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GREETINGS

A MESSAGE FROM PEAVEY INDUSTRIES LP PRESIDENT AND CEO, DOUG ANDERSON

Welcome to the Fall 2023 issue of *Connected to the Land*. As the vibrant colors of autumn leaves blanket the landscape and the crisp, cool air fills our lungs, there's a profound joy in savoring the beauty of fall. The season beckons us to embrace its fleeting moments, whether it's the comforting aroma of pumpkin spice wafting from cozy cafes or the rustling of leaves beneath our boots on leisurely walks. As we relish the golden hues and the harvest's bounty, there's also a sense of purpose in preparing for the impending winter.

In this issue, we feature articles on how to turn your harvest into home décor and get you set for winter with tips for wood stove safety, and how to build the perfect snowman.

I hope you enjoy the Fall 2023 issue as much as the last one. Please share any comments or suggestions by email to feedback@peaveyindustries.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

I invite you to check out connectedtotheland.info for more great information, insights and how-tos. 🍁

Doug Anderson

Photo by Drew Kenworthy.

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Peavey

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GREETINGS

A message from Peavey Industries LP President and CEO, Doug Anderson.

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BEAUTIFUL BOUNTY

HOW TO TURN YOUR HARVEST INTO HOME DÉCOR

Story by Pat Kerr.

I was surprised to learn the North American history of Thanksgiving. I thought it was about giving thanks for a bountiful harvest. And it is, sort of.

Those early suppers were about, “Wow! What can we do with all this food?”

In the time before refrigeration and freezing, the bounty was overwhelming to the home canner and solar dehydrators. The solution was to go out on the highways and byways and compel people to come in and consume like old bears preparing for winter. Preserving the annual bounty was an impossibility, and no one wanted it to waste. A summer of hoeing and weeding was not going to compost.

They invited everyone to eat. This included the neighbours they fought over the fencing issue, the creepy relative, and even, “Oh no, not them.” Everyone was begged to come and eat. The overflow was used as decoration. It was a display of wealth and abundance in a time when bank accounts and flashy cellular devices didn't exist.

Orange is, without a doubt, the colour of autumn. It is pumpkins, leaves, and the October moon. It is flamboyant, warm, determination, danger and high energy, and it's my darling's favourite colour. This is the problem. I'm a blue person.

Blue is the colour of tranquility, devotion, introspection, healing, and ice. I not only

don't do orange, I strongly dislike orange, the boisterous colour of power. Orange is the colour of division: people love it or hate it. It's a colour that attracts attention and segregates people into outgoing and introverted.

Orange and blue aren't even complementary colours, or opposites on the colour wheel for maximum contrast. Blue is complementary with yellow. Orange complements azure. Blue, red, and green are triadic colours or evenly spaced around the colour wheel. Blue and orange aren't up there on design charts at all.

None of this matters when decorating for fall. Blending with the dark shades of seed heads, neutrals of grains, tree cones, acorns, and the kaleidoscope of leaf colours. Orange and blue or whatever your favourite colours come together in celebration of the harvest and feast. It is time to share and boast of your provisions. Brilliant colours on your door and crammed in every empty corner tempered with deep shades make a splash that is the envy of the rest of the world. Maple, birch, and oak lead by example. It's time to drop your worries and indulge without gifts and bills.

Everyone needs to eat and now is the time to share our love of food and cozy comfort. Winter is coming; it's time to prepare for snuggling in.

A priority in decorating is to put other things away. It looks cluttered unless your summer décor is stored out of sight. Dump out the

old pots or clip them back. Your goals for this season are comfort and edibles. So the pie crust burned and the pumpkin cake flopped, this is not the time to fret. Put it all out and laugh at the learning experience.

Leaves may not seem like an edible. In Europe, where landholders historically had tiny properties, trees were coppiced or pruned heavily, not as a design technique, but to provide winter food and bedding for livestock. Using leaves as a decoration was a pioneer's boast of the excess feed available. It was a clear symbol, “I have ample food for my livestock, and I'm ready for a heavy snow falls and a harsh winter.”

There are many ways to use leaves. Fresh, they don't last long but you can press them in books, iron them with wax paper or microwave, and tie them in stings. They can be podged into bowl or plate shapes with wallpaper or white glue. Podging leaves can also cover vases or candle holders. This can be washed off later.

Fresh herbs keep the verdant green in any décor. Tying jute, sackcloth, or plaid around the pots keeps them in tune with the season. You can also step them up by repotting them into hollowed-out pumpkins or squash.

Pumpkins are the perennial autumn ornament. Since over thirty varieties of white pumpkins are now available, I can have my blue without the conflict. They now come in all

sizes and flavours leaving no excuse not to use them. Podge, paint, use as planters, the list of pumpkin functions is endless. (These also apply to zucchinis and those over-ripe cucumbers that hid in the back of the patch.) Cure your zucchinis and cucumbers in the sun, and they will blend well with their more popular cousin the pumpkin. Just don't ask them to stay green.

