued to say, "I think that is what makes this area so special. How much people just want to help others." Inspired by their generosity, the Co-op decided to match monetary donations up to \$250, doubling our typical quarterly donation!

We feel it is important to support organizations that match values of community, health, sustainability, and the environment. The Warming Center is a valuable asset to have in our region, helping so many in need to have a safe and warm place to stay. Because of these reasons, the Co-op was happy to have them as one of our Wooden Nickel recipients. In March, we were pleased and honored to present a check for over \$600 to support their mission.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

HOW TO BE A FOOD WASTE WARRIOR

by *Monica Tichenor*

We've all done it, despite our best intentions – thrown out food that's well past its expiration date, from moldy fruits and veggies we buried in the produce bin to leftovers tucked away in the back of the fridge for so long they've become science experiments.

Food waste is a global problem, with almost one-third of the planet's food going to waste at every stage along the supply chain. Although some spoilage happens largely outside of our control – insects, animals, bacteria, and severe weather – or by damage caused during processing or transport, most food waste occurs at home through overbuying, preparing too much food at once, and leaving food on our plates when dining out.

FOOD WASTE IN THE U.S.

Sadly, the U.S. is globally the worst offender per capita when it comes to food waste. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the nonprofit Save the Food, up to 40% of food in the U.S. goes uneaten each year, which is equal to about 133 billion pounds of food total. This loss translates to a cost of \$218 billion when you factor in waste at the consumer and retail levels and through wasted water, fertilizer, cropland, labor, energy, and production costs.

"We all want to be good stewards of the food we bring home," says Toni Kay Wright, a University of Illinois Extension Service SNAP-Ed Educator in Marion, Ill. "We don't intend to be wasteful, but there's a disconnect in our relationship with food. We too easily forget the complex chain of nature and labor that makes it available to us. For perspective, consider that the average family of four wastes from \$1,356 to \$2,275 in food each year. This is about a pound of food per person per day!"

FOOD WASTE IMPACTS EVERYBODY

When food is wasted, so are opportunities to protect the environment and to feed American families struggling with food insecurity.

Food waste is the single largest component of solid waste sent for disposal, mostly in landfills. In 2018, the EPA estimated that about 68% of the wasted food Americans generated – about 42.8 million tons – ended up in landfills or at thermal treatment facilities. Why does this matter? Because as food decomposes, it produces the greenhouse gas methane, which is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide (CO₂) over a 20-year period and between 25-34 times more damaging to the environment than CO₂ over a 100-year period.

In addition to contributing to climate change, which has resulted in more extreme weather around the world and the continued loss of plant and animal habitat, greenhouse gases may also be contributing to the rise in climate-sensitive diseases and respiratory problems.

As the richest country in the world, the U.S. has more than enough food to feed all of its citizens, yet in a cruel irony millions of people still struggle to put food on the table. According to Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief organization, 72-billion pounds of wholesome food goes to waste each year even as over 40-million Americans go to bed hungry. Using its network of food banks, pantries, and meal programs, Feeding



America works to combat hunger by providing over 4.3-billion meals to the 1 in 7 Americans who are food insecure. Learn more about their work at feedingamerica.org.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Change is already underway at the national level through nonprofits like Feeding America and many other secular and faith-based organizations, but government agencies are also working together to make a difference.

In 2015, the USDA and the EPA partnered with private sector and charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, and local, state, and tribal governments to set a goal to cut the nation's food waste by 50% by 2030, with a focus on improving overall food security and conserving natural resources. This effort builds on the USDA and EPA's 2013 U.S. Food Waste Challenge, which calls on manufacturers, retailers, and other food producers to reduce, recover, and recycle food waste by establishing and following best practices.

We may think food producers, stores, and restaurants are the primary culprits when it comes to food waste, but that's not the case – individuals are responsible for most of the waste in our complex food distribution system.

"Consumers are responsible for more wasted food than grocery stores and restaurants combined," explains Toni, echoing comments made by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a U.S.-based non-profit international environmental advocacy group. "Changing behavior at home is the most critical action needed to reduce food waste."

