Create memories and help your community by shopping local this Christmas season

By Sally Rummel
news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282

There’s certainly more to the holidays than just shopping, but with only three more weeks until Christmas, finding the right gifts for all the people on your list is likely at the top of your own to-do list.

The good news is that half of all Christmas shopping in 2016 will be done at traditional brick-and-mortar stores, according to the National Retail Federation. Online shopping will claim the other half of this year’s shopping dollars.

However, the most fun, rewarding holiday experiences don’t happen with a click on your computer.

It’s that “wow” moment when you find just the right gift for someone special; you can touch it, pick it up and feel the quality, then wrap it all up with a personal connection made between yourself and an appreciative local retailer. There’s no waiting, either, and hoping the item will arrive on time and in one piece.

Knowing how to navigate in-store shopping for the best retail experience is an exciting challenge for today’s consumers and shop owners.

For business owners

Now more than ever, storeowners and sales associates need to be knowledgeable about what they’re selling, engaging and interactive with their customers, so they can add value to each transaction.

Thanks to loyalty rewards, Facebook and emails, tech savvy store owners can get to know their customers and their preferences, tailoring sales and “wish lists” so there’s a personal side to shopping locally.

One excited shopper recently received a Facebook private message from Eclections about a gift owner that Nicole McCurdy thought her husband would like from their newly opened men’s shop. That type of service makes local shopping personal, fun and convenient.

This year, we created a Christmas Wish List for our customers.

Cortney Gwaltney
Owner of The Retreat Salon & Skin Spa in Fenton Township.

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See HAPPY on 2B
**HAPPY**
Continued from Page 1B

Many local retailers also gladly create Wish Lists for their customers. Stop in at your favorite jeweler, boutique or salon/spa and write down a few ideas for gifts you’d really enjoy.

“This year, we created a Christmas Wish List for our customers,” said Cortney Goulart, co-owner of The Retreat Salon & Skin Spa in Fenton Township. “It’s better than just coming in and guessing what a person might want. We also sell gift certificates online for the ultimate in convenience.”

Other added value services, like free gift-wrapping, encourage local shopping. Karen Pacentinti of Fenton’s Open Book, offers free gift-wrapping, along with discounted pricing on bestsellers and new titles, special orders for out-of-print books and a welcome door to local and self-published authors.

“Being a small store, people are always surprised that we have just the book they are looking for,” said Pacentinti. “We have many more titles than people think, compared to big-box stores that only carry the top bestsellers.”

**For customers**

On the customer side, it’s important to make the holiday season less stressful for busy shop owners and employees, too, by treating them courteously. They’re working long hours and days, and a smile goes a long way.

Businesses offering spa or salon services appreciate it when customers are on time for their appointments and if a cancellation is necessary, that it’s made early enough that someone else can fill that appointment.

To make returns hassle-free for both the store and the customer, hang on to receipts and know a store’s return policies. If a return is necessary, either from buyer’s remorse, duplicated, wrong size, wrong color, or simply a change of heart, have the receipt handy so that the item can be returned hassle-free. Be honest about the reason for a return, and most store owners will be happy to accommodate.

“I’m happy to make an exchange for just about any reason, as long as you have a receipt,” said Kevin Bogela of Bridge Street Exchange in Linden. “I’ve had customers return (Stormy Kromer) hats that smell like bacon grease or smoke. Products with wool sometimes can hold scents. I’ll still make the exchange, but they’ve obviously been worn. We can’t really send items back to manufacturers for stuff like that.”

**SUMMARY**

- Here’s how to make Christmas shopping a pleasant, rewarding experience, whether you’re a retailer or customer.

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**Cheapo Christmas**

Capers and nonperishable dry goods, shelves packed with fresh water, canned and nonperishable dry goods, and anything else we might need. I remember thinking at the time, ‘I hope nothing really happens because I don’t want to have to eat SPAM for any reason — ever.’

On trips to a larger town nearby, I remember seeing new signs pop up all over — the large yellow and black ‘Fallout Shelter’ signs. We learned that a fallout shelter was designed to protect people from radioactive debris resulting from a nuclear explosion. Oh yeah, that made us feel much better.

