

Living And Growing

It began about a week or so ago. First my nose started running and then my bones began to ache. The tiredness came a bit later, to be followed by a bad cough. Before you know it, I was in the midst of a full blown case of the "bug." In case you are not familiar with what the "bug" means, it is a catch all phrase for some sort of virus, infection, or the like.

Being sick is not much fun. It's especially tough if you have to go ahead and work. The hardest part, though, was dealing with all of the help that was offered. Every time I would sniff, someone would pull out a capsule of this or a tablet of that. Some were pink, some were blue, and some were a combination of the two. I must have had twenty favorite remedies passed my way. This person suggested antibiotics. Another person said take a cold pill. My mother, as you might expect, made the most reasonable suggestion of chicken soup. All of their suggestions, to frequent dismay, fell on deaf ears. I just wasn't willing to make use of the magic.

I'm not much for taking pills. I have a little faith in mother nature, and I like to think that this body I received was designed pretty well. I eat right, exercise, and try to take care of it. Sure, there are times when the system breaks down and a little extra help from man is a blessing. But as a matter of routine, it just doesn't make sense. I like the idea of leaving my body to its own devices. These carcasses of ours seem to be more capable than some of us realize.

People actually got mad at me for not taking their suggestions. My comments about relieving the symptoms not being the same as relieving the problems didn't seem to get heard. It was more than evident that people like the idea of taking pills. They are so neat, simple, and full of promise that they're hard to resist. I've got to admit, they do sound good. But could it be that we've got a little carried away with the whole business?

Have you been to your local drug store lately? There is a pill for everything. Television bombards us also. I get a headache everytime I look at some big sweaty construction worker encouraging me to take some pill to make my multiple pains go away. If the commercials are to be believed, we're one sick bunch.

Hey, folks, if you need what you are taking, then take it. Medications aren't to be discounted in many situations. But do take a close look at that word need. Could it be that some of those little aches and pains are our bodies way of communicating with us? Is it perhaps trying to tell us that we aren't taking good care of it? Is it all that wise to mask the symptoms or take a pill that takes over for our natural system? For me, most of the time, I'll stick with chicken soup and mother nature. They've both been around a long time...

Job Workshop Offered

The Opportunity Corporation will offer a five-day class aimed at improving job-hunting skills beginning on Nov. 12. The week-long class will meet at Walnut Elementary School from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

The training sessions are open to the public and there is no charge. The sessions are designed to help develop good job searching and job interview skills.

For more information on the program, contact the Opportunity Corp. at 649-3231.

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THE GOOD COOK'S COMPANION: CAST-IRON WARE

Years ago, cast-iron cookware was generally considered the best available. Even today, many great chefs agree that cast-iron ware is, in a number of ways, second to none.

The foremost virtue of this particular cookware may be its durability. Many a skillet, Dutch oven, and muffin pan has been tended with loving care by one generation of cooks after another. Furthermore, cast iron is an efficient heat conductor and thus saves time and energy in the kitchen. Also, just one meal a day prepared in these fine black pans will provide your body with all of the iron it needs.

Well-cared-for cast-iron ware is like a fine wine—it gets better with age. So perhaps the best way to obtain your first skillet or griddle is to turn to your own family. You may well find that a favorite aunt would be delighted to give you an iron pot she no longer needs. Or perhaps you'll run across a good piece at an estate sale, yard sale, or flea market. If you must go shopping for new cast-iron ware, you'll find it in most department stores, hardware stores, camping supply outlets, and at some mail-order companies.

A good iron utensil is heavy and is made all in one piece. The bottom and sides should meet smoothly, without a welded seam, and curve into one another.

New ironware will be coated inside and out with a protective oily substance and will feel sticky to the touch. Old utensils, on the other hand, should be black inside and out. If the inner surfaces are smooth, with a slight dry sheen, you'll know the pan has been well seasoned through frequent use and good care.

If you buy new pans, your first job will be to scrub them using a sponge and mild cleanser to remove the sticky coating. After rinsing and drying the ironware, slather a thick layer of unsalted vegetable shortening over the inner surfaces of each utensil, including the undersides of any lids. Then set the tops on the pans and bake them in a slow oven (250°F) for 1-1/2 hours, occasionally swabbing the grease around the interiors to keep them evenly coated. Let the pans cool, drain or wipe out any excess grease with a clean cloth, buff up a sheen, and the cookware should be ready to use.

After preparing a meal, and as soon as the pans are cool enough to handle, they should be washed or wiped. Don't ever use harsh abrasives or scrub down to the bare metal, as these methods will remove all the fine seasoning you've given to the surfaces.

Once you've seasoned your cookware, you'll find that *Uprisings: The Whole Grain Bakers' Book*, a unique cookbook recently published by THE MOTHER EARTH NEWS, will give you lots of tasty recipes, like the one below, for your cookie sheet or muffin pan. There's an old saying that the heavier the pan, the lighter the muffin. If that's the case, your cast-iron muffin pan will make delicious ones.

BANANA MUFFINS

- 2 or 2-1/2 ripe bananas, mashed with a fork
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1/3 cup oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1-1/2 tablespoons water
- 1-1/3 cups whole wheat pastry flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix mashed bananas with beaten egg, oil, honey, vanilla, and water. In another bowl combine dry ingredients. Make a well in the center and pour in wet mixture all at once. Stir just until moistened—batter should be lumpy. Fill greased muffin cups 2/3 full and bake 30 to 35 minutes at 350°F. Makes 12 muffins.

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