In 2016, the NRDC launched their initiative "Save the Food," which offers online tools to help individuals make simple lifestyle changes to reduce food waste, to protect the environment, and to help others in need. Check out their interactive tools for meal planning, recipes, storage, and more at savethefood.com.

Another issue that can contribute to waste is the confusion surrounding food package dates, which can cause even the savviest shopper among us to toss food that might otherwise be useful.

"If you're confused by the different dates stamped on food packages, such as the expiration date or 'sell by' and 'best if used by' dates, the University of Illinois Extension Service has prepared a handout that can help you make sense of all the numbers," says Toni Kay. "You can find it online at extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/understanding_food_package_dates.pdf."

Continue to next page



STOP THE WASTE!

To help you become a smarter, healthier, and more eco-friendly manager of the food you bring into your home, try these 10 tips from the NRDC's "Save the Food" initiative.

1. **Shop wisely** – Plan meals, use shopping lists, buy from bulk bins, and don't shop hungry to avoid impulse buys.
2. **Buy funny fruit** – Many fruits and vegetables are thrown out because their size, shape, or color is not "right," but they are still safe and nutritious.
3. **Learn when food goes bad** – Most food can be safely consumed well after their package dates: "Sell-by" and "use-by" dates are not federally regulated and do not indicate safety, except on certain baby foods. Rather, they are manufacturer suggestions for peak quality.
4. **Become a storage pro** – Did you know bananas, once ripe, should be moved to the fridge? Proper storage of food can increase its lifetime and reduce spoilage. Learn more at savethefood.com/storage.
5. **Mine your fridge** – Get creative with your leftovers. You'll find all kinds of great recipes online that can help you use up anything before it goes bad.
6. **Use your freezer** – Frozen foods remain safe significantly longer. Freeze fresh produce and leftovers if you won't have the chance to eat them before they go bad.
7. **Request smaller portions** – Restaurants will often provide half-portions upon request at reduced prices.
8. **Eat leftovers** – Only about half of Americans take leftovers home from restaurants! Ask your server to pack up leftovers and transfer them to the freezer as soon as you get home if you don't plan to eat immediately.
9. **Compost remaining scraps** – Set up a home compost bin in your backyard, contribute food scraps to a community garden, or see if your town has a compost collection service.
10. **Donate** – Non-perishable and unspoiled perishable food can be donated to local food banks, soup kitchens, pantries, and shelters. Call ahead to find out what food can be accepted and how the food should be delivered.

APRIL 28 IS STOP FOOD WASTE DAY!

Food waste is linked to hunger, poverty, climate change, health, and sustainability issues. Become a Food Waste Warrior by making a pledge to stop wasting food and help spread the message on social media using the hashtag #StopFoodWasteDay. Learn more, take the pledge, find delicious recipes, and more at stopfoodwasteday.com!

Additional Resources

- University of Illinois Extension Service
 - extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/stocking-food-check-your-food-waste-habits
 - extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/understanding_food_package_dates.pdf
 - extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/yes_you_can_food_preservation.pdf
 - extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/have_extra_freezing_tips.pdf
- U.S. Department of Agriculture – usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs
- Environmental Protection Agency – epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-home
- Food & Drug Administration – fda.gov/food/consumers/tips-reduce-food-waste
- Natural Resources Defense Council – nrdc.org/food-waste
- Save the Food – savethefood.org
- Stop Food Waste – stopfoodwaste.org
- Feeding America – feedingamerica.org
- Foodkeeper App – foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app



Eat the Rainbow for Better Health

RED for your heart – apples, strawberries, raspberries, pomegranates, tomatoes, red peppers, beets, red beans

ORANGE for your eyes – carrots, oranges, peaches, sweet potatoes

YELLOW for immunity – bananas, corn, yellow peppers, squash, pineapple

GREEN for your bones – leafy greens, grapes, peas, avocado, cucumber, celery, broccoli, green beans

BLUE & PURPLE for your brains and digestion – blueberries, plums, eggplant, purple grapes, plums, prunes, blackberries, raisins

Plant-based whole foods aren't just good for adults. Kids of all ages who eat a balanced diet of whole grains, veggies, legumes, and fruits also reap the benefits, greatly reducing their chances of developing heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, acne, allergies, and gastrointestinal problems.

