

Columns

There are right and wrong ways to microwave eggs

I have never cooked eggs in the microwave simply because my son and his friend put a whole egg in the microwave when they were kids, and the egg exploded making a terrible mess. Since that time I have also read stories about the many failures cooks had with eggs and microwaves so I stayed away from the task on purpose.

Last week while preparing my dinner salad I discovered that I had forgotten to boil eggs and I decided to try one in the microwave. Thinking I had learned from reading stories warning of impending doom I cracked the egg and put the contents in a glass dish and covered it with two layers of napkins. I checked the progress after one minute but did not like the texture so I gave it another minute and it was done to my delight.

For days I have been wondering what all the fuss has been about cooking eggs in the microwave; I had no trouble the first time so I decided to try it again. I repeated the process and again after one minute the yolk was not cooked hard so I put it in for another minute. For some reason the yolk was still not hard so I pondered what to do and decided to pierce the yolk with a fork and to my stunned amazement; the yolk popped and splattered all over the microwave as well as splashing into my right eye and on my forehead. Lesson learned; scramble the egg before putting it into the microwave!

Speaking of eggs, did you try King Charles Fava bean quiche? Well I did try it and I can honestly say that I did not like it. I did, however, watch

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



the coronation and thought it was quite interesting. It was certainly better than watching all the negative stuff on the news this week. I decided not to set my alarm to 5 a.m. but subconsciously my mind woke me up at 5:30 so I did not miss too much.

The cats were pretty confused when I moved into the living room and got comfy on the couch with the TV on. I really enjoyed seeing all the high fashion dresses and hats. I thought our First lady, Doctor Jill Biden, was beautiful in her Ralph Lauren dress and I really liked her granddaughter, Finnigan Biden's outfit.

Catherine, Princess of Wales was a knock out as expected and Queen Camilla's white embroidered gown was, in my mind, absolutely perfect for the occasion. I was pleased to see she was not covered by beautiful robes although the robes I viewed were gorgeous.

I was especially intrigued by the floral headdress Catherine chose instead of a tiara. I don't believe I have ever seen such a stunning headpiece and her daughter, Princess Charlotte, wore a matching one but a smaller design and the mother and daughter matching ensemble was a delight. The headpieces were made of glittering silver and embroidery, a joint design ef-

fort by the famous milliner Jess Collett and designer Alexander McQueen. I actually thought this headwear was the highlight of the whole coronation and well worth my getting up early to see.

A kitty cat update: Sadly, Simey the blind stray has been gone for two weeks. I have placed posters around the neighborhood and called or texted all the neighbors as well as having walked around all the garages and hiding places looking for Simey, with no success finding him. This is when I realize I don't understand cats even after having cared for them my whole life; I wonder why he left? Chessy, the other stray, seemed quite lost last week without his friend, but I hope Simey found his original home.

The neighbor cats, Tiger, Stripe and Rosy have been helping me in the garden. I have been cleaning out the last area behind the shed which the former owners used as a catch-all for limbs and leaves and I am trying to make it a prettier area with brick borders and a few new plants.

One afternoon I was moving mulch and dirt around an old bush hoping to give it new life and had dug holes to plant new hosta plants and when I turned around to place a plant in a hole Tiger was going pot-

ty in the hole I had just dug. I thought it was pretty funny and I took a picture to send to his human. Then today I was filling the porch pots with impatient plants and new potting soil and Stripe, Tiger's sister, promptly jumped into the large pot and began digging along with me. All the while Chessy cat was sitting on the porch quite obviously irritated at the attention his neighbor cat was receiving. Life without cats would be quite boring!

It certainly has been nice to be able to work in the yard again especially after dinner. I seem to be able to get a lot done in the early evening and I try to stay out as long as possible. The worse time of the day for me in the winter is after dinner and trying to find something to do when in the summer I can garden.

The heat of the day has

passed and right now early evening is a gardener's dream. Years ago I had a huge patch of evening primrose plants and they bloom in the evening and the blooms stay open until early morning. The evening primrose blooms have a lemon fragrance and between the primrose and the herbs my yard smelled really nice. I have yet to find any evening primrose for this yard but I am looking.

Now that I am gardening I have less time to cook so I decided to use my computer time to research microwave egg recipes. I am sharing the first one I tried and I really liked it. I started with "The Incredible Egg" website and used their basic French Omelet recipe and added fresh herbs. Wow, it was incredibly delicious!

Microwave French Omelet

2 large eggs
1/8 tsp. Salt
dash pepper
1 tsp. Butter
1/3 to 1/2 C. filling, such as shredded cheese or finely chopped ham
I added 1/4 C. chopped fresh herbs

Beat eggs, water, salt and pepper in small bowl until blended.

Microwave butter in 9-inch glass pie plate on high until melted, about 15 seconds. Tilt plate to coat bottom evenly. Pour egg mixture into hot pie plate. Cover tightly with plastic wrap, leaving a small vent.

Microwave on high 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 minutes. Do not stir.

When top is thickened and no visible liquid egg remains, place filling on one half of the omelet. Fold omelet in half with turner; slide from pie plate onto serving plate. Serve immediately.

<https://www.incredibleegg.org/recipes/basic-microwave-french-omelet/>

New Moon is back in the sky

Friday's New Moon means we'll see a wonderful waxing crescent Moon back in our evening sky. Can you find it on Sunday night? It will be below and right of Venus.

Monday, the two bodies appear much closer. Tuesday evening, the Moon is above and left of Venus. This alignment presents us with a challenge. If you own binoculars, try finding the Moon while the Sun is still above the horizon.

I find it interesting that it surprises some that you can see the Moon in the daylight. You can, but it's more difficult given the bright blue sky. But then see if you can find Venus

In the night sky

By David Leake



in the daylight. It's very possible if you know where to look. But you can let the Moon be your guide. Why not give it a shot?

Venus is in the middle of the constellation Gemini, below the stars Pollux and Castor,

marking the heads of the twin brothers.

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

More state help needed to assist farmers in soil conservation

By DAVID KLEINSCHMIDT

After traveling across Illinois and with my consulting business, Progressive Agronomy Consulting, I have worked on conservation and nutrient management plans with farmers at all scales. I have seen soil at its unhealthiest and soil at its healthiest. I have seen the power in soil health focused farming practices - witnessed firsthand soil that is bone dry become rich with microbes with the help of living roots and soil health practices.

With seven people dying and dozens injured when a dust cloud enveloped Interstate 55 south of Springfield and made international news, there have been a lot of people commenting about the need to do something to ensure this doesn't happen again. But this

isn't unprecedented. The Dust Bowl occurred nearly 100 years ago when the topsoil was left loose without anything to hold it in place. Strong winds picked up the soil and blew it across the Great Plains and all the way to the East Coast.

The month of April in central Illinois was drier and much windier than normal. With normal rain events, this accident might have never occurred, but only masked the underlying cause.

Farmers need support from leaders at the state level to implement conservation practices to help keep more tragic accidents from occurring. Legislation now in the Illinois House - Senate Bill 1701, the Partners for Conservation Reauthorization Act - has a focus on soil health and providing

funds for conservation farming practices and education. This bill could help provide support to farmers to ensure that we keep our most valuable resource, the soil, in place.

In Illinois, we lose nearly five tons of topsoil per acre per year on average. Much of that erosion is from rain, not wind. It's not as apparent, because it falls from the sky and is less visible. But nearly every lake and reservoir in the state deals with sedimentation from agricultural land that carries with it soil nutrients like phosphorus that cause algal blooms in the middle of the summer or nitrates that can cause blue baby syndrome and other illnesses. This sedimentation forces municipalities to use more chemicals to treat the drinking water or to spend

millions of dollars on reverse osmosis systems. All this cost gets passed down to everyone using that water.

Through my work, I have learned directly from the farmers I serve that there is a desired need for more outreach programs, peer-to-peer mentor groups, and education on how to manage conservation practices, like cover crops, and strip-till as another tool in the toolbox. Sometimes, the cost of the cover crops and the risk of the unknown keeps farmers from trying new practices.

The truth about erosion is that it is a biological process in the soil, specifically a lack of biological processes - or stable aggregates. These are the lumps and clumps of soil glued together. Without the glue to hold the soil together, Illinois

soil is susceptible to wind and water erosion.

I believe that the tenants of soil health outlined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service can help solve the problem.

1) Keep the soil covered as much as possible with residues.

2) Minimize physical, chemical, and biological disturbances.

3) Keep a living root in the soil as much as possible.

4) Add more plant diversity. But farmers need support through education, technical assistance, and funding in order to adopt these soil health practices.

Often, farmers feel like they are on an island if they are doing something different than their neighboring farmers and feel

like they can't talk about what they are doing with them even though the neighbor may be curious about the practice. Peer groups have worked incredibly well for some projects I have been a part of in Kansas to get a greater adoption rate with a greater degree of success.

I support SB1701, as it provides resources for peer-to-peer education and resources for farmers who are considering adopting a soil health system to their farming operation. Farmers can be their own greatest support group when adopting a new farming practice.

I urge you to join me in calling on our elected officials to pass this bipartisan bill.

David Kleinschmidt is owner of Progressive Agronomy Consulting in Vandalia.

Weekly Horoscopes

ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, try to rectify an imbalance in a relationship with another person close to you this week. It's never too late to make amends, and the rewards are fully worth it.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, friction can be overcome with patience and perseverance. Take an even-keeled approach and give things time to simmer. Change will come.

GEMINI - May 22/June 21

The brighter you shine, the more things will come your way this week, Gemini. Wear a big smile on your face and get out into the thick of things.

CANCER - June 22/July 22

Cancer, you may have to change your way of thinking to get on the same wavelength as some others this week. Be open-minded to new experiences.

LEO - July 23/Aug 23

Important lessons about balance could come your way soon, Leo. You need to find that happy medium between work and home responsibilities.

VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Events this week could leave you a little dazed and bewildered, Virgo. Nothing seems to be going to plan and that could get on your nerves. Figure out a way to destress.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, your urge to take action comes on strong this week. Figure out a project you can put your efforts behind as soon as possible and then dive in with maximum effort.

SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Use this week as an opportunity to tend to your own needs, Scorpio. Indulge in a spa treatment or play hooky and go on a road trip all by yourself.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your desire to get ahead is very strong over the course of the next few days. Now you only need to figure out the venture that you will take on.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Others may be begging for your attention, Capricorn. But this week is all about self-healing for you. Focus inward to bring about any personal change you desire.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

You can accomplish a great deal when you happen to get moving, Aquarius. This week the struggle may be finding the motivation to take the first step.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, take a break from reality by reading a good fantasy book, watching a movie or enjoying a stage show. You can use the respite.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

MAY 14

Miranda Cosgrove, Actress (30)

MAY 15

Andy Murray, Athlete (36)

MAY 16

Janet Jackson, Singer (57)

MAY 17

Nikki Reed, Actress (35)

MAY 18

George Strait, Singer (71)

MAY 19

Eleanor Tomlinson, Actress (31)

MAY 20

Busta Rhymes, Rapper (51)

