

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Counting the Cost Ezine ~
Everyday Abundant Living at Its Best

June 15, 2008 issue
Volume 8, Issue 20

Ideas, insights and inspirations for living each day to the fullest.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit:
<http://www.countingthecost.com/subscribe.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."
John 10:10

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ In This Issue ~

- * Letter from the Editor
- * Tips to Building a Better Burger
- * Educational Plans for the Summer
- * Taming the Tongue
- * Your Favorite Keep-Cool Treats

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Letter from the Editor ~

Hello everyone!

I hope you all are enjoying the lazy days of summer. Before we get into this issue, I had a quick tip I wanted to share for those readers in the States. Recently I learned that JoAnn's craft and fabric stores have a department they call "Kids' Crafts." In that section, they have all kinds of craft kits that would make great gifts for kids' birthday parties. I also learned that this section has a generous selection of clearance items sprinkled throughout. By scanning through the clearance items, my daughter and I were able to find two gifts she'll need for upcoming parties for less than \$2.00 each. Since I usually try to spend \$5 or less on party gifts, I was thrilled. Next time you're in JoAnn's, check it out.

Blessings,
Nancy
<mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Featured Sponsor ~

Discover Secret Recipes from Your Favorite Restaurants!
This e-book will teach you the jealously guarded secrets behind actual dishes from restaurants like The Cheesecake Factor, KFC, The Olive Garden, Red Lobster, PF Chang's and others. Save money and skip the long lines. Get step by step instructions for making secret restaurant recipes in your own kitchen!

Check it out at <http://ctcezine.2cook.hop.clickbank.net/>

<< << << << << << << << << << << <<

Feature Article:

Ten Tips to Building a Better Burger
by Deborah Taylor-Hough

Summer's almost here and if you're anything like me, you've already made that annual trip to the store to refill the propane tank on your backyard grill.

One thing I often hear from guests is that my barbecued burgers actually taste good ... rather than just being hard and dry as hockey pucks like so many of those traditional family reunion barbecued hamburgers we've all endured from time to time.

In honor of the hallowed summertime tradition of outdoor cooking, here are some of my favorite tips for finding your way to Hamburger Heaven in your own backyard.

1) Don't build your burger from low-fat meat. Get a package of ground beef with an 80/20 or even a 70/30 ratio of meat to fat. The fat keeps it moist and flavorful and drains off during the cooking process so the calorie count ultimately isn't much higher than the lower fat varieties...but the flavor is so much better. Be aware, though, that the higher the fat content in your meat, the more the patty will shrink while cooking. So plan accordingly.

2) For additional flavor, try mixing ground beef with other ground meats like pork, sausage or lamb. A good ratio is two parts beef to one part other meat. Also, if you use ground turkey to save money, keep in mind that turkey is probably one of the least stable burger materials you can find, so mix it 50/50 with ground beef to keep those burgers in one piece on the grill.

3) When forming burgers, mix the ingredients together gently, handle your burger patties as little as possible, and don't fully compress the meat...remember, you're not making meatloaf or meatballs. If you form the raw beef into patties with wet hands, the grease won't stick to your skin nearly as much.

4) If you like adding extra things to your ground beef

before making patties, make sure to keep the pieces small. Large chunks of onion or garlic make the patty unstable and more apt to fall apart while cooking. Be sure to finely chop or grate all added veggies.

5) Some particularly tasty additions to the burger mix are: freshly ground pepper, minced garlic, finely chopped onion, Worcestershire sauce, grated carrot, crushed vinegar & salt potato chips, or soy sauce. I've discovered that burger purists tend to insist on top-of-the-line ground beef (Sirloin) with nothing added but salt and pepper (after grilling). Honestly, I love a good, pure burger, but sometimes it's fun to add the extras for variety. Also, if you add steak sauce or applesauce to your burger patties, try mixing in some dry breadcrumbs, quick-cooking oats, or beaten eggs to help stabilize the burgers.

6) Cook over a medium flame rather than a high one. You want to cook the patties just slow enough to cook all the way through. You don't want them charred on the outside and a raw mess on the inside.

7) Don't press down on the cooking burger patties with your spatula or flip the burger using tongs that squeeze the burger. You'll just be squeezing out all the delicious juiciness and leaving behind a much dryer and tougher finished product. Make an indentation with your thumb in the center of each burger before cooking to help keep them flat without squishing them under the spatula.