Not all children will respond easily to a switch from animal products to plant-based whole foods. To ease the transition, work together as a family and make small adjustments. Here are a few ideas to get you started!

- Get your kids involved in planning meals. Create an "Eat the Rainbow" worksheet showing all the colors of the rainbow and foods that match each color. Bring the worksheet to the grocery store, so kids can help pick out items.
- Add plant-based milk to dairy milk and gradually reduce the amount of dairy.
- Make the same meals your kids have always loved, like spaghetti, but swap half of the ground meat with beans or another plant-based protein and add spices to turn up the flavor. Reduce the amount of meat you use over time until you're using plant proteins only.
- Turn Taco Tuesday into meatless Taco Tuesday using veggie crumbles or another meat substitute and try swapping out dairy cheese for veggie-based cheese.
- Turn healthy eating into a game. Before dining at a restaurant, check the online menu and have your kids go on a treasure hunt to identify plant-based options.
- Picky eaters might be more open to healthy snack options, such as: chopped raw vegetables or pretzels with hummus, tortilla chips with bean dip, homemade granola, apple slices or whole-grain crackers with cashew or almond butter, ramen soup with added veggies, and plant-based yogurt.

** Content adapted from Nutrition for Kids resources provided by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM.org)*



Maple Walnut Granola

Makes about 6 cups

- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1-cup wheat germ
- 1/2-cup chopped walnuts
- 1/2-cup raisins
- 1/2-cup dried cranberries
- 1/4-cup sesame seeds
- 1/4-cup maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Preheat oven to 300-degrees F. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix thoroughly. Transfer to a 9- x 13-inch baking dish. Bake, turning often with a spatula, until mixture is golden brown, about 25 minutes.

Per 1/2-cup serving: 231 calories; 7 g protein; 39 g carbohydrate; 6.5 g fat; 2.5 g fiber; 5 mg sodium; calories from protein: 11%; calories from carbohydrates: 66%; calories from fats: 23%.

Chasing Waterfalls in Southern Illinois



by **Monica Tichenor**

“Water is the essence of life: The ocean, healthy rivers, lakes, and wetlands are good for our minds and bodies.” – Wallace J. Nichols, marine biologist, author, water warrior

Scenic southern Illinois is renowned for its extraordinary natural beauty – from its rolling forested hills and sparkling lakes to its towering sandstone bluffs and lush wetlands.

Among our region’s most popular attractions is the nearly 290,000-acre Shawnee National Forest, which stretches across Illinois’ lower 14 counties, along with the seasonal waterfalls that bloom across the rugged landscape after spring rains.

After heavy rainfall, it’s not unusual for quietly trickling stone-bottom creeks to transform into roaring streams of swift-moving water. If you’ve witnessed these natural wonders in action, then you’ve experienced their special brand of magic. Watching the water as it tumbles down rock formations and cascades over moss-slick bluffs into turquoise pools below is a sight you have to see to believe, especially in a state better known for its rich, flat farmland and miles of corn and soybean fields.

THE ALLURE OF WATERFALLS

What draws us to falling water? Why do we find it so mesmerizing and exhilarating?

“We are beginning to learn that our brains are hardwired to react positively to water and that being near it can calm and connect us, increase innovation and insight, and even heal what’s broken,” says marine biologist and author Wallace J. Nichols in his book *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*.

“Chronic stress and anxiety cause or intensify a range of physical and mental afflictions, including depression, ulcers, colitis, heart disease, and more,” adds Nichols. “Being on, in, and near water can be among the most cost-effective ways of reducing stress and anxiety.”

Avid hiker and backpacker Shawn Gossman, founder and CEO of Hiking with Shawn LLC and passionate advocate for promoting and protecting the region’s natural areas, shares similar sentiments.