When the season passes, don't toss the pumpkins. These are wildlife feed. Dry the pulp and seeds for dog food or share with a passing deer. (Make sure you keep some seeds clean for roasting and toasting.) These tasty treats are full of quality nutrition. Landfills don't deserve this bounty. Neither the pioneers nor First Nations believed in waste, it was our second thing in common. Even in a time of abundance, they didn't discard sustenance.

It's a little late to find pink pumpkins for this year but these are the new symbol for October, Breast Cancer awareness month. These "new" addition to our seasonal décor are anything but new. They like the white and blue pumpkins were bred and raised for hundreds of years in Central America. They are in fact heritage varieties. Most are considered better tasting than many of the traditional orange selections which were bred for carving.

It is comforting to know I am not alone in my search for autumn blues. Australia has developed a couple of blue pumpkins reported to be tasty with orange flesh and some stores now carry seed for a pale blue one with over twenty other heritage varieties available worldwide. Since I have none of these, my blues are grapes and plums abundant in fall. I used to be disappointed when migrating birds stripped my décor but recognizing the true meaning of the season, I am now delighted to share with these travelers. After all, the blue jays storing the acorns from the oak are a living ornament that can't be surpassed.

Acorns can be put through a soaking process to remove the tannins and then crushed and ground into a gluten-free flour making these another decoration of abundant food. First Nations piled them in trenches and used the most easily accessible nitrogen source to remove the tannins.

Either way, Public Health indicates the process is safe. I'm still feeding mine to the blue jays.

Pine, spruce, tamarack, and cones of all sizes and types are perfect for autumn creative work. Spray-painted or plain, they add textural interest to the colour display. Best, at the end of the season, change up the colour and reuse them for winter with pine or spruce. There is no room for waste in autumn celebrations. Remember, when cones are wet, they close and when dry they open. So leave room in outdoor bouquets for this movement.

Strangely, the scents of autumn are not North American. We've got cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg for cider and candles and they never seem to change. Perhaps we can't improve on perfection as they blend with apples and pumpkin.

One thing that is changing is our attraction to grains. Brilliant red amaranth is both gorgeous and nutritious for humans and birds. Quinoa has spectacular fall foliage. While gluten free and our traditional wheat and oats may not get along in recipes, they look great together in bouquets. Red buckwheat's flowers are delicate beauties for the table.

There's no special dress for autumn celebrations. New hairdos aren't expected. People rushed in from the fields and out of the kitchen washed their hands under the pump and sat with a thud. Rest and comfort are the requirements. Toss lots of pillows and throws around. Pull on your oldest slippers and bulky sweater, a big apron, and smile. We're remembering those who planted, weeded, canned, and baked through 2023 and in our national past. Now, is the time to savour the bounty in our farmer's markets and locally grown products.

Our Canadian harvest is well done! Let's eat! 🍁

Pat Kerr is a Master Gardener and author of two books promoting native diversity. My Tree, My Forest encourages gardeners to support their yard trees to be part of a thriving eco-system. We are Planting a Forest is a short children's pamphlet on growing native trees from seed.

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FALL CAMPING

BEING PREPARED IS KEY

Story by Dan Kerr.

The best thing about fall camping is the lack of bugs. Cool clear air, warm days, temperate nights and no mosquitoes or black flies. Perfect. The second-best thing is the spectacular fall colours. The change is not due to the temperature but light levels which is another camping flag reminding you to take along a lantern. With the reduction of campers this time of year, camp site selection becomes easier. Rather than a tent site, a camper site with hydro may ease the comfort issue. Taking along a small electric heater for the tent will certainly take the edge off the cold.

Camping is sort of a slang word. It's like saying the car is made from metal. What metal? Aluminum, steel, titanium, stainless steel. Similarly, whether you are sleeping in a 33-foot triaxle double pull-out trailer with full amenities like a furnace washer and dryer, etc. or in a pup tent with a self-inflating mattress, you're still camping. Either or, you will need a few similar items, such as:

- waterproof matches
- small first aid kit
- small fire extinguisher
- top map and compass
- can of bear spray
- pocketknife
- a hat
- good footwear
- good jacket and pants
- folding chair
- cooking stove with fuel
- freshwater supply
- cooking utensils
- duct tape
- rope
- fanny pack

This list can go on and on so I will let you fill it out as its length depends on the size of the truck you own to carry it all.

THE BASICS

My favorite saying is “Keep It Simple Stupid.” You will need 2 gallons of water per person per day for hydrating purposes alone. The waterproof matches stow in the fanny pack nicely and will be ready when you need them. The pots go without saying and can double up when light is really light. Forget plates, just eat out of the pot, is an example. If you plan on doing anything when you are camping then a little fore planning will help, such as obtaining a top map of the area and finding your compass or buying one for eight bucks. Never enter the bush before setting your compass in that direction. That way when you get totally lost you can look at the compass and follow the opposite direction to get out. The map and compass will fit in beside the matches. The knife should be sharp and could be needed to cut the tape, rope or shave a stick for fire starting and can double as a cooking utensil. My fanny pack is a biggy. Yep, I use it for camping and as an emergency bag for flying. I carry stuff that I don't have on the list. Emergency projectile flares, headlight flashlight, and orange/silver reflective survival blanket, to name a few. The can of bear spray will sit in its holster on the fanny pack belt like a sidearm, ready for use if needed. When it comes to bear spray, bigger is better—forget those little ones. The bigger the can the more distance between you and a predator which reduces the number of underwear you need to pack.

CLOTHING

Layering is the key here. Start with a base of moisture-wicking undergarments that will draw the moisture off the skin. The mid-layer should be easy to open and adjust as the events dictate. The outer layer is where the heavy polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) clothes appear.

My fall camping hat is an orange wool toque. Simple and warm even when wet and wearable all night long as you lose 10% of your body heat from your head. PTFE clothing is waterproof and the product allows the garment to breathe preventing moisture build-up.

As we are talking about fall camping, fall is also the time of year that various hunting activities occur so having apparel that will reverse to blaze orange is a great idea.

When it comes to footwear, the sky is the limit. I think the most important feature is the fit. If they aren't comfortable, you won't be for the entire time. Footwear with removable inner soles is really good. I have removed the inner soles and replaced them with wool felt ones that can be changed out at the end of the day for a dry pair.

TENT & SLEEPING BAG

Your tent should be big enough for you to stand up if possible. As a bonus, it should have an extended fly vestibule that will be a nice touch to hang wet garments. A large tarp can

be hung over the entire tent service area as a double protector from the elements.

There are multiple choice and price ranges, for sleeping bags. Despite your choice, choose the one that is rated for your outdoor temperature. An underlying pad of appropriate rating is a must as well.

PAJAMAS & TOILETRIES

Yes, pajamas. Rule of thumb here, you never sleep in your day clothing; they're damp and will interrupt proper sleep. Everything is changed. I prefer a heavy tracksuit and socks.

Don't forget some gloves. I like my soft leather ones that I treat with linseed oil for water resistance.

The one thing I can't stand is going to bed with scales on my teeth. Along with a few cotton swabs, hand soap and TP—don't forget your toothbrush.

MAINTENANCE

Before I head out, I always lay all my equipment out on the shop floor and go over it. Missing buttons, tears and worn boot laces get replaced and fixed at this point. I check for adequate cooking fuel and the condition of the water totes. If you have battery-powered equipment such as a GPS, what is the battery condition like? Of course, the more equipment you take the more you have to check. If we are talking about a tent trailer, hard top, 5th wheel or RV, the list turns into a small book. I have walked the walk so I can talk the talk on this one. I started with the pup tent and went to the top. I just sold my 5th wheel this year and now use an ambulance that I converted to a camper for our short jaunts. It's not pretty, but then neither am I. If you have canvas camping equipment, there are waterproofing products that you can apply. Some of these contain petroleum distillates so you want to use them in a

well-vented area and in time to allow it to dry. There are similar aerosol products available for nylon equipment.

Not a maintenance issue but if you are going to do some remote hiking of sorts it is best to leave your location information with a responsible soul should things go sideways on you. Information such as your license plate and cell phone numbers go a long way.

On the same note, you could find yourself out of internet range and a pocket game such as checkers or chess may be a great way to bond with your companion. Don't worry about the rules, if you can't remember them make them up, the game could get interesting really fast.

Hold a competition. Who can find the prettiest leaf? Of course, you may want to take some parchment paper with you to fold over the leaf and then slip it into a book. That is one of those things replaced by the cell phone. They have a cardboard front and back with many pages in between with writing on them. Quite a novel idea. Pressing the leaf will keep it flat and preserve it for mounting in a frame of your trip. You can label them, mine "the best," and yours "nice try" or whatever you come up with.

Being prepared is the key here. You can go to bed under a clear sky and wake up with snow on the ground, the weather can change quickly. Don't be afraid to back out if the weather goes south on you. Continuing camping when you are cold or wet may not go far to a harmonious camping trip.

At the end of the day, you prepare as best you can and make sure you have a good time. The fresh air and free vitamin D will go a long way to a good feeling and a great experience. 🍁

Dan Kerr learned photography in his dad's darkroom, then progressed to providing photos and articles for magazines, and crime scene photographs for the Ontario Provincial Police, as a forensic identification officer. Dan is the author of K.I.S.S. My Maintenance.

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WOOD STOVE SAFETY

KEEP COZY, WARM AND SAFE THIS WINTER

By Dan Kerr.

Wood stoves come in many shapes, sizes, colours and claims of efficiency, but they all operate on a few basic needs. Airflow, dry wood and yearly maintenance.

When we upgraded to our present stove, the selection was huge, and we opted for a Canadian-built unit installed by a local dealer. The old one was a doubled-door unit that would not burn all night which was a problem as we heat primarily with wood.

Safety is a paramount consideration for all wood or pellet stoves, and your provincial regulations should be followed for clearances. Aside from that, here is a basic list:

Hearth: should be clear of debris, such as fireplace tools, pots, brooms, carpets and

anything else that would obstruct movement around the stove.

