

December 2014

## Simplify the Holidays: Reduce, Reuse and Repurpose!

In December, you may look forward to spending time with loved ones but dread the drudgery of complex cooking, elaborate decorations and endless shopping. This year, minimize stress and maximize enjoyment with these tips.

- **Reduce!** Limit the amount of time spent on devices like laptops, smartphones and televisions. Time away from technology creates opportunities to have meaningful conversations and share memorable stories.
- **Reuse!** Decide to reuse holiday decorations rather than buying new. Consider donating extra decor to food banks, nursing homes or other local organizations. Eliminating excess decorations saves time, money and storage space.
- **Repurpose!** While eliminating holiday kitchen duties may not be possible, make the most of the time. Repurpose your regular holiday baking as a new family tradition. Get the whole family involved in baking favorite recipes to use as gifts for friends and relatives.

Also, not every dish at the dinner table needs to be an “official” holiday recipe. Repurpose everyday comfort foods such as [mashed potatoes](#) and [asparagus](#)—or try

the cheesy pasta dish in this month’s newsletter—to keep cooking simple. Serving a few dishes you know are winners takes away the stress of trying unpredictable recipes. Again, involve the whole family in preparing meals to ease stress this holiday season.



Most importantly, keep it simple and enjoy this time with family and friends!

## Move of the Month

### The Kicking Airplane

Courtesy of Health News & Views

Keep life in balance during this hectic holiday season. Put your poise to the test with an exercise that will help strengthen your core and improve stability in no time!

Standing with both feet together raise both arms out to your sides, like an airplane. Slowly lift your left leg as far as you can behind you. Bring your left knee forward to your chest and crunch toward your knee with your arms. Raise your torso up and kick your left leg back to complete one rep. Continue the move, switching sides, for two minutes.

Trainer tip: For help balancing, hold on to the back of a chair.



## Recipe of the Month

These colorful shells are packed with flavor and can be made ahead and reheated for holiday entertaining.

### Spinach + Cheese Stuffed Shells

Recipe + Photo courtesy of EatingWell.com

#### Ingredients:

- 24 jumbo Pasta shells
- 1 ½ teaspoons extra-virgin Olive oil
- 2 Onions, finely chopped
- 2 pounds fresh Spinach, trimmed and washed
- 2 cups part-skim Ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup plain dry Breadcrumbs
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground Nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon Salt + Freshly ground Pepper to taste
- 1 large Egg white, lightly beaten
- 3 cups prepared Marinara sauce, preferably low-sodium



#### Preparation:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cook shells according to package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about three minutes. If using fresh spinach, add it in batches and toss with tongs until wilted. Drain in a colander, pressing out excess moisture with the back of a spoon. Let cool. Set aside.

Combine ricotta, breadcrumbs, ¼ cup Parmesan and nutmeg in a bowl; mix well. Add the reserved spinach and season with salt and pepper. Stir in egg white.

Stuff each of the reserved shells with a generous two tablespoons of ricotta mixture. Spread 1 cup marinara in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange the stuffed shells in a single layer. Top with the remaining two cups of sauce and sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup Parmesan cheese.

Bake until golden and shells are heated through, about 30 minutes. (If the top browns too quickly, tent loosely with foil.) Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