“I think waterfalls in southern Illinois are so attractive because you don’t have to go far to be immersed in nature and leave all the stress of our technological society behind,” he says. “I also feel like southern Illinois offers people from different areas a natural beauty that they cannot directly find where they live.”

POPULAR LOCAL WATERFALL HIKES

If you’re new to the southern Illinois waterfall experience and don’t know where to begin, Shawn recommends several trails that can accommodate hikers of all skill levels.

“The first place I’d recommend is **Burden Falls** (in northwestern Pope County and southwestern Saline County), which is an easy hike for most people,” he says. “You can see awesome upper level waterfalls right from where you park.” Hikers can also climb down to see the main waterfall, but as with all rock formations, you must exercise extreme caution as you descend to prevent falls leading to serious injury or worse.

“The second area I recommend is **Cedar Creek**, often referred to as Cedar Wonders, which can be accessed from the Gum Springs Road Trailhead near Simpson,” says Shawn. “There are several different waterfalls, creeks, and even a little natural arch.”



Photo: Bulge Hole Ecological Area. Credit: Shawn Gossman.

“The third area for waterfalls is **Bork’s Falls**, which is located on a remote tract of land at Ferne Clyffe State Park and features a pretty awesome waterfall right off the main road.” From the road, the trail quickly descends to the waterfall, which after a steady rainfall features a double stream of cascading water and is ringed by colorful layers of sedimentary rock. Note that the main road to the area crosses the creek right above the falls. If the water is deep and flowing swiftly, do NOT attempt to drive (or walk) through it. You can access the trail from Happy Hollow Road instead or simply wait a few days before heading out.

Another gem at Ferne Clyffe is **Big Rocky Hollow Trail**, a short out-and-back trail that’s perfect for families with young children. The flat trail follows a creek through a gorgeous canyon flanked by high bluffs, rock formations, and stands of tall trees before terminating at a waterfall, which can range from dry to a trickle to heavy water depending on recent rains. Check out Shawn’s guide for Ferne Clyffe State Park online, which provides details and directions to various trails, at hikingwithshawn.com/ferne-clyffe-state-park-guide.

THE TRAILS LESS TRAVELED

If you’re looking for lightly trafficked trails, Shawn recommends a personal favorite that takes a little extra effort to reach.

“There is an Ecological Area attached to the Shawnee National Forest called **Bulge Hole EA** in rural Johnson County near Dutchman Lake,” says Shawn. “It is a true hidden gem and unless you know about it, you’ll always pass it up. During a few days of good rain, you could witness anywhere from 10 to 15 different waterfalls of all shapes and sizes in this little tract of National Forest land. It is rugged, but such a magical place when wet.”

Another lesser-known trail with scenic waterfalls is the **Double Branch Hole/Hayes Creek** area, says Shawn, which can be

accessed either from Hayes Creek Horse Camp in Eddyville, with permission, or by Mustang Lane using National Forest access.

“Near Double Branch you’ll also find **Jackson Hole**, another waterfall worth checking out, although you have to work to get there,” says Shawn. Other trails Shawn recommends include **Max Creek** north of Vienna, the **Red Cedar Trail Loop** within Giant City Park (on a wet day), and **Little Grand Canyon**. “**Piney Creek Ravine** (near Ava), when wet, is another great waterfall hike,” he adds, “but be prepared to cross a creek and get wet!”

SAFETY FIRST

Moss-covered rocks are slick when wet and can cause potentially dangerous falls even if you’re an experienced hiker wearing appropriate footwear. Be mindful of where you step, using a trekking pole or hiking stick for balance, and don’t take unnecessary risks, such as stepping too close to flowing water on a rocky incline to take a photo or standing too close to bluff edges.

“Most fatalities on southern Illinois public lands result after victims have fallen,” warns Shawn. “Safety should come first. I like to say, ‘Leave with great memories, not bad injuries!’ If it’s wet, it is slick. If it is wet and green, it’s basically ice without the cold. Seeing something amazing just isn’t worth the risk of not coming back home.”