Surround and Mantel: again, should not be cluttered with anything flammable or that could jeopardize the safe operation of the unit, such as oil lanterns, decorations, or hanging up damp clothes to dry.

Furniture: should not be placed too close as these appliances can get quite hot, and the results can be catastrophic.

Fire extinguisher: cheap insurance. I have a 5 lb. ABC which will not extinguish a stack fire but will look after the firebox and surrounding area, should something go wrong.

Fire alarm: I periodically check ours throughout the season, and when I change the

clocks, I change the battery.

Cleaning: after feeding, wiping off the stove with a whisk is a good idea. Keeping the glass clean with a stove glass cleaner should be looked after when needed so you can see what the stove is doing. Stove polish is available to keep the exterior nice and clean and prevent rust.

Ash can: I use a galvanized pail for this purpose; it too can be used to extinguish the firebox if needed. The ash can be used in the garden to add phosphorus.

Door gasket: should be examined when you open and close the door to ensure it is sealing properly. This is a very important component. If you have a leaky gasket, you won't be able to shut off the airflow, which means you won't



Photo by Dan Kerr.

have control of a chimney fire should it happen; this is not good.

They can be replaced quite simply with a kit from suppliers.

Door pins: should be lubricated with an anti-seize compound to keep them working smoothly.

Stove pipes: should be cleaned yearly, either by a wet inspector or by yourself. The pipes are removed and taken outside to be brushed out, and then the stack is brushed clean.

I do not like to climb onto the roof. A couple of near misses have taught me that it is not a good environment for me, and so I figured out how to clean the stack from inside.

The process involves obtaining the proper length of rods and diameter of the brush. Then I take a pillowcase

and sew a buttonhole in the centre of the closed end. Next, I remove the stove pipe and insert the brush, now attached to a section of the rod into the stack. Over this, I slide the customized pillowcase and bungee cord it to the base of the stack with the rod now sticking out through the buttonhole. While I hold onto the pillowcase at the buttonhole, I now scrub the pipe by moving the rod up and down. Then I add another section and continue, and continue, and continue until I am at the top of the stack. Then I slide the rods back down, undoing each as it pokes back out of the pillowcase until the brush comes out. To finish, I just pull the pillowcase off of the stack, and I have captured all the contents in the pillowcase. I then take it outside and dump it on the flower garden. There—stack scrubbed.

Now I just reassemble the pipes, clean up and continue the rest of my maintenance.

The stove air vents need to be clear of any obstructions to ensure a good supply of fresh air into the combustion chamber.

FUEL

Here is a topic that could take up several columns. I also have an outdoor boiler that I have been told can burn anything: hay, coal, wood, furniture, skids, oil filters, truck seats, tires... Basically, if it is flammable and fits through the door, it is good to go. I have never tested anything other than wood, but I have burnt wet wood in the outdoor boiler, which I was told is no problem. The moisture created steam that literally steam-cleaned the inside of the stainless-steel firebox, and creosote was running out of the door and all over the ground. Tracking this muck from the stove through the snow and into the house was a major ado that the wife told me in no uncertain terms would not continue—yes, dear. The smoke smelt fantastic, though; you would think I was running a maple syrup boiler.

Creosote is created by burning wood with not enough air. The wood that you burn should be seasoned and have a moisture content of less than 20%. It is not the sap that creates the problem; it's the water content. Once the water is evaporated off through time, the sap becomes a flammable substance.

Softwood/hardwood. You will get a faster, hotter fire with evergreens, but you will also be filling the stove all day. The hardwood also burns hot but will burn longer. So, for safety's sake, you want to burn wood that is dry. Softwoods were commonly referred to as "summer" wood, something you could start fast, would heat up and go out to take off that dampness in the basement.

The only thing nicer than sitting next to a lovely wood stove and reading a good book is sitting next to a lovely wood stove snuggled up with someone who already has.





KEEP IT FLOWING

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR ANIMALS' DRINKING WATER FROM FREEZING

Story by Jenna Malcolm.

Every living creature needs water to survive, and in order to survive the winter, that water cannot freeze. Whether you have a few backyard chickens or a whole pasture of cows, here are some tips to keep them hydrated and keep that water flowing.

PROPANE STOCK HEATER

These heaters are great for off-grid, or even areas that are out of electricity reach. They are portable, so can be placed anywhere they are needed. They have sensors that will turn off and on to keep your water from freezing, but not get too warm. You won't have to worry about power outages with these, but you have to keep an eye on the pilot light to ensure it keeps running.

ENCLOSURE

Another option would be to have a 3-wall enclosure built around watering troughs or keep the troughs in a shed with a heat lamp. This would insulate the air around the troughs and block the wind, reducing the chance of water freezing and also providing your animals some shelter in more frigid conditions.

BATTERY POWERED WATER CIRCULATOR

These systems work just like in a fish tank; the circulator keeps water moving which prevents it from freezing. They will keep working in the event of a power outage, but you need to keep an eye on the batteries, or you can connect it to a solar power source.

ELECTRIC WATER HEATER

For larger tanks, electric heaters are an option. They can be permanently installed or removable and stowed away when the weather warms up. It is important to note that you never use electric water heaters with an extension cord. They need proper ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets to avoid injury, fire hazards, and electric shock. The GFCI senses changes in the current and interrupts the power in order to prevent lethal harm, which is very important when dealing with electricity and water. Ensure these outlets are contained within a weatherproof covering to prevent the safety mechanism from turning the power off in moist conditions.

RECYCLED TIRES

For smaller animals, a simple idea of a bucket inside old tires can be an effective way to keep water from freezing. Simply fit the bucket inside the tires and set in an area with full sun during the day. The black tires will absorb the sun's heat and you could even fill the base with straw for added insulation.

FLOATING TOY OR BALL

We know moving water takes longer to freeze than still water. If a circulator isn't a possibility for you, a floating toy or ball can work in a pinch. A Ping-Pong ball in a small water bucket for chickens, or a basketball in a larger one for horses. The breeze from the wind, or the snout or beak of an animal will move the ball around and keep the water in motion, preventing freezing.

KEEPING DRINKING STATIONS CLOSE

Grouping drinking stations close to one another helps keep the heat in. There's less air in the spaces between to cool, and the body heat from the animals will help keep the water warm.

AUTOMATIC WATERERS

These are dream. A frost-free hydrant with a waterline that runs below the frost line to the tanks that provides a constant source of water for your animals. No standing water to freeze, and no algae growth in the summer as a bonus. Inside the tanks can have an insulator to keep the cold air from reaching the plumbing. However, these come with a cost. A big one. They are the priciest of the options here and require professional installation and frequent maintenance. Your livestock would likely require some training on how to drink from them as they are more of an unnatural method of drinking water. Some models

require frequent use of the system to prevent freezing which can be an issue if you don't have many animals.

FINAL WORDS

A few small tips to finish off. Start off with lukewarm (not hot) water in dishes as warm water takes longer to freeze than water that's already cold. Keep an eye on water levels throughout the day. You want to keep the containers full enough that it would take longer to freeze, but not too full that all the water isn't all drunk. Leftover water will freeze quickly, and you're then left having to manually de-ice the container. Ensure your containers are not resting on the ground. Wooden pallets work great for this. Black rubber tubs will keep water warmer than metal tubs, although if you're using an electric water heater, check your product's specifications to see if it is compatible with something other than metal.

You will want to balance what you can physically handle with what your budget allows. A full heated watering system is comparatively minimal work after installation, but quite costly. A simple system of rubber bins is more affordable, but you need to fully drain and refill frequently and can be labour intensive. With so many options, you're sure to find the right one to keep your animals hydrated and happy all year round.



Jenna Malcolm is a busy mom of two in Calgary. She enjoys coming up with recipes to find something to feed the picky eaters, and a good roasted meat is usually the winner. If she gets any free time available, you can find her in the woods photographing birds.

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UNPLUG

6 OFFLINE THINGS TO DO WHEN IT'S TOO COLD OUTSIDE

By Jenna Malcolm.

The winter months can feel long and dark. We end up spending more time inside escaping the cold. It's easy enough to throw on a movie or browse the internet and the hours just fly by. Here are some ideas on what you can do when that bright screen feels like it's taking over and it's too cold to go outside.

1. Knit or Crochet

Nothing says cozy more than a handmade wearable. Knit up a hat or crochet a scarf. Make yourself or the kids some matching mitts and socks. If you're adventurous, whip up a blanket! The longer you work on it, the warmer you'll get.

2. Embroidery

You can personalize anything if you learn a few simple stitches. I'd recommend starting with a satin stitch, chain stitch and running back stitch. You can turn a regular pair of pajamas into your classy winter ones with a quick monogram.

3. Bake Cookies

A great way to add extra heat in the house is a nice fresh batch of cookies! Follow your favourite recipe or browse that old cookbook on the back of the shelf. You know the one. There's bound to be a cookie recipe begging to be tried in there.

4. Feng Shui

Rearrange a room, or two! Moving around a few pieces of furniture can give your room a whole new feeling. Bring about a new perspective for the start of the new year. Plus, it'll get the blood pumping and keep you warm.

5. Exercise

It's very easy to slip into hibernation mode in these cold, dark months of winter. Exercise—even just a little extra movement each day—can provide those much-welcomed endorphins to brighten an otherwise dreary day.

6. Read a book

Cozy up to the fireplace and crack open that spine and adventure anywhere! A far-off space adventure, a steamy romance, a mystery whodunnit, an engaging biography... There are no limits when it comes to books! So much of our lives these days is spent online, be it for work or leisure. That blustery winter storm rolling through can be the sign you need to sit back, disconnect and work on a beloved hobby or try a new one! 🍁



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* Test Lab: Fred Cunee (3rd Party) Nail Climb Test; Test date: 03/2021.
** Test Lab: WD-40 Co. Technical Center (Pine Brook, NJ) ASTM B117; Test date: 02/2021.



Building The Perfect Snowman

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

By Peg Strankman.

Making a snowman certainly is in the top five winter activities for kids in Canada. But how to make a great snowman?

To answer that question, I went to experts. Blakely (age 7) and Dylan (5) Beier of Calgary believe the type of snow is very important. It should feel a bit thick, kind of sticky and not be too soft, they say. The literature suggests the best test is to scoop up a handful of snow and see if it makes a ball that sticks together. Prairie snow is often too dry and just falls apart. So, then the waiting begins until the temperature warms a bit and the snowball test tells you the snow is perfect. Not too dry but also not too slushy.

Once you've decided the snow is just right, the rolling begins. According to other experts Caleb (8) and Brady (5) Smith of Airdrie, three

snowballs are required: a large one for the bottom, a smaller one for the middle and a smallish one for the head. They warn you must be careful not to make the middle ball too big, or it's hard to lift, and you might end up making a snowman that's lying down. Blakely and Dylan agree that it's important to have enough snow in your yard to be able to roll the bottom ball big enough.

Caleb and Brady follow a traditional style for their snowmen. They were gifted a snowman kit a few years ago and now use wooden pegs for eyes and buttons instead of some coal that their grandparents probably had access to. They use a scarf for the snowman's neck, but they differ on the hat. Caleb goes with the top hat, but Brady prefers a straw hat. Classic carrot for the nose is the choice.

Blakely and Dylan like to use big buttons for eyes, mouth, and also on the middle ball. They admit they do use rocks sometimes. They prefer to have a carrot for the nose. Occasionally they will put small snowballs on either side of the head for ears. A top hat and scarf are also preferred accessories. Sticks for arms are not required when they make snowmen.

It turns out that snowmen have a very long history. In many countries, snow was an easily accessible material for expressing artistic ability. Bob Eckstein, a cartoonist with *The New Yorker*, wrote *The History of the Snowman*, finding that the earliest documented snowman was in the *Book of Hours*, dating back to 1380.

The Japanese make their snowmen with just two snowballs, a big one and a smaller one on top. The figure resembles the Daruma doll, which brings good luck. As far back as the 7th century, the Chinese were carving Buddha statues out of snow.

In mid-1800s, snowmen were more like ice sculptures and crafted by artists. But Ruth Herman's 1944 book *Snowy, the Travelling Snowman* seems to have been the start of the classic Frosty features with a hat, scarf, and carrot nose.

Peg Strankman enjoys the challenge of using her communication skills to share agriculture's story to the general public and bringing consumer issues back to producers. She also became an auditor for Where Food Comes From. Her passion for the agricultural landscape resulted in a Masters exploring a land performance framework as a basis for sustainability. She grew up on a cattle and grain farm north of Oyen and currently lives just outside Airdrie.



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DON'T LET THE DRIFT GET YOU STUCK

By Dan Kerr.

Here we go again. It happens every year, that four-letter word that starts with “S” and sounds like “blow.” I am not fussy about its arrival, but eventually, it does and has to be cleared, and there are choices for how to do it.

Shovels are a bit of a personal tool; to each their own, so to speak. They come in a huge selection: handles made from wood, plastic or aluminum. Blades made from steel, aluminum, plastic, aluminum-edged plastic, and in a rainbow of colours. And then there are the ergonomically shaped ones with the bent handle. My preference is the straight-handled, aluminum-edged plastic bladed ones. Light, basically non-sticking, and relatively inexpensive. For me, lifting is off the radar. Now, I use my tractor with loader. It matters not what you do to move the stuff; what really matters is that you at least do some stretches before you engage in the activity.

I began to weight train in my teens and have continued through my lifetime on a regular program which presently takes me to my gym three times a week for anaerobic and aerobic training. I credit this to be the reason I have side-stepped a lot of injuries over the years.

PHYSICAL REMOVAL

Before you grab the shovel and get at it, I would recommend a few back stretches and knee bends to get the blood pumping. Even stair climbing a few times will get the large muscles warmed up, then start slow with the shovel. This may sound a little tedious, but figuring out a pattern the same as when you cut your lawn, can save you a lot of time and effort. I have found that if I make an effort at the beginning of the winter to push the bank of it well back, I will have enough room by the end of the season for the season's worth. Having a pattern is especially true for large jobs like the driveway. Completing blocks will show progress in areas that accumulate large amounts and be less discouraging. I lived in

Midland, Ontario, for 20 years, so I am fully aware of the definition of discouraging. When it came to winter storms, a 16” accumulation overnight was normal.

MECHANICAL REMOVAL

Here, you have some choices:

Thrower: is a high-speed single stage unit that throws the accumulation in the direction that the chute is pointed.

Blower: is a two-stage unit with a slow speed auger breaking the accumulation down and a blower that accelerates its travel out the chute in the direction it is pointed. I do not like the thrower design as its high-speed travel can really go south if you pick up something that could jam it. I once had this happen on a lawn tractor that broke the drive chain and spat it out into the pile, leaving me to search for it for an hour, then fix it. These are also available in a small electric shovel version for decks and walkways.

Plows: are available for ATVs, UTVs, and your vehicle. If you have the room to plow back onto the lawn and you don't mind fixing your lawn in the spring from all the divots, this may be an option for you. Make sure you take into consideration that your vehicle may not have been engineered to be a plow truck, so getting rough with it could get expensive.

Tractor: using the loader is similar to using a plow. Adhering to a pattern is a good idea to think about. Tractor blowers come in drag or push type for the three-point hitch and for the front, thrower and blower configuration. I priced out a front blower for my tractor and decided that ten thousand dollars was a tad expensive. At that expense, I could contract someone for about ten years.

All of the mechanical units need some sort of maintenance, which is something to consider if you are not mechanically minded or do

not have the tools to conduct such service. The predominant feature of the walk-behind units is the oil and fuel. Synthetic oil is a good idea as it tends to stick to the parts inside the engine block. Another good idea is a fuel stabilizer additive to take care of moisture in the fuel. Keeping the chassis moving parts lubricated helps the overall performance as these small engines work really hard here. And at the end of the season, touching up the paint with a good rust paint will prevent corroding of the unit.

When storing for the off-season, fill the fuel tank to the full mark and add a stabilizer, change the oil and clean the air filter so the unit is ready to go for the next round.

NOTE

If you decide to purchase a walk-behind unit or tractor-version blower, read the instructions on safe operation. NEVER try to unplug the unit if it is still running, and stay away from the working end while it is in motion.

Whatever means you choose to move it, you should establish what is the predominant wind direction. A good thing to know so you can pile, plow or blow it in that direction to prevent drifting, or you'll be doing it all over again.

The Highway Traffic act of Ontario violates depositing on the roadway under section 181. The roadway is defined as the maintained portion of the Highway and is an \$85.00 fine so be aware of what you are doing on the roadway. Check your local laws. It may be good to note that municipalities may prevent the dumping of your load into their ditch, which could also have a fine attached to it.

There you have it, basic removal techniques and I wrote it without writing the “S” word.



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HOT CHOCOLATE

DECADENT AND GOOD FOR YOU

RECIPE

Recipe by Angie Rodgers.

There is nothing quite like a steaming mug of hot chocolate on a cold winter day.

Long considered a staple of the Canadian winter experience, hot chocolate is enjoyed all over the world, with varying additions according to different cultures. Chocolate drinks were originally believed to have been invented by the Mayans around 500 B.C., although the use of cocoa likely predates the Mayan empire. Sugar didn't reach the Mayans until much later, and chocolate drinks were considered a health tonic, with the addition of chili pepper adding a punch to the taste. As international trade brought cocoa around the globe, regional cuisines adapted it to their own tastes, adding herbs and spices such as cinnamon, vanilla, and cardamom.

Some might assert the introduction of sugar has rendered cocoa more of a dessert than a health booster, but chocolate lovers know better. Chocolate contains antioxidants and flavonoids that contribute to good arterial health, and trace compounds help elevate mood. So, mix up a batch of Decadent Hot Chocolate, and drink to your health!

The secret to smooth, hearty hot chocolate is heat. Taking the time to cook the ingredients on the stovetop will make the difference between good hot chocolate (because, really, there is no such thing as truly bad hot chocolate) and a creamy treat that leaves you wanting more. Whole milk is also essential, although lower-fat milk can be substituted if you must. This recipe has small extras you might not expect and is a good base for flavour-altering additions.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a heavy-bottom pot, combine the cocoa, sugar, salt, and 1/4 cup of the milk. Whisk together until blended.
2. Place on stovetop and stir with wooden spoon over medium-low heat.
3. Once warm, slowly add the rest of the milk, and the cream if desired, constantly stirring until it's all added.
4. If there are small lumps, press them against the side of the pot with your wooden spoon as you continue to stir.
5. Keep over medium-low heat, frequently stirring, for 5 minutes.
6. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla.
7. Pour into mugs. Top with marshmallows and enjoy!

FAMILY-FRIENDLY VARIATIONS

Extra Decadent – add 2 oz of shaved semi-sweet chocolate or chocolate chips to step 2. Reduce sugar to 1 tablespoon. Stir until melted. Taste before adding milk. Add more sugar if needed. Top with whipped cream and shaved chocolate.

Gingerbread – add 1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/4 teaspoon ginger, and 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg to step 1. Top with marshmallows and place a cinnamon stick in the mug.

Mocha – add 2 to 3 teaspoons instant coffee after step 3. Instant espresso powder is even better. Top with whipped cream and a sprinkling of shaved chocolate.

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| CALORIES* | 266 kcal |
| PROTEIN* | 9.2 grams |
| FAT* | 10.3 grams |
| NET CARBS* | 37 grams |
| FIBER* | 1.8 grams |
| SUGAR* | 33.7 grams |
| SODIUM* | 266 mg |

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| PREP TIME: | 5 MINUTES |
| COOK TIME: | 5 MINUTES |
| SERVES: | 2 |

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups whole milk
- 1/4 cup cream (optional but tasty)
- 2 tablespoons powdered unsweetened cocoa
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Marshmallows

Chocolate mint – add 4 drops of peppermint extract to step 6. Place a whole candy cane in each mug, or top with whipped cream and crushed candy cane bits.

Black Forest – add 4 to 6 drops of cherry flavouring to step 6. Top with whipped cream, shaved chocolate, and a cherry.

Mexican – add 1/8 teaspoon cayenne or chili powder and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon to step 1. Top with whipped cream. Place a cinnamon stick in the mug.

Salted Caramel – replace the 1/4 cup cream with 1/4 cup sweetened condensed milk. Reduce sugar to 1 tablespoon. Increase salt to 1/4 teaspoon. Adjust sugar to taste at the end; add more if desired. 🍁

Angie has been a glass artist since 2008, and was lucky to land a position as an editor and writer for Glass Patterns Quarterly. She is the copy editor/associate editor for The Flow® magazine, proofreader for Glass Art® magazine and Glass Patterns Quarterly®, and contributing writer for Glass Art® and The Flow®. She also works as a freelance writer and editor specializing primarily in the arts and non-fiction publications. She has too many pets and needs a lot of naps.

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THAT'S SPICY!

YOU WON'T BE CHILLY WITH THIS CHILI

Recipe by Lisa Caroglianian Dorazio.

RECIPE

DIRECTIONS

Welcome winter with a favourite comfort food. The aromatic spices in this recipe will draw everyone to the table for a steaming bowl of chili over rice. Enjoy with garnishes of your choice. Options for sides include tortilla chips, salsa, corn bread, Cheddar Old Bay Biscuits or Oyster crackers.

1. Chop onions. Set aside.
2. Mince garlic. Set aside.
3. Chop all peppers. Set aside.
4. Drain/rinse beans/mushrooms. Set aside.
5. Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium high heat (or large pot). Add ground beef. Cook 5-7 minutes or until browned.
6. Add chopped onions/minced garlic. Cook until onions are tender.
7. Transfer beef, garlic and onion mixture to warming slow cooker. Turn slow cooker to high.

8. Stir in beer. Cook for 7-10 minutes.
9. Add all chopped peppers. Stir.
10. Add all spices. Stir.
11. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce and paste. Stir. Continue to cook on high for 10 minutes.
12. Add beans, and mushrooms. Stir. Reduce heat allowing chili to simmer and thicken for 2-3 hours.

Serve two (2) generous ladles of chili over ½ cup steamed rice in bowl. Garnish. 🍁

Entrepreneur Lisa Caroglianian Dorazio loves creating in the kitchen. Family, friends and clients regularly benefit from her home-grown fruits, vegetables and spices. When not engaged in serving her clientele, Lisa enjoys volunteering, watching and/or playing sports, traditional crafting, traveling, ethnic cuisine dining, gardening and even landscaping for her friends.

INGREDIENTS

- Two (2) Tablespoons Olive Oil
- Two (2) pounds extra lean ground beef

Canned Goods

- 1 can of Beer
- 1 cup beef broth (canned, instant stock or homemade)
- 1 can Black Beans rinse/drained (540 mL - 19 fl oz liq)
- 1 can Sliced Mushrooms rinse/drained (284 mL - 10 oz fl)
- 1 can Whole Plum Tomatoes (796 mL - 28 fl oz)
- 2 tablespoons Tomato Paste
- 1 can Tomato Sauce (680 mL - 24 fl oz)
- 1 can Six Bean Blend¹ rinse/drained (540 mL - 19 fl oz liq)

Fresh Vegetables

- 4-6 cloves minced Garlic
- 2 cups chopped Green Bell Pepper
- 1 cup chopped Red Sweet Pepper
- 1 medium Hungarian Wax Pepper diced (yellow, orange or red - the darker the hotter)
- 1 medium Jalapeño pepper diced
- 4 cups (approx. 3 medium) chopped sweet onions

Spices

- 2 teaspoons Allspice
- 2 Bay Leaves
- 1 tablespoon Chili Powder
- 2 teaspoons Ground Cumin
- 2 teaspoons Oregano
- 1 teaspoon Ground Himalayan Pink Salt
- 1 teaspoon Finely Ground Black Pepper

Garnishes²

- Dash with bottled Tabasco (or hot) Sauce to taste
- 1 Tablespoon Sour Cream
- 1 Tablespoon Shredded Cheddar Cheese
- 1 Tablespoon Diced Scallions
- 1 Tablespoon Diced Red onions

¹ Six Bean Blend includes: Chickpeas, Dark red kidney beans, Black-eyed peas, White kidney beans, Romano beans, Baby lima beans.

² All garnish options and rice are included in total nutritional count. Omission of any item will reduce calorie count.

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| CALORIES* | 338 kcal |
| PROTEIN* | 17 grams |
| FAT* | 10 grams |
| NET CARBS* | 41 grams |
| FIBER* | 5 grams |
| SUGAR* | 6 grams |
| SODIUM* | 479 mg |

* may vary depending on specific ingredients & brands used.

SERVINGS: 10-12 PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES COOK TIME: 3-4 HOURS



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