



## Monthly Lifestyle Newsletter April 2010

### **Don't Worry. Be Happy.**

Are you a happy person? Studies have found that a variety of factors directly influence our day-to-day happiness. For instance, researchers have found that hereditary personality traits – such as sociability, conscientiousness, and a tendency not to worry – which directly influence our level happiness, are linked to specific genes. Although we cannot change our genetic make-up, we can control other factors that have the potential to increase our happiness. Here are a few:

- **Practice optimism.** Optimism is defined as 'an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions or events or to anticipate the best possible outcome. In one research study, participants were asked to imagine ideal situations and describe them in journal entries. After several weeks of journaling, participants reported having a heightened sense of well-being. By practicing optimism, some people can train themselves to have a positive outlook – and that can make them happier.
- **Be kind to others.** It turns out, Mom was right. There is a benefit to being kind to others – it can make you happy. Research has found that acts of kindness and demonstrations of gratitude – such as shoveling a neighbor's driveway, doing volunteer work, or writing a letter of thanks to a mentor or friend – can make you measurably happier. In fact, research has found that one act of kindness can inspire feelings of happiness that linger for as long as three months.
- **Listen to music.** Music can jumpstart certain parts of our brains by releasing endorphins and melatonin, and sparking feelings of happiness and relaxation. In studies, patients who listened to music during surgeries had lower blood pressure, reduced heart rates, and lower anxiety levels than patients who did not listen to music. In one study, surgical patients who listened to music required less sedation.
- **Have a good laugh.** Laughter is an endorphin trigger. It releases stress hormones and actually can strengthen your immune system, in addition to making you feel happier. Whether you prefer a funny television show, the shtick of your favorite comedian, or a dinner with entertaining friends, make sure you get a regular dose of laughter.

There is no reason to mope around in life. If you're feeling blue, take action – make yourself happy!

## Skillet Bread

Skillet bread was a staple in the diet of pioneers who traveled by covered wagon across our great nation. They generally carried just the essentials required for survival. In terms of food, that might have included coffee, salt, sugar, beans, rice, and baking soda. Often, their meals were prepared in a skillet over an open fire. Try this modern day skillet bread recipe if you want to get a flavor of the old west. Cook it in grandma's cast iron skillet, if you still have it.

### Skillet Bread

2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 small onion, thinly sliced  
1 Yukon gold potato, peeled and thinly sliced  
1 tablespoon rosemary  
1 teaspoon sea salt  
¼ teaspoon black pepper  
1 package refrigerated pizza dough  
Cornmeal

### Directions

Heat oven to 450° Fahrenheit. Add the oil to a cast iron skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until golden. Transfer the onion to a bowl. Add the potato, rosemary, salt, and pepper to the bowl. Mix these ingredients thoroughly.

Wipe the skillet clean and turn it upside down. Sprinkle the bottom (which will be your cooking surface) with the cornmeal to prevent sticking. Shape the pizza dough to fit the skillet bottom and put the dough on the bottom of the skillet, which has been sprinkled with cornmeal. Arrange the potato mixture evenly over the dough, leaving a 1-inch border. Bake for about 20 minutes. Serve in wedges.

## What Do You Know About Citrus X Paradisi?

Citrus X Paradisi was called the forbidden fruit when it was discovered in the mid-1700s in Barbados and Jamaica. Today, we know it as the grapefruit!

1. Grapefruit are believed to be an accidental hybrid of which two fruits?
  - a. Limes and oranges
  - b. Lemons and oranges
  - c. Pummelos and grapes
  - d. Pummelos and oranges
2. Grapefruit peel is:
  - a. An important source of pectin
  - b. Squeezed and the oil is used for soft drink flavoring
  - c. A source of flavoring for tonic water and bitter chocolate
  - d. Combined with dried pulp and used as cattle feed
  - e. All of the above
3. Why was this fruit nicknamed grapefruit?

- a. It is the color of wild grapes
  - b. It is the shape of a large grape
  - c. It is a hybrid of a grape and a pummelo
  - d. It grows in bunches
4. A grapefruit is what percentage juice?
- a. 25%
  - b. 50%
  - c. 75%
  - d. 90%

### How Does Your City Stack Up?

If you're thinking of moving to another city once you retire, or are considering living somewhere else for part of the year, it's important to do some research and make an informed decision about your new hometown. A website called [Sperling's Best Places](#) can help. It provides all kinds of valuable information about cities and states across America. You can compare the cost of living, population characteristics, current and projected economic conditions, cost of housing, and other information about cities, counties, and states across America. For example, did you know that:

- Tucson, Arizona has significantly better air quality than Phoenix or Sedona, Arizona, but worse water quality than both of those cities?
- The median home price in Punta Gorda, Florida is almost 40% higher than the median home price in Homosassa, Florida and that the value of homes in Punta Gorda fell significantly further than the value of homes in Homosassa during the housing crisis?
- During the next 10 years, Gardnerville Ranchos, Nevada – a popular retirement community – is expected to experience more robust jobs growth than Pahrump, Nevada? However, the cost of living in Pahrump is generally lower than the cost of living in Gardnerville Ranchos.

Even if you're not planning to move, it can be interesting to see how your town compares to others. It's possible that a nearby locale may have a more attractive profile – such as lower cost of living, more stable home values, or better economic prospects – than the area you currently live in. Check it out on Sperling's website.

### Answers:

- 1d. Pummelos and oranges
- 2e. All of the above
- 3d. It grows in bunches
- 4c. A grapefruit is 75% juice

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