8) Never -- I repeat, Never! -- poke your cooking burger patties with a fork or other pointy object. It's a guaranteed trip to Hockey Puck Hamburger Land when all those delicious juices pour out through that hole.

9) The less you move the burgers around on the grill, the better-looking the grill marks. Ideally, you only want to turn the burger once, but be sure to focus on safety and full cooking more than making the prettiest burgers on the block. You'll hear mixed messages from burger aficionados about what temperature to cook the burgers and how often to flip them, but I tend to not worry about the perfect grill marks. I have found that frequent flipping tends to keep the juices in the burger a bit better.

10) Let the burgers rest for a minute or two before serving to give a chance for the juices to settle. Serving too soon may cause the burgers to dry out. Rather than melting cheese onto the burgers during the grilling process, I like to set the cheese slices on top of the finished burgers while they're "resting." The cheese melts without dripping off the burger onto the grill. When the cheese is done melting, the burgers are done resting and ready to serve. Add your favorite toppings and enjoy!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Deborah Taylor-Hough is the author of the best-selling "Frozen Assets" series, "Frugal Living For Dummies (R)," "Mix-and-Match Recipes," and "A Simple Choice: A Practical Guide for Saving Your Time, Money and Sanity." Debi also edits the Simple Times, Solo Parents, and Bright-Kids ezines. Visit Debi at <http://thesimplemom.wordpress.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

DVDs from Counting the Cost Publications!

Are you looking for a biblical perspective on what it means to live simply as a Christian? Or has God given you a message that you believe He wants you to write about in a book? Check out these presentations on DVD:

- * Keep It Simple, Sister
- * The Joys and Blessings of Living Simply
- * Contentment in a Discontented World
- * Four Things Every Aspiring Author Needs to Know
- * How to Successfully Self-Publish Your Book

For more information, visit the CTC Video Store at <http://www.countingthecost.com/store/videostore.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Readers' Poll Question:
Summer "School"?

In the last issue, I shared that every summer, I look for ways to balance intellectual and social stimulation for my daughter with lots of good summer fun. This year I have been doing something a little different. Each day I've been putting together a "packet" of worksheets from several different grade-appropriate review workbooks I've collected over the year. I try to keep it fun and balanced -- each packet contains math, reading, language and handwriting review. Because the sheets come from different workbooks, they offer variety and are much more interesting than simply working page by page through a single workbook. Lydia works on her packets each morning while I help her dad for an hour or so in his business. She knows that after we both finish our work, we can proceed with whatever fun the day holds.

In our last Readers' Poll Question, I wanted to hear about your family's educational plans for the summer. The question asked, "How will your kids spend their time this summer? What kinds of activities are you planning that will be both educational and fun? Do you plan to do any review work with your kids during the summer? If so, what do you plan to do?" Here are a few of the answers we received:

"There are two things that we do every summer:

1. We do Summer Bridge books. It is a quick assignment every day to make sure that the kids have retained what they have learned all year and 30% of it is material for the upcoming year. This gives them a head start on their peers. They take about 15 minutes or so. I get these from Holcomb's Knowplace (<http://www.holcombscatalog.com>). This is where a lot of the area's schoolteachers shop for their supplies. I do, too, since I homeschool.
2. We go to the zoo. Many zoos have a day where you can get in free. Our zoo has this day on Monday. Our zoo also has a membership program that has reciprocal privileges. We travel and we get into other zoos free for being a member of ours." ~ Annie

"We plan educational activities throughout the summer that intellectually stimulate our children ages 13, 11, and 5. We have done a variety of activities:

- (1) Have a two-day summer camp with friends. We pick a theme such as 'Life on the Prairie' and study that era, wearing appropriate clothing of the time, washing clothes by hand, and serving appetizing recipes to fix.
- (2) Join one or more reading programs. Reading is more fun when friends and competition with prizes are involved. There are numerous on-line reading programs as well. The Charlotte Mason website has a reading list for all ages.
- (3) We always have a read aloud book during the summer too.
- (4) We take insect, fish, bird, and flower field guides with us on hikes along with binoculars.
- (5) Having a small pet in a jar for the summer is a wonderful learning experience. Read Seymour Simon's book, 'Pets in a Jar.'
- (6) We also volunteer at nearby nursing home playing games such as bowling, Bingo and Wheel of Fortune. It's great fun!
- (7) Have your child start his/her own blog site of activities over the summer. Grandparents will love following along. Scrap booking about the summer or keeping a journal is also an educational option. We've also written a weekly family newspaper of activities in our home and in the community." ~ Kim IA

"We are homeschoolers and believe in schooling year-round in a relaxed way. We never really stop. Our year runs from July 1st through June 30th. We do a lot of things for learning seasonally. Summer is garden time (science, botany) and time for fence and barn-building and repair (math, geometry, carpentry). Minds never go to mush if you let them learn things they are interested in. Watch your children for interests, then help them get the resources and take off with it. Example: If your child is very interested in the Civil War, read living books about it, make up games, watch good quality movies about it, make a model of one of the battle fields. Teaching your child that you can learn in many ways is the way to instill a love of learning!" ~ Sandy

"I've made up 12 folders with fun worksheets for my two children (4 and 6) to work on each week of the summer. They'll have to finish one each week. We're also setting a goal to read 100 books -- complete with a chart and the goal at the end. We have a neighborhood camp about once a week where each mom hosts a date and provides a fun activity. Water day, field day, crafts and games give a semi-structure time for the kids and moms to get together. Story time, free classes at local museums, Vacation Bible School and inexpensive city classes give us enough activities on a weekly basis." ~ Bee in NC

Thanks to all our readers who took time to respond to this question. To read through all of the responses we received, visit the "Summer Schooling" page on our website at <http://www.countingthecost.com/poll/summerschool.htm>. To peruse previous "Readers' Poll" questions and the answers our readers submitted, visit the "Reader Input" page at <http://www.countingthecost.com/readerinput.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

**Our Newest Readers' Poll Question:
Wisdom You've Learned with Age**

In last week's Parade magazine (the one that comes with the newspaper each Sunday), there was an article called, "Advice to the Young Me." In it, several celebrities were asked what they wish they had known sooner. It was interesting to hear the variety of answers they came up with. Actress Glenn Close said, "I'd tell myself to listen to my heart. Listen to the little voice that says, 'Mmm, I don't think so'..." Comedian Adam Sandler advised, "...Stop and enjoy your life -- enjoy every moment." Actress Felicity Huffman said she'd tell herself, "Be grateful. It's something that I learned by getting the stuffing knocked out of me a couple of times..."

I thought it would be fun to ask you all to answer a similar question in our newest Readers' Poll. The newest poll question asks, "What advice would you give to a younger you? What have you learned now that you wish you had known sooner?"

It should be fun to hear some of the wisdom you've acquired with age. Think about your answer and send it to us at: <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com?subject=Advice>. Many of the responses we receive will be posted in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

A Totally Unique Approach to Behavior Management!
Experience the thrill of well-behaved kids overnight with this one-of-a-kind, powerful new parenting tool. It has

worked for thousands of grateful parents and we guarantee it will work for you as well. Finally -- a breakthrough discovery in child behavior management that's guaranteed to give you well-behaved kids or your money back!

Learn more about The Better Behavior Wheel by visiting <http://ctcezine.behavior.hop.clickbank.net>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

"Talk It Out" Question:
Taming Your Tongue

Do it sometimes seem your foot spends more time in your mouth than out of it? If so, maybe you could relate to our last "Talk It Out" question. Bonnie wrote:

"All too often I find myself flying off the handle at my husband or kids and then later regretting what I've said. I'd like to hear how other readers have learned to control their tongues. I want to learn to think before I speak. Can your readers help me by offering tips and strategies for engaging my brain before I engage my mouth?" ~ Bonnie

Bonnie presents an challenging question. Here are the suggestions we received:

"Tools I have used for taming the tongue:

- * Pray for self-control.
- * Always use 'I' statements. State your feelings as 'I believe,' 'I think,' 'I want,' etc., not in 'you' statements such as 'You said,' 'You are mean,' 'You should,' etc., which assess blame on the receiver, making him or her defensive and then leading to arguing and hurt feelings.
- * Learn about Kaplan's drama triangle of personal relationships and get your family off the pattern of reacting to each other as either victim, persecutor or rescuer.
- * Whenever you begin to feel that tongue is about to be out-of-control, 'HALT,' check to see if you or those you are dealing with are either 'Hungry,' 'Angry,' 'Lonely,' or 'Tired.' If any of those are so, deal with that situation and then perhaps everyone will be calmer.
- * Lastly, for women, a daily dose of B6 helps a lot to regulate moods and honestly, as you get older, get a full check-up on your hormones as hormonal imbalances can wreak havoc in you, and when you lose your cool, on those you love.
- * Also, when you need a break, take it. The world won't end if you aren't Super Mom but life will be so much better with a refreshed mom who can control her tongue!" ~ Sherrie

"I try to use a technique that I learned in a Psych class. Rather than using, 'You do this and you do that' statements, I try to say:

'When (insert problem here) takes place, I FEEL _____'

'When the dishes are not done, I FEEL _____'

'When _____ is said to me, I FEEL _____'

I also have learned to repeat statements back to family members: 'When you said, "XXXXXXXXXXXX", I perceived it to mean "XXXXXXXXXXXX." Is this correct?'

This seems to take the attack out of my statements." ~ Annie

"I have found myself many times in the same situation. I've found that if I will just get up and leave the area, whether it's to go outside for a walk or to leave the table and go to another room, it gives me time to 'cool off' before I say something I'll regret. One time my husband and I were talking and he said something to me and I left. He asked me where I was going and I told him that I'm leaving the area before I said something that I couldn't take back. All he said was 'Oh!' That seems to stop the argument or comments from getting out of hand. I'm trying to get our 3 kids to do the same but they haven't got it figured out yet. That's one area where I still have to work because I find myself arguing with them for no reason. Thanks for allowing me to tell you what I do." ~ Nancy

Thanks to these readers who took time to respond. To peruse previous "Talk It Out" questions and the responses our readers submitted, visit our "Reader Input" page at <http://www.countingthecost.com/readerinput.htm>

<<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<< <<<

Our Newest "Talk It Out" Question:
Dealing with Kids' Clutter

Do it sometimes seem that your children's belongings are taking over your home? Are you swimming in a sea of books, baby dolls and birthday party baubles? If so, maybe you can relate to our newest "Talk It Out" question. Cindy wrote:

"Help! I am about to lose my mind. My children's stuff is crowding us out of house and home. Can your readers give suggestions for keeping kids' clutter under control? They can't seem to get rid of anything on their own. I've even resorted to filling up and disposing of bags of toys they no longer use when they are not home. I feel a little guilty doing that and have been 'busted' a few times when they happened to see something in the garbage that they recognized. I am open to any and all suggestions." ~ Cindy

How can parents declutter their kids' belongings when they can't seem to do it themselves? Think about what has worked in your family and send your tips and tricks to us at: <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com?subject=Clutter>. Many of

the answers we receive will appear in the next issue of the newsletter and on the website.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Our Sponsor ~

* Simplify from the Inside Out *

Do the women of your church need to a time to refocus and refresh? Do they need a weekend of encouragement and inspiration? Is your women's ministry group in need of a dynamic speaker for an upcoming conference or special event? Author Nancy Twigg teaches women how to declutter life from the inside out.

Visit <http://www.nancytwigg.com> or email Nancy at <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Creative Frugality Explored:
Keep-Cool Treats

Recently when faced with an abundance of strawberries on the verge of going bad, I had an attack of cooking creativity. I took a handful of berries and pureed them in my blender to a slightly chunky consistency. I then poured the berry mush into a glass and filled with glass with the generic version of Diet Sprite. Not only was it deliciously refreshing, but it also allowed me to get in an extra serving of fruit that morning.

In our last Creative Frugality topic, I wanted to hear about your favorite summer treats. The question asked, "What are some of your favorite, low-cost summer foods that not only taste good, but also do double-duty by helping you cool down?" Here are some of the answers we received:

"Our current favorite is this: Put 1/2 a can of fruit juice concentrate (grape or apple is best), 1 or 2 fresh or frozen bananas, and some berries or canned fruit in the blender and whirl. We pour into ancient Tupperware popsicle molds that my mom and I used. An alternative would be to pour into ice cube trays and insert toothpicks when slushy, or Dixie cups with popsicle/craft sticks. This is cooling, nutritious, and scrumptious!" ~ Robyn

"We make 'Lindys' for our favorite cool snack. All we do is freeze grape juice in ice cube trays. When they are almost frozen, poke a toothpick through them and eat them later like a cool, high antioxidant snack." ~ Katy

"I have made home made frozen yogurt popsicles before that are healthy and very tasty. We can play with the flavors to make some that aren't found in the stores. They are made

with lower sugar, real fruit chunks, fruit juice, and yogurt. They are easy to say 'yes' to because then they work within giving my kids a nutritious boost during the day! We also have a Turkish recipe my husband makes for a Lime-Celery salad. It is a tiny bit sweet from yogurt, delicious, and very refreshing even though it is not a frozen concoction!" ~ Melissa in MD

"Here is a good use for leftover buttermilk. Take about 2 cups of berries, puree, and press through a fine mesh sieve. Add 2 cups of buttermilk and 1t. vanilla. For the sweetener add either 1/2 c. honey or 1/2-1c. sugar. Mix well and chill in freezer for 20 minutes. Once chilled put in your ice cream freezer and freeze according to manufacturer's instructions. Yummy!" ~ Gabrielle, Knoxville, TN

Thanks to all our readers who took time to respond. If you'd like to read more of the answers we received or browse through responses to previous "Creative Frugality" discussions, visit the "Creative Frugality" page at: <http://www.countingthecost.com/cf/creativefrugality.htm>

<< << << << << << << << << << << <<

Our Newest Creative Frugality Topic:
Summer Fun and Fellowship

With school out and everybody moving at a more relaxed pace, summer is a great time for additional fellowship with friends and neighbors. But because the weather is usually hot and sticky, it's best to keep any and all preparations quick and simple.

In our newest Creative Frugality topic, I want to hear your summer fellowship ideas. The question asks, "Tell us your favorite ways to get to enjoy fellowship with friends during the summer. Share any tips and tricks for experiencing quality time together without too much prep work."

Your comments could include anything related to get together with family or friends: interesting activity ideas, out-of-the-ordinary special outings, recipes for quick and easy feed-a-crowd favorites. Send your ideas to: <mailto:nancy@countingthecost.com?subject=Fellowship> Many of the responses we receive will appear in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.

<< << << << << << << << << << << <<

~ What to Expect Next Time ~

Now that summer is well underway, are your kids starting to run out of things to do? How many times have you heard the cry, "I'm bored"? In the next issue of the newsletter,

guest contributors Jill Cooper and Tawra Kellam, editors of Living on a Dime, will share ideas for fun summer crafts to do with your kids. Don't miss it.

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Counting the Cost Reader Classifieds ~

Mrs. D's Homestead - soaps, stories 'n' stuff. All natural handmade goats milk and Jersey cream soaps; luxurious lotion bars, lip butters and more! Custom gift baskets available. FREE shipping on orders over \$25! Read about our homestead life and shop in the homestead store at www.mrsdshomestead.com.

* * * * *

Would you like to KEEP more of your hard-earned MONEY? Subscribe to Money-Wise Newsletter a free weekly ezine. Share money saving tips and strategies, humor, and encouraging articles with Christian perspective! mailto:mwn_subscribers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

~ Additional Resources from Counting the Cost ~

Counting the Cost Editor Nancy Twigg is available to share the message of simple, frugal and meaningful living with your organization, church group, or Bible class. Nancy specializes in presentations to Christian audiences, but can tailor a message to fit almost any group and any budget. For more information, visit: <http://www.countingthecost.com/speaking.htm>

For a complete list of audio and printed products produced by Counting the Cost Publications, go to: <http://www.countingthecost.com/catalog.htm>

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

Counting the Cost is a free, "by-subscription-only" publication that is sent around the 1st and 15th of every month. If at any time after subscribing you wish to unsubscribe, visit this page on our website: <http://www.countingthecost.com/subscribe.htm> Simply enter your email address, select "Unsubscribe" and then hit "Enter."

<> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <> <>

All articles in this e-zine are copyright of Nancy Twigg unless authorship is otherwise noted. We will gladly grant permission to reprint in your e-zine, printed newsletter, or on your website in exchange for a link and byline with