Bring plenty of bug spray and sunscreen – and dress appropriately for both the weather and the terrain (to avoid poison ivy, scratches, and other irritants).

“If it’s cold, layer up, but be able to shed layers if you get too warm,” advises Shawn. “If it’s warmer out, dress in wicking clothes that dry quickly, such as synthetic fitness clothing. Carry extra lightweight layers in your backpack, including waterproof socks, and wear sturdy, weatherproof hiking boots or shoes with a good grip.”

Although you may occasionally see a snake on the trails, you're more likely to run into them off-trail and near rock formations or fallen logs, especially in more remote areas with less foot traffic, so stick to known paths, if possible. "We do have three venomous snakes in our region, including copperheads, cottonmouths, and timber rattlesnakes," says Shawn. "Watch where you step to avoid a bad interaction with a snake."

BACKPACK ESSENTIALS

Hitting the trail with life's essentials is a key part of any outdoor adventure – and the longer the hike, the more necessities you'll need. Although regular backpacks are fine for short trips on less demanding trails, Shawn recommends a hiking backpack for all-day or multi-day hikes because they are designed for greater comfort and durability.

- **Plenty of water/hydration**
- **Plenty of snacks/fuel**
- **Small first aid kit**
- **Water filter**
- **Extra change of wicking clothes (shirt, tights or shorts, waterproof socks)**
- **Gloves**
- **Towel**
- **Whistle**
- **Knife**
- **Rain poncho**
- **Toilet paper**
- **Small hand shovel**
- **Waterproof matches**
- **Bug spray and sunscreen**
- **Trekking pole or hiking stick (optional, but recommended for challenging hikes)**
- **Hat (optional)**

Photos:
Left - Upper Burden Falls.
Credit: Shawn Gossman.

Right - Lower Burden Falls.
Credit: Shawn Gossman.





LEAVE NO TRACE

To stay safe and protect the environment, proper trail etiquette is a must.

"If you pack it in, pack it out," says Shawn. "Most garbage left in the forest is taken out by volunteers. We take out used diapers, used toilet paper, undergarments, and even exposed needles. Lately, it's been disposable masks. Fun fact – it takes decades for an orange peel to degrade in nature! So, don't litter. Litter destroys the forest, harms wildlife, and makes a beautiful natural area look like a landfill."

Invasive plant species are a persistent threat to native plants and can spread through seeds that attach to footwear. "To prevent spreading their seeds, clean your shoes with a boot brush before each hike or take advantage of boot brush stations, if available," says Shawn.

We've all seen (or built) them – a pile of improbably stacked stones, referred to as "cairns," left by hikers on trails and beside streams and waterfalls. While they look cool, unless they are actual trail markers, resist the urge to build them. "Don't stack rocks," says Shawn. "The ecological damage to plants and wildlife outweighs any sort of benefit that is attached to it."

Finally, don't build a fire where a fire shouldn't be made, and if you do, make sure it's cold to the touch and out completely before leaving the area.

GROUP HIKEs AND RESOURCES

Although Shawn doesn't offer an official hiking guide service, he's planning to add that option in the near future.

"For now, I occasionally organize 'fun hikes' where anyone can join me," he says. "I usually start those kinds of hikes in the

spring. I also lead hikes on behalf of the River to River Trail Society, which are free, but you must register and there are limits due to public health guidelines."

Shawn's website, Hiking with Shawn, is chock full of trail details, directions, YouTube videos, photos, links, and other helpful resources, so take advantage of the wealth of information he provides by visiting the website at hikingwithshawn.com. You can also contact him through the website or at shawn@hikingwithshawn.com.

"You can also follow me on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr," says Shawn. "Just type in 'Hiking with Shawn' and you'll find me. Obviously, my main content is on YouTube®. I release a new video every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday."

"I also recommend following the River to River Trail Society (rivertorivertrail.net), Friends of the Shawnee National Forest (shawneefriends.org), and Friends of the Cache River Watershed (friendsofthecache.org). If you get into apps, I endorse Avenza with the River to River (R2R) Trail bundle and the multi-day hiking bundle, which is supported by the U.S. Forest Service. For official news and alerts, follow the U.S. Forest Service – Shawnee National Forest on their website, Facebook, and Twitter."

TAKE A HIKE

With spring in full bloom in southern Illinois, there's no better time than now to lace up your hiking boots, strap on your backpack, and explore the forested hills and sparkling waterfalls of the old Shawnee. Remember to recreate responsibly – check the weather, plan your route, pack essentials, dress appropriately, follow safety guidelines, leave no trace, and respect the environment and other hikers. See you on the trail!

your health through a **PLANT-BASED DIET**

by **Monica Tichenor**



Want to live a longer, healthier life? Adopting a more plant-based way of eating can greatly improve your chances of doing just that – and it's a lifestyle that more and more Americans are beginning to embrace and put into practice.

A 2019 study published by Ipsos Retail Performance shows that the number of Americans following a plant-based diet surged from 290,000 in 2004 to 9.7-million in 2019, an increase of 300%.

"Vegan eating is increasing significantly across the U.S. population," says Leslie Duram, Ph.D., Director of the SIU Environmental Studies Program and an independent vegan cooking instructor for Food For Life, an award-winning nutrition and cooking class program offered through the nonprofit organization Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM).

"Trends also show that younger underrepresented populations are more likely to experiment with plant-based eating than any other group," adds Leslie, confirming the results of a 2018 NielsenIQ Survey reporting that 40% of

Americans are actively trying to eat more plant-based foods, with between 46-48% of minority youth and white millennials being more likely than the average U.S. consumer to incorporate plant-based foods in their diet. [*"Analysis: Plant-based food options are sprouting growth for retailers," June 13, 2018, nielseniq.com*]

WHAT IS A PLANT-BASED DIET?

"The complete term is actually plant-based whole food," explains Leslie. "Whole foods are real foods – whole, unrefined, and minimally processed. Plant-based foods include fruits, grains, legumes, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, and exclude all animal flesh and fluids, so no meat, fish, milk, or eggs. If it has eyes and can look at you, don't eat it or bother it!"

People who follow plant-based diets are often referred to as vegetarians or vegans, but the terms are not interchangeable. Among the different types of plant-based diets are:

- **Flexitarian** – plant-based foods at the core, with occasional eggs, dairy, and meat
- **Lacto-Ovo-Vegetarian** – vegetarian, but includes dairy and eggs
- **Lacto-Vegetarian** – vegetarian, no eggs, but includes dairy
- **Pescatarian** – vegetarian, but includes seafood
- **Vegan** – plant-based foods only, no animal products or by-products



Keep in mind that not all foods classified as “vegan” are good for you, such as potato chips, sugary cereals, energy bars, and a whole slew of sweets, from cake to cookies. “Oreos are ‘accidentally vegan,’” says Leslie, “but that doesn’t make them healthy!”

HEALTH BENEFITS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that two-thirds of Americans are either obese (39.8%) or overweight (32.2%), conditions that contribute to high rates of heart disease, stroke, Type-2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Plant-based whole food diets not only improve nutritional intake, but can prevent up to 50% of cardio-metabolic deaths in the U.S.

And in 2016, the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics published a position paper stating that appropriately planned vegetarian and vegan diets are nutritionally adequate for everyone from pregnant women to children to athletes, are environmentally sustainable, and reduce risk of certain health conditions.

“Eating plant-based whole food helps to prevent many serious conditions,” agrees Leslie, “including Alzheimer’s, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, migraines, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, and prostate cancer. Plant-based eating also improves gut bacteria and bone health, lowers cholesterol, and aids in weight loss.”

Embracing the vegan lifestyle can also restore good health to people struggling with specific conditions that don’t respond fully to healthy lifestyle changes.

“Years of healthy eating with just fish and chicken did not reduce my husband’s high cholesterol levels, despite marathon running,” shares Leslie. “Eating plant-based whole foods did! He was able to stop his cholesterol meds. We like to say it’s best to ‘Go Cold Tofu!’ instead of ‘Going Cold Turkey!’”

Many people hold the misconception that vegan or vegetarian diets will leave them deficient in protein and other nutrients, but this is false, says Leslie.

“If you eat a good plant-based whole food diet, there is no need to worry about protein, which is widely available in beans, vegetables, and grains,” she says. “Protein deficiency is almost unheard of in the U.S., with most people needing between 46-56 grams per day. Most Americans get double that amount through animal protein sources, which are often packed with saturated fat and cholesterol.”

The only supplement Leslie recommends for plant-based eaters is Vitamin B12. “Over-farming has depleted B12 from our soil and water,” she says, adding that vegans aren’t the only ones who need to supplement. “Many meat eaters are also deficient in B12.”

OTHER BENEFITS

When it comes to the environment, Leslie says the vegan diet is best for mitigating climate change. “It has by far the lowest greenhouse gas (GHG) emission at 250 kg of CO2 equivalent per person per year, while the Standard American Diet (SAD) stands at 2,000 kg of CO2 equivalent annually per person,” she says. “In everyday terms, consider the natural resources required to produce just one quarter-pound burger, which includes 14.6 gallons of water, 13.5 pounds of feed, 64.5

Continue to next page

square feet of land, 0.126 pounds of the potent greenhouse gas methane, and 4 pounds total carbon footprint.” According to a 2016 research study by the University of Oxford Martin School, a global switch to plant-based diets could save up to 8-million lives by 2050, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by two thirds, and lead to healthcare-related savings and avoided climate damages of \$1.5-trillion.

The vegan lifestyle appeals to many people for ethical reasons, as well, such as ending exploitation of and cruelty to animals and using land to grow food to feed people rather than to feed livestock for slaughter. According to a 2019 report from the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel (IPCC), meat and dairy farms use up to 83% of farmland around the globe, contributing to soil erosion and environmental damage caused by pesticides and air pollution.

Finally, another benefit of plant-based eating that’s sometimes overlooked is its economic impact. The global market for vegan and vegetarian products is huge – \$51 billion in 2016 alone – and is expected to grow almost exponentially by 2025.

HOW DO I MAKE THE CHANGE?

“Think about recipes that are plant-based, such as oatmeal with non-dairy milk, cinnamon, and raisins for breakfast,” says Leslie. “Snack on grapes, refried beans on a tortilla with salsa and lettuce, or celery with peanut butter. Think about the meals you already know and love and prepare them without meat or dairy, or use a plant-based substitute.”

If you’d prefer to ease your way into a more plant-based lifestyle, try introducing a few simple changes:

- switch to non-dairy milk, such as coconut, hemp, or almond milk
- add whole grains like oatmeal, quinoa, flax, and brown rice
- snack on veggies with a healthy fat like almond or cashew butter
- add leafy greens to your breakfast smoothie
- try salad as an appetizer before dinner
- add high-protein meatless substitutes like tofu or tempeh, lentils, chickpeas, and beans
- go meatless one day per week and gradually add more meat-free days
- substitute fruit like apples and berries for sugary desserts

If you’d like a more hands-on approach to making the switch, Leslie recommends the **21-Day Vegan Kickstart Program by PCRM at kickstart.pcrm.org/en** or via their free app, which includes recipes, meal plans, grocery lists, nutrition advice, cooking demos, and more. PCRM also offers Food for Life classes and resources, such as the Vegan Starter Kit, Vegan Diet for Pregnancy, Nutrition for Athletes, and Nutrition for Kids.

Or, you can just go ‘Cold Tofu’!

“Our family went plant-based whole food overnight and never looked back,” says Leslie. “We feel healthy, my husband’s cholesterol dropped significantly, and we have lots of energy. We rarely get sick, even with a cold. Overall, plant-based whole food is a great lifestyle!”

RESOURCES

Website: *Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM)* – [pcrm.org](https://www.pcrm.org)

Films: *Forks Over Knives; Food, Inc.; Vegucated; Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead*

Books: *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé; *The Vegan Starter Kit: Everything You Need to Know About Plant-Based Eating* by Neal Barnard, MD, FACC



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