

TOP 10 FALL ACTIVITIES

Family

by Cassie I. Story, RDN

Fall has arrived, bringing cool, crisp air and sweet crunchy apples as fire lit shadows dance on the walls and meals turn savory. It's also a perfect time to get outside and explore! Take advantage of the ever shortening days with full knowledge that winter is just around the corner.



In my family, we are starting a new tradition this fall. We've decided to carry one of our favorite summer activities over to the fall season. Each year, on the first day of summer, we get out a big poster board and buy new markers. Then, we go to town while making a list of all the things we want to do during those precious weeks of no school and more play! It's called our "Summer Lovin' List." Each of us takes turns writing something we want to accomplish, and each time we complete a new task, we cross it off our list.

It can be an individual goal or a group activity. There are no limits, just fun! This year, my seven-year-old wrote down that she wanted to "go to China and visit the pandas." Obviously, she doesn't understand the planning, saving and organizing that a trip like that entails, but I didn't stop her from adding it to the list. Making a "bucket list" for each season can bring excitement and attention to the changing weather and daily activities. Below, I share some of our ideas that will hopefully inspire you and your family to get out of the house and enjoy the last few months of 2016.

1. GO APPLE PICKING

Hardy and sweet apples are one of the easiest fruits to pick, and once they are picked – they stop ripening. It's also relatively easy to spot ones that are ready to be removed from their branches and placed in your basket. They don't bruise easily and they store well. Apples can be eaten fresh, cooked or canned, and they make a nice addition to fall meals (see recipes on page 42).



How to Remove Apples from the Tree:

1. First, select firm, bruise-free apples. They will come in a wide range of colors depending on the variety.
2. Gently twist the apple from the tree, attempting to leave the stem intact (don't pull forcefully).
3. Place in your basket until you have reached desired amount.
4. Wash just before use to extend the shelf life.

2. TAILGATE AT A LOCAL FOOTBALL GAME

If you can't make a live game, just use your driveway as a parking lot. Invite the neighbors and put a television in the garage – you're all set! Regardless of your feelings for football, you can enjoy the social activity of tailgating. It's a fun way to bond with friends, family and neighbors! Have everyone bring a favorite side dish and "meat" to grill. That way, you're not in charge of all of the food and you can enjoy more time socializing.



3. WALK OR RUN A RACE TOGETHER

It seems like family-focused races happen every weekend during the fall. Do a quick Google search or look in your local papers for a race that every member of your family would enjoy participating in. Whether you walk, jog or run, getting outside with your family during the fall season is a cherished time!



4. VISIT A PUMPKIN PATCH



Touring a local pumpkin patch is a must!

Nothing is guaranteed to put you in a seasonal mood faster than touring a pumpkin patch.

Whether my family chooses one from a family farm or a single roadside stand, it's not quite fall until we choose our first pumpkin of the season.

While using a fresh pumpkin in recipes is possible (depending on the pumpkin

variety), I prefer to use the canned stuff – it's much easier, and I'm all about ease. See pages 40 and 42 for pumpkin recipe ideas.

5. BREATHE

As the lazy days of summer come to an end and the hustle and bustle of the fall season gets underway, don't forget to take moments for yourself to just sit and breathe. A typical rush of fall activities can bring stress to our lives as we start to make plans for the upcoming holiday season. Remember, you can't be your best self if you are running on fumes. Take time out of each day to sit and be still.



6. COLLECT

Go pick out pinecones, fall-colored leaves and branches for crafts.

Do-it-yourself (DIY) crafts during the fall couldn't be more fun!

Nature provides the perfect artwork for us. Collect items that have fallen to the ground and get creative with repurposing them.





BACON-WRAPPED DATES

Ingredients:

- 10 pitted dates
- 1/3 cup ricotta or cream cheese
- 1/3 cup peeled and diced apples
- 5 slices of bacon

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. In a small bowl, combine cheese and apples.
3. Stuff each date with one 1 ½ tsp. cheese and apple mixture.
4. Wrap each date with ½ slice of bacon and secure with a toothpick.
5. Bake on a parchment-lined baking sheet, with cooling rack placed on top (allowing heat to circulate around each date) for 20 minutes or until bacon is crisp.

