

Did You Know?

July is National Horseradish Month. Horseradish has been popular for over 3500 years. It was used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Jews as a cure for back pain, coughs, rheumatism and tuberculosis.

The name "horseradish" comes from the German "meerrettich" meaning sea radish. "Meer" eventually was changed to "mare" and English speakers made the connection to "horse", giving us the modern name for this root. Its nicknames include "redcole" and "stingnose".

To experience the full pungency of horseradish, the root must be crushed or grated to release the volatile oils in the plant. It takes about 4 lbs of horseradish root to make 1 lb of prepared horseradish.

Vinegar is added to prepared horseradish to stabilize the flavor. The heat of prepared horseradish is determined by when the vinegar is added to the freshly crushed horseradish root. Vinegar stops the enzymatic action in the ground product, so if the vinegar is added immediately, the result is a milder horseradish.

Approximately 6 million gallons of prepared horseradish are produced each year in the US. There are only 2 calories in a teaspoon of horseradish. It is also low in sodium and high in fiber.

Easy Ways to Save on Gas

Gas prices continue to head upward and that can put quite a pinch on your wallet. To help ease the pain, here are some easy ways to cut your gas costs:

Slow down to save on fuel. The number one way you waste gas is driving too aggressively. By taking it easy, you'll increase your fuel efficiency. Do not rev your engine and avoid quick accelerations. Don't exceed the speed limit. If possible, use your cruise control, as this helps keep your RPMs level.

Try to avoid unnecessary stop-and-go traffic. Rush hour is a notorious gas burner, as your vehicle must use up more fuel to deal with stops and accelerations over and over. If possible, try to run your errands outside of heavy traffic times. Driving to and from work earlier or later can also help save you fuel.

Keep your vehicle in good shape. Poorly inflated tires, a dirty air filter, or an ignored tune-up can all lead to the use of more gas. Follow the manufacturer's recommended schedule of maintenance and check on your tire pressure at least once a month to ensure your car is in tip-top condition.

Remove excess cargo from your trunk. If you are carrying around unnecessary items in your vehicle's trunk or passenger compartment, you are simply adding weight to your car. This weight requires more fuel to transport it. So give your vehicle a good cleaning to help add to its fuel efficiency.

Share your driving. Carpooling can save you a significant amount of money each month. Consider sharing rides for trips other than going to and from work as well. You can carpool to your children's after-school activities or can share rides to the grocery store with a neighbor.

Reduce your driving. Run all your errands in one trip, order delivery instead of heading out to a restaurant, and forego any joy-riding. You can also look for ways to stay at home instead of heading out for entertainment. Get movies delivered by mail or use pay-per-view instead of heading out to the theater or video store. Play games with your family or catch up on your spring cleaning chores.



Plugging Those Money Leaks

One of the easiest ways to help your immediate financial situation is to look for, and plug up, any money leaks you may have in your daily life. Money leaks are those small purchases or expenditures that get overlooked, but tend to add up each month. Here are some ideas to help control these little leaks.

- Use the ATM wisely. One or two larger withdrawals a month is usually better than many small withdrawals several times a week, which can add up quickly.
- Late payment fees can be avoided by using online bill paying or automatic withdrawals. This ensures you will not miss those payment due dates.
- Paying your car insurance for a six-month period, rather than every month, can offer you significant savings, often up to 20%. Ask your insurance provider for ways to save money by prepaying your premium.
- You can avoid bank fees by looking for free checking offers and by keeping a cushion in your account that will keep you from bouncing checks. Save on ATM fees by only using your own bank's ATMs or using a bank that offers a refund of competitors' ATM fees.
- Get rid of magazine subscriptions that you do not actually read. If you are a few months behind on your periodical reading, cancel those subscriptions. Most likely, you won't even notice the difference.

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Coldwell Banker

1690 McCulloch Blvd
Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403
(928) 855-9195 ext 273—Office
(800) 738-4148—Toll Free

Summer Smoothies

The weather is heating up, and nothing beats a cool drink on a hot summer day. Mixing up a smoothie is a perfect way to cool down. Basically, a smoothie is simply a blended mixture of milk, fruit juices, yogurt, sherbet or sorbet, with fruit and ice added. These recipes can get you started. Once you've tried a few, start experimenting with different combinations of fruit and juice. If you are adding fruit, use frozen fruit or freeze fresh fruit in the freezer for about half an hour first. Substitute soy milk for the milk or yogurt for a healthy drink.

Basic Banana Smoothie

In a blender, combine, 1/2 cup milk, 1 banana, 1/4 cup plain or flavored yogurt, and enough honey to sweeten to taste. Blend until smooth and serve in a chilled glass.

Strawberry Banana Smoothie

To Basic Banana Smoothie, add 1/2 cup frozen strawberries. Also works great with blueberries or raspberries.

Chocolate Banana Smoothie

To Basic Banana Smoothie, add two tablespoons chocolate syrup.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Smoothie

Blend together one frozen banana, three tablespoons peanut butter, two tablespoons chocolate syrup, and 3/4 cup milk. Serve in a chilled glass.

Peanut Butter Ice Cream Smoothie

Combine 1/4 cup peanut butter with one cup vanilla ice cream and one cup milk. Blend until smooth.

Fireworks Safety

Hot dogs, apple pie, and fireworks! The Fourth of July offers a chance to celebrate these great American traditions. While your safest bet on this holiday is to attend a community professional fireworks display, if you do choose to shoot off fireworks yourself, keep these tips in mind to help you and your family stay safe.

- Fireworks should only be used outdoors.
- Children under the age of sixteen must have adult supervision when around fireworks.
- Always have a hose or a bucket of water standing nearby.
- Do not consume alcohol when handling or using fireworks.
- All local laws regarding firework use should be obeyed.
- Sparklers can burn up to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. Children using sparklers should be closely supervised and told not to touch any lit portion of the stick.
- Spectators should stay at a safe distance away from the shooting area.
- The shooting area should be free of dry grass and leaves and should have a smooth, flat surface.
- Read and follow all safety warnings printed on the fireworks' packaging.
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Properly dispose of all firework remains and leftover unused fireworks.
- You should only buy fireworks from a licensed store or stand. There are illegal fireworks on the black market that contain dangerous explosives. These can cause serious injury. Do not buy fireworks from an individual's home or vehicle on the street.
- Be sure that the fireworks you purchase are packaged and have safety warnings on the packaging. Illegal explosives are often unpackaged or wrapped in plain brown paper.



Pool Safety Tips for Summer

Swimming pools are the number one choice for summer recreation. To make the most out of your fun in the sun time, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Children should never be left unattended in the pool area. Do not rely on "floaties" or other floatation devices to protect your child. Even with a few swim lessons under their belts, children should never be left alone.
- If you are swimming with a group of people, designate each child to an adult for supervision. Don't assume someone else is watching your child.
- No running, no pushing, no diving in pools without a diving board installed, and no swimming alone.
- If possible, consider attending a CPR class to learn about resuscitation techniques and basic first aid.



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