

Recipe of the Week



Party apps get a healthy makeover

Healthy eating is on the minds of many people at the start of a new year. One road block to healthy eating each January is the start of the National Football League playoffs, which culminate with the big game each February.

Appetizers, sandwiches and other game day offerings often prioritize taste over nutrition. However, by rethinking some game day staples, it's easy to put a twist on popular favorites to make them lower in calories and fat and more nutritious.

This year skip the calorie-laden potato skins for "Sausage-Stuffed Red Potatoes," which are just as delicious. Try this recipe, courtesy of "Taste of Home Healthy Cooking Cookbook" (RDA Enthusiast Brands, LLC) from Taste of Home Kitchens.

Sausage-Stuffed Red Potatoes

Makes 16 appetizers

- 8 small red potatoes
- 1 pound Italian turkey sausage

- links, casings removed
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 9 teaspoons minced fresh parsley, divided
- 1/3 cup shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese

1. Scrub and pierce potatoes; place on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 8 to 9 minutes or until tender, turning once.
2. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook sausage and pepper over medium heat until sausage is no longer pink. Add onions and 4 1/2 teaspoons parsley; cook 1 to 2 minutes longer. Remove from the heat; stir in cheese. Cut each potato in half lengthwise. Scoop out 1 tablespoon pulp (save for another use).
3. Spoon about 2 tablespoons sausage mixture into each half. Place on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave on high for 1 to 2 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with remaining parsley.

Erickson Continued from page 1

His volunteerism also extended to community events like turkey bingo, the annual fish fry and "DIY projects," including numerous first place floats created for Blomkest Appreciation Day.

Erickson worked for many years at Erickson's Plumbing and Heating, the family business which he would own and operate, before recently working in sales at Perkins Lumber.

He is survived by his wife Kelly, daughters Tasha Hage, and Jennifer Adkins, and four grandchildren.

On Tuesday evening, a county-wide tribute

was held for Erickson, with an honor guard escorting his hearse from St. Cloud to the Peterson Brothers Funeral Home in Willmar. Along the way, the procession was met by an outpouring of community support, with the New London and Spicer Fire Departments hoisting American flags over the Highway 23 route.

In addition, the Lake Lillian Fire and Ambulance squad will be hosting a pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. through noon Sunday, May 22 at the Lake Lillian Fire Hall, with all proceeds going toward Erickson's family.



MASTER GARDENERS

By Susan Morris

This spring there has been a lot of buzz about "No Mow May". We have had no official stance on this subject from the University of Minnesota but Becky West found information from the University of Wisconsin and I found about the same view from Iowa State University Extension. The reasoning behind this is it gives food for the early pollinators before other food is available. Even the city of Edina has adopted the practice and will not penalize home owners if they do not mow their lawns in May. No Mow May is a conservation initiative started by the UK-based organization, Plantlife.

By allowing some of the common flowering plants present in most home lawns to bloom, like dandelion, clover, creeping Charlie, and violet, you can provide more food for pollinators at a time of the year when many other flowers are not yet blooming. At least one early study showed that un-mown yards in the city have a fivefold increase in the number of bees present.

I know if I didn't mow the lawn and surrounding outbuildings in May, I would have to bale the grass to get it off the lawn if waiting until June to mow. I don't spray for dandelions in my yard and it seems the day after I mow, there are new yellow flowers sprouting up all over again. I don't believe I have ever had clover blooming in May but have tons of it in the middle of summer.

Here are some things to consider when adopting "No Mow May". Most municipalities will issue citations for unkempt lawns - wanting to reduce noxious weeds and manage pest problems like mice or rats, among other things.

The Iowa article stated the grass there will grow at least a foot in the month of May. It will likely outgrow the flowering plants and once tall enough will smother any plants underneath (and the pollinators won't be able to find the flowers either). Ideally you only remove 1/3rd of the total leaf blade in a single mowing. If you take grass from 12+ inches down to 3 - 3.5", it will cause stress or death of the grass because you are removing so much leaf material at once. Then there are the grass clippings to clean up. If you don't remove the clippings, you can kill the plants underneath, leaving bare or open spots in the lawn.

When lawns are not healthy, they develop thin or bare spots. Mother Nature covers the soil in plants and when bare soil is exposed in the lawn, many weeds grow. In summer these bare spots will be filled primarily by weeds like crabgrass, foxtail, purslane, and spotted spurge. These species do not support pollinators well. When lawns are not mown it can also promote the growth of weedy and invasive plants that wouldn't normally grow because they don't tolerate mowing.

Both Wisconsin and Iowa recommend instead adopting a "Mow Less in May" routine. It has been found that the ideal time between mowing in May would be ten days to two weeks. Most flowering plants in lawns, like dandelion and clover, flower even with mowing. By extending the time between mowing from every 7 days to every 10-14 days, you can continue to manage your landscape in a way that

No Mow May

Help to preserve and protect pollinators during this crucial spring period.



#NoMowMay

supports the pollinators with more flowers and avoids many of the drawbacks.

The good news is that mowing grass at a taller height promotes a healthier lawn. Mowing at a height of 3.5 to 4 inches promotes a larger, more drought-tolerant root system, can help shade the soil surface reducing undesirable weeds, and allows you to use less pesticide and herbicide on the lawn because the turf is healthier.

Rather than relying on the lawn to provide food sources for bees, install a pollinator garden. Pollinator gardens with a wide variety of species that bloom from early spring to late fall can help support bees, butterflies, and other beneficial pollinators all season. Trees and shrubs that flower in May also provide food for pollinators.

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