PUMPKIN HUMMUS

Ingredients:

- 15 oz. can of garbanzo beans
- 15 oz. can of pumpkin puree
- ½ cup of lemon juice
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup tahini paste
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- ½ tsp. each of cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice and salt to taste



Directions:

1. Drain and rinse garbanzo beans.
2. Place all ingredients (except olive oil) in blender or food processor, and pulse until well combined.
3. Slowly drizzle in olive oil and blend until smooth and creamy.

7. ATTEND A FALL FESTIVAL

Festivals are sure to bring out the feelings of fall as they are typically adorned with images that denote the crisp season. Scarecrows, tractor pulls, bobbing for apples – you never know exactly what you're going to find, but it's sure to be a good time for everyone in the family!



8. BE THANKFUL

Make a "Thanksgiving tree."

1. Collect a few fallen branches from a tree (leave as is, or spray paint).
2. Purchase tags or make some using construction paper.
3. Give every member of your family three tags and have them write one thing they are thankful for on each tag.
4. Punch a hole in the top of the tag and insert string, twine, or rope through the hole. Tie the ends together to make a loop.
5. Hang the tags on the branches and display in a vase.



After visiting your local apple orchard or pumpkin patch, get your family into the kitchen to try some of these easy and delicious recipes. Young children can help wash and stuff fruit, t'weens can help dice and season foods and teenagers can do it all (or at least they think they can!).

DRIED APPLES

Ingredients:

- 1-3 small apples
- 1 tbsp. coconut oil
- Fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon or nutmeg

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 200 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Wash and dry 1-3 small apples, (depending on how many members of your family you have).
3. Using a mandolin or sharp chef's knife, slice into small, thick rounds (less than 1/8 inch).
4. In a small mixing bowl, mix together apple slices, lemon juice and spices.
5. Arrange sliced apples on a baking sheet with cooling rack placed on top (this allows heat to circulate around the entire apple slice). To prevent sticking, coat the cooling rack with coconut oil or spray prior to placing the apples on it.
6. Bake until dry, but soft – about 2 ½ hours, depending on your oven.

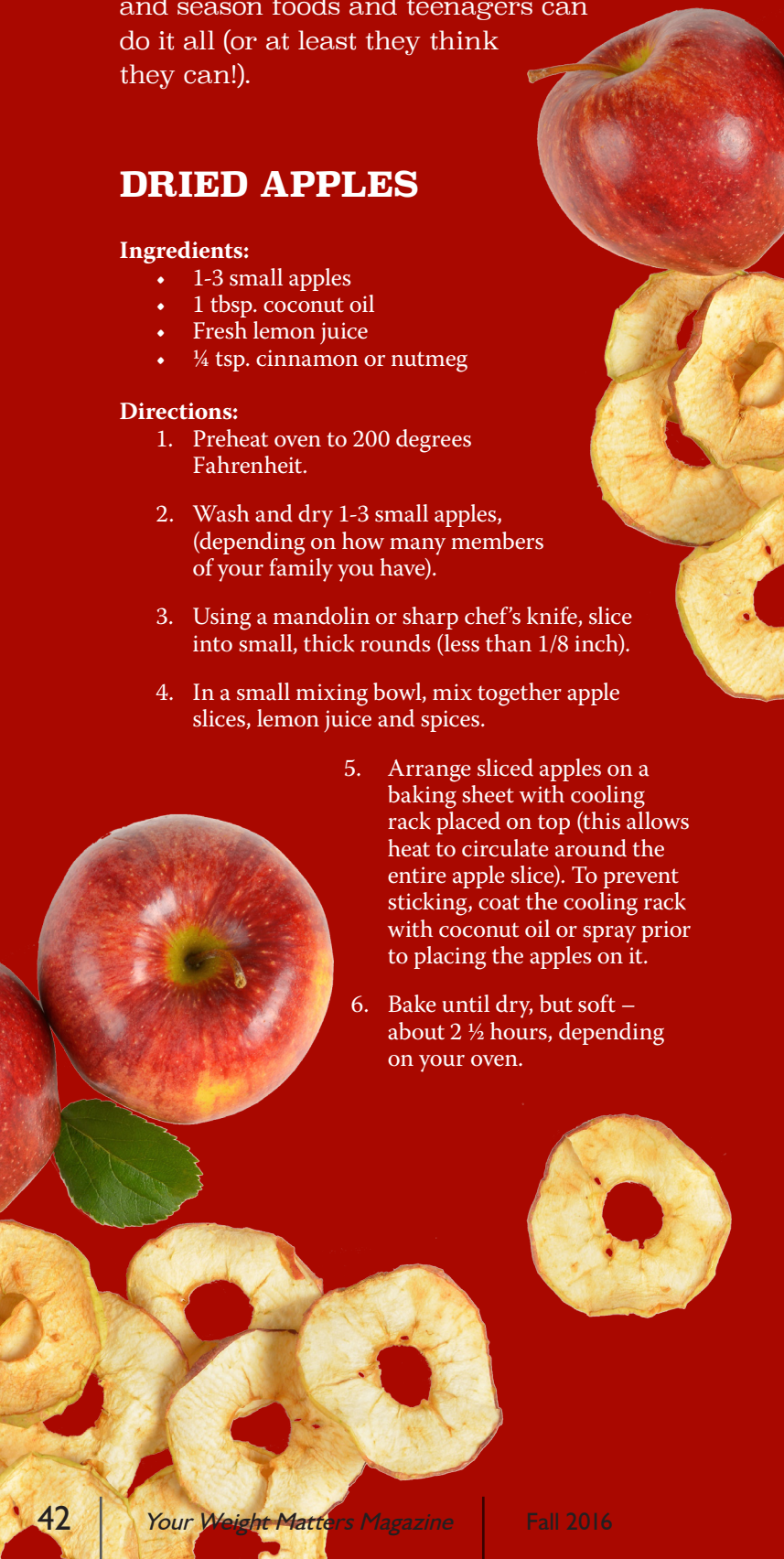
ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cup raw, whole pumpkin seeds
- 2 tsp. of (choose one) melted butter, ghee, coconut oil or olive oil
- 1 pinch of salt
- Optional – any spice you can think of! We use (1) red pepper flakes and cayenne (2) cinnamon and nutmeg (3) pumpkin pie seasoning and ginger...the possibilities are endless!

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Toss seeds in bowl with choice of fat and seasoning.
3. Spread on baking sheet and bake for 45 minutes, or until golden brown. Spread one to two times during baking so they cook evenly.





9. FEED THE DUCKS

My children are constantly asking for a pet at home, but I don't have the time or energy to take care of another living being. So, during the cooler months we get out as often as we can and feed the ducks. It's fun to go early in the morning and bring a warm beverage to enjoy as we take in the beautiful scenery that nature provides for us. We get pretty creative in our adventures! Prior to feeding the ducks, we guess how many we will see, what colors they will be, if they will eat from our hands, etc. Making games out of daily activities injects fun and creativity into our brains.

10. GO BACKYARD CAMPING

While summertime is typically thought of as the time to go camping, fall can be a great time as well. Change up the typical camping routine and go out in your back yard.



We actually have a tradition where the night after Thanksgiving, we bring the television in the backyard with blankets, fire-pits and food. Then, we watch our favorite Christmas movie – it's an event that we look forward to all year!

Enjoy this seasonal change, get outside, bond in the kitchen and above all else – remember what you're thankful for. Happy fall!

About the Author:

Cassie I. Story, RDN, is a dietitian who has been working with bariatric patients for the past 11 years. She also has her own food blog, www.WLSDailyPlate.com, to help inspire healthy eating following bariatric surgery. She enjoys cooking, hiking and spending time with her two daughters in Arizona.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

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