Anyway, nothing happened. The United States agreed to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s offer to remove the Cuban missiles in exchange for the U.S. promising not to invade Cuba.

A few years later, we moved to the Chicago area when my dad accepted an executive position for Sears at the Sears Tower (now the Willis Building). During my late teenage years, we had a visitor once a year around Christmastime. We knew him only as ‘Mr. Ernesto.’

Dad told us Mr. Ernesto was a Cuban refugee who came to work in the Sears Tower mailroom, a job usually held by much younger employees. They had him trained, but Mr. Ernesto later helped Mr. Ernesto get a better job with a local security company. He moved to Miami, but always came up to visit our family during the holidays. He told us a story I will never forget.

Mr. Ernesto said, as a child in Cuba, he and Fidel Castro were school chums. While Castro was in the process of overthrowing Cuba’s government, Mr. Ernesto was part of a resistance. He said he came face to face with Castro one day and knew then that he was going to die. Instead, in a moment of weakness, Castro told him he would turn his back for five minutes. If Ernesto was not gone when he turned back around, he would be killed.

Mr. Ernesto obviously made tracks and was out of there. Today I hope the world doesn’t romanticize who and what Fidel Castro really was. It doesn’t make me happy that a human being has died — but this man was a ruthless tyrant and dictator, a liar and a killer, who made tens of thousands of his own terrified countrymen, endure unbearable pain and suffering.

Now that he is dead, please let’s not glorify and remember him as one of the world’s great leaders.

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What is neuropathy?

Things you should know about nerve damage and its causes

By Vera Hogan
vhogan@tctimes.com; 810-433-6823

People diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy suffer from a number of unpleasant, painful symptoms.

A result of damage to your peripheral nerves, neuropathy generally describe the pain as stabbing, burning or tingling.

Causes include:
- **ALCOHOLISM**
  Poor dietary choices made by people with alcoholism can lead to vitamin deficiencies.
- **AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES**
  These include Sjogren’s syndrome, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and more.
- **DIABETES**
  More than half the people with diabetes develop some type of neuropathy.
- **EXPOSURE TO POISONS**
  Toxic substances include heavy metals or chemicals.
- **MEDICATIONS**
  Certain medications, especially those used to treat cancer (chemotherapy), can cause peripheral neuropathy.
- **INFECTIONS**
  These include certain viral or bacterial infections, including Lyme disease, shingles, Epstein-Barr virus, hepatitis C, and more.
- **INHERITED DISORDERS**
  Disorders such as Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease are hereditary types of neuropathy.
- **TRAUMA OR PRESSURE ON THE NERVE**
  Traumas, such as from motor vehicle accidents, falls or sports injuries can sever or damage peripheral nerves.
- **TUMORS**
  Growths, cancerous (malignant) and noncancerous (benign), can develop on the nerves or press nerves.
- **VITAMIN DEFICIENCIES**
  B vitamins - including B-1, B-6 and B-12 - vitamin E and niacin are crucial to nerve health.
- **BONE MARROW DISORDERS**
  These include abnormal protein in the blood (monoclonal gammopathies), a form of bone cancer (osteosclerotic myeloma), lymphoma and amyloidosis.
- **OTHER DISEASES**
  These include kidney disease, liver disease, connective tissue disorders and an undiagnosed thyroid.

Free dinner for neuropathy pain sufferers

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7 AT 7 PM
Little Joe’s Tavern
11518 S. Saginaw St., Grand Blanc

A free dinner is being offered exclusively for neuropathy sufferers. Preceding your free dinner, Dr. Beth Steczek will be speaking on the latest FDA-cleared treatment program found to relieve pain where others have failed. This event is for new patients only and includes free admission and free meal. Seating is limited so reservations are required by calling (810) 412-0628. This is an adults only event.

Sharpen your memory skills with brain games

Compiled By Vera Hogan

The following are games that can boost your long and short-term memory:

**Crossword Puzzles**

Crossword puzzles are a fantastic tool for engaging short-term memory, since your brain has to sort through a series of colors and shapes in order to assemble a visual picture. The more pieces, the harder your brain has to work, and the greater the reward: “Clicking” a piece in place has been shown to produce dopamine, which the brain has to work, and the greater the reward. “Clicking” a piece in place has been shown to produce dopamine, which can help concentration.

**Video Games**

Find video games that force you to multitask. While shooting aliens can be fun, it's not necessarily going to boost your cognitive function. Games that require you to react to a stimulus - like a road sign or new environment - while playing can improve working memory, or the ability to recall information while you’re in the middle of solving a problem.

**Sudoku**

This number game has been a staple of newspapers for years, and for good reason. By having to keep a series of numbers in your head while mentally “rehearsing” their placement in the nine-space grids, you’re relying heavily on working memory.

**Chess**

Chess is one of the most intellectually challenging games around, though newer players often rely on short-term memory in order to analyze the board and plot their next move on the spot. More experienced players have committed strategies to their long-term memory, shifting the exercise to retaining information for the long haul.

**Rebus Puzzle**

A rebus puzzle usually consists of letters, numbers, pictures, and symbols that contain clues to the answer. The puzzle phrase “BAD BAD,” for example, is an encrypted way of saying “too bad.” You’ll need some knowledge of clichés and expressions to solve these puzzles, and you won’t be able to rely on implied or contextual clues like you would with a conventional sentence or word game.

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**Public Notice**

**Charter Township of Fenton**

**Special Board Meeting Synopsis**

**November 28, 2016**

The Fenton Township Board held a special meeting on Tuesday, November 28, 2016 at the Fenton Township Civic Community Center, 12060 Mantawauka Drive, Fenton, Michigan and took the following actions.

1. Approved invoices and expenditures for payment in the total amount of $51,056.44.
2. Approved a motion to continue the optional 80/20 rules for 2017 to comply with the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, Public Act 152 of 2011.
3. Adopted Resolution No. 2016-24, declaring intent to issue capital improvement bonds to fund sewer system improvements and authorizing the publication of the required notice of intent.
4. Approved internal and external committee appointments for the 2016-2020 term of office.
5. Adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

A complete copy of the minutes of this meeting and any ordinances adopted at the meeting are on file and available for review at the Fenton Township Office, 12060 Mantawauka Drive, Fenton, Michigan 48430. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Wednesday and 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Friday. Ordinances, meeting schedules, meeting minutes and other Township information are also available at www.fentontownship.org.

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**HOUSE PLAN OF THE WEEK**

**Calhoun**

**PLAN 30-479**

The Calhoun would be so nice to come home to. Stone veneer bases provide natural-looking support for wooden posts on the vaulted porch, and wooden handrails add to the nostalgic and welcoming ambiance. It’s easy to imagine winding away a lazy afternoon on an old-fashioned porch swing suspended here, with a good book and a cool drink in hand.

More plans at associateddesigns.com

---

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**HOWELL**

Just listed!  
3 bedroom  
2 bath ranch on large lot with lake access to Beavine Lake. Large, beautiful kitchen, open to dining area. 24x16 deck, 1st floor laundry. Wood stove in basement w/walk up lower level for easy access. Oversized 3 car detached garage has 220 amp service. A must see! $248,000.

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**VILLAGE OF HOLLAND**

Just listed!  
3 bedroom  
Walk on large lot with lake access to Bunker Lake. Large, beautiful kitchen, open to dining area. 21x20 family room with many windows. Nice patio area, 1st floor laundry, basement and 2 car garage. $390,000.

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**HOLLY HANDYMAN SPECIAL!**

Need lots of space and five bedrooms? Here is your new home, over 3600 total combined square footage of living space. This house has a large kitchen and family room, walkout finished basement with a two car garage.

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**OPEN SUN. 1-3 PM**

13123 River Rock Pass • Linden

Hartland

2525 Tiptico Lake Rd, Linden, MI 48153  
New Open Floor Plan, High Quality Custom Home.

- Oversized Riverfront  
- Walkout Basements  
- Over 3600 Total Combined Square Footage of Living Space  
- Beautiful, Spacious Kitchen  
- Family Room  
- Master Suite

For Sale: $229,900

**OPEN SUN. 1-3 PM**

16442 Elder Oak Trail • Fenton

Very nice 3 bedroom ranch located in a quiet newer subdivision on an extra large partially wooded lot. Home features an open floor plan, granite counter tops, ceramic floors, gas fireplace in great room w/cathedral ceilings. Finished basement includes an additional bedroom, rec room and office plus full bath stubbed to finish to your taste and needs.

For Sale: $218,600

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**A New Home for the Holidays!**

- Open Sunday, Dec. 11th, 1-3 PM
- 33883 Helvella Dr. • Fenton

Beautiful home in Stoney Brook Subdivision

This 4 bedroom, 2½ bath home features nice open kitchen with stainless steel appliances, hardwood floors, reverse osmosis system, spacious master bedroom & bath and a large 4th bedroom or play space for the kids. Partially finished basement, large deck overlooking grassland & woods for plenty of privacy. Community sidewalks and new asphalt streets.

For Sale: $274,900

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**VILLAGE OF HOLLAND**

Just listed!

- 3 bedroom  
- Walk on large lot with lake access to Bunker Lake. Large, beautiful kitchen, open to dining area. 24x16 deck, 1st floor laundry. Wood stove in basement w/walk up lower level for easy access. Oversized 3 car detached garage has 220 amp service. A must see! $248,000.

**HOLLAND**

For Sale: $249,000

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**GREAT NEW HOME!**

- 3 bedroom  
- 2 bath ranch

For Sale: $249,000

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**OPEN SUN. 1-3 PM**

286 Clear View Ct. • Linden

For Sale: $229,900
YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED OF A REGULAR PUBLIC HEARING TO BE HELD TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2016 AT 7:00 PM BY THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF FENTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS AT 12060 MANTAWAUKA. THIS HEARING WILL BE HELD TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

NEW BUSINESS:
ZBA16-044 Vantage Homes, 13453 Lakeshore, Fenton: Requesting a 18 ft. 6 in. sight line variance to build a new house and garage after demolishing the existing, at 13377 Lakeshore, parcel 06-14-551-035

ZBA16-045 Steve Steffey, 13453 Lakeshore, Fenton: Requesting a 3 ft. 10 in. setback from principal structure and 6 ft. 4 in. sight line variances to build a detached accessory building and covered deck with fireplace, parcel 06-14-551-020.

ZBA16-046 Greg Payne, 2413 Davis, Fenton: Requesting a 16 sq. ft. allowable square footage of accessory building variance to build a garage across the street from principal structure, parcel 06-02-551-010.

ZBA16-047 Daniel Maldonado, 4237 Crystal Cove Ct, Linden: Requesting a home occupation permit to operate gun sales business in residence; parcel 06-21-626-034

ZBA16-048 Julie Miller & Jay Shepherd, 11475 Torrey, Fenton: Requesting 6.5 ft. sight line and 341 sq. ft. allowable square footage of accessory building variances to put a 6 ft. privacy fence on deck and keep part of existing garage, parcel 06-02-551-003

RENEWAL OF HOME OCCUPATIONS:
HO16-047 Daniel Maldonado, 4237 Crystal Cove Ct, Linden: Requesting a home occupation permit to operate gun sales business in residence, parcel 06-21-626-034

ZBA16-048 Julie Miller & Jay Shepherd, 11475 Torrey, Fenton: Requesting 6.5 ft. sight line and 341 sq. ft. allowable square footage of accessory building variances to build a garage across the street from principal structure, parcel 06-02-551-010.

WHY DO WE need a $2 million bond to pay for the lift stations in the sewer system? I thought that’s why we were paying big bucks on our sewer bills to cover the upkeep and maintenance. Genesee County should be the ones who pay for it, not us.

BEWARE THAT THE Bah humbug bug is creeping into town. I don’t see a lot of lights and decorations up yet, and the weather has been nice and warm. If you can’t find the means to do the light show, just a single candle in the window lights the way home.

MR. TRUMP WILL not be president for 51 more days but he has already helped to save over 2,000 jobs by keeping jobs at Ford and Carrier in the United States.

IT’S A SHAME that my dog has to be on a leash or in a fence and your cat can come into my yard and kill the birds that I feed all winter.
 Synopsis of Argentine Township Regular Board Meeting November 28, 2016

Call to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Supervisor Saad.

Present: Saad, Graves, Corner, Hallman and Schmidt.

Approved: Minutes as printed of October 24, 2016. Of Regular Board Meeting.

Approved: Budget Amendments.

Approved: Payment of bills as presented.

Authorized: Chief Alien to hire Paul Horkan as a part-time police officer.

Authorized: Fire Department to purchase new hoses.

Approved: Amendment of Zoning Ordinance 12, section 17.04 Accessory Buildings.

Approved: Planning Commission recommendation to amend section 27.01, add 27.02 and delete language in 27.3 of Zoning Ordinance.

Adopted: Resolution 2016-11 designating Supervisor Saad to represent the township at 911 Consortium meetings.

Appointed: Trustee Hallman to the ZBA.

Appointed: Trustee Conner to the Planning Commission.

Appointed: Supervisor Saad to Genesee County Metro Alliance.

Appointed: Supervisor Saad to Genesee County Water & Waste Advisory Committee.

Appointed: Supervisor Saad to NPDES Surface Water Committee.

Appointed: Supervisor Saad to Roads and Bridges.

Appointed: Supervisor Conner to Loose Committee.

Tabled: Lease of Ferrelgas building for Police Department.

Appointed: Supervisor Saad to Shawassee Water Trail Committee.

Appointed: Trustee Hallman to LAFF Pathway Project Committee.

Tabled: Renewal terms of BCBS Renewal Policy.

Authorized: Attorney to proceed with circuit court action for resolution of issue at 7340 Larhing Rd.

Approved: Bid from K&E Electric Supply for outside lighting in the amount of $1.

Authorized: Attorney to proceed in circuit court for resolution to 7340 Larhing Rd. property.

Issued 12 Building and Zoning Permits in the amount of $11,091.90.

Adjourned @7:53 p.m.

Submitted by Denise Graves

Argentine Township Clerk
**HOT LINE CONTINUED**

**TODAY I HEARD** on NPR that her family used 166 bottles of water just to make dinner, which is well over 15 gallons. Seems a little excessive and ridiculous. Where’s the government? Why can’t they get poly tanks and drop them off at each house?

**HOW MANY MORE** people are going to be killed or seriously injured at the intersection of Old U.S. 23 and White Lake Road in Tyrone Township before the township or Livingston County Road Commission decide to do something about it?

**DUE TO THE** new $15 minimum wage laws in many places across the country, McDonald’s has just announced it’s going to put in self-service kiosks nationwide to employ fewer employees. Great job liberal Democrats and unions. Because of this, businesses will look to cut a number of employees.

**THE NEW SECRETS** of the treasury claims huge corporation tax cuts will create more jobs, which in turn will create more tax revenue for a middle class tax cut. When taking from Peter to pay Paul, it’s always better to be Paul.

**I AMVERY** impressed with the brilliant and successful people Trump is bringing into his administration. He continues to drain the swamp, also known as Washington, D.C. The Democrats brought back an original swamp creature as they made Pelosi minority leader.

**WHERE IS THE** Welcome to Fenton sign on Grange Hall Road by the church? It was there before they started building the church and I think it should be there after it’s done. You have all the civic-minded groups to let you know who’s active in this country.

**YOU KNEW WHEN** this country.

**HE continues to** drain the swamp, also known as Washington, D.C. The Democrats brought back an original swamp creature as they made Pelosi minority leader.

**TRUMP NOT** A politician? For those who are afraid and didn’t know what to do when he got in office, he’s one of the greatest politicians we ever had, he’s a super politician.

**TURNING UP TRUMP,** why is Trump backing out now and reneging even before he’s in office on every promise that got him elected? He got a dose of reality. He realizes now that the president does not run this country. The one world order runs this country.

**YOU KNEW WHEN** you moved into your condo that there are rules. If you don’t like it, move to Flint. You can leave your decorations up all year, have a few bottles of water just to make dinner, which is well over 15 gallons. Seems a little excessive and ridiculous. Where’s the government? Why can’t they get poly tanks and drop them off at each house?

**PRAYERS TO ALL** those affected by the fires in Tennessee. Stay safe, and good luck to the first responders battling with the fires.

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**Obituaries**

**Dennis Earl Willingham**
1948-2016
Dennis Earl Willingham - age 68, died November 13, 2016. There will be no services at this time; a memorial will be held in the spring. Dennis was an outdoorsman, sailor, adventurer, and Mason. He is survived by his wife, Marilyn; two daughters, Elizabeth and Jennifer; sister, Deborah; and extended family. He was preceded in death by his parents, Luther and Mary Lou. Arrangements provided by Sharp Funeral Homes, Linden Chapel, 209 East Broad Street, Linden. Tributes may be posted on the obituaries page of www.sharpfuneralhomes.com.

**Ada Caleca**

**Betty Tucker**

**Carol Stacey**

**Lottie Engelhart**

**Richard E. Graham**

**Linda J. Staley**

**Richard Lawrence**

**Jason Wichert**

**Joanne Boyden**

**Lottie Engelhart**

**Eugene Falerios**

**Jason Lawrence**

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**Katz Family Funeral Home**
Family Funeral Home & Cremation Services
500 Main St. • Fenton • 810-629-2533

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**Obituaries updated daily online! Visit www.tctimes.com**
**DEAR AMY:**
My sister recently died suddenly. My husband does not like my late sister’s husband. My mother invited my sister’s husband to share our holiday dinner. I have a problem with him right now because after 35 years together (she even waited for him while he was in prison for more than a decade), he announced that he had met someone two months after my sister’s death. We all believe he was in prison for 35 years together, this might help you more than plowing through the awkwardness of this high-stakes holiday meal. You can say, ‘Honey, I’m hoping that you can do this for me. If you don’t want to go, or if you don’t think you can behave well, then it would be best for you to make other plans for that day. I’ll be back by six and I’d be happy to bring you some pie.’

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**DEAR AMY:**
How can older family members not feel guilty about stopping the extensive gift-giving that has evolved over the holiday season? My husband and I have been very generous to all of our children and their children. Our family has now swelled to massive numbers and it is overwhelming for us. Also, it must be noted that these family members hardly ever reciprocate or thank us. They don’t remember our birthdays and gift-giving from them is very sporadic. — Overwhelmed

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**DEAR OVERWHELMED:**
Here’s how you do it: You look back on your decades of generosity with pride, and you put the word out that from now on, you will focus on celebrating the holiday season through a shared meal and experiences together. I suggest you send out a group email with this message, and make some plans to attend seasonal concerts and services in your community. The time has come for you to enjoy the season in the way you want to.

---

**WHY IS ALCOHOL BANNED WITH ANTIBIOTICS?**

I’m confused about the medical rule not to drink alcohol while on antibiotics. After doing Internet research on reputable sites, I found, to my surprise, that the overwhelming medical opinion is that moderate alcohol use does not render most antibiotics ineffective. I do understand that alcohol should not be used with specific antibiotics, e.g., Flagyl, because of adverse physical reactions. I read that the warning not to mix alcohol with antibiotics stems from doctors fearing patients taking antibiotics to cure STDs would have lowered inhibitions and engage in unprotected sex. Could you please set the record straight for the public on this subject? — K.L.

**ANSWER:**
I never learned the rule that alcohol shouldn’t be taken while on antibiotics, with the exception of metronidazole (Flagyl), the combination of which causes extremely unpleasant nausea and vomiting, headache, shortness of breath and other symptoms. This reaction can happen to a lesser extent with sulfamethoxazole (a component of Bactrim or Septra) as well as other, less commonly used antibiotics such as tetracycline and some cephalosporins. The antibacterial drug sulfamethoxazole can cause liver damage in combination with excess alcohol. In general, if you are sick enough to need antibiotics, it is prudent to avoid alcohol, and certainly large doses. But alcohol does not render antibiotics ineffective. Preventing STDs is much better than treating them, since not all can be cured. Part of being sexually responsible is making good decisions. You are correct that people are more likely to make unwise decisions with even moderate amounts of alcohol. That’s true with or without antibiotics.

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**SUNDAY SCRAMBLER**
Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

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**TWEED BAKED CHICKEN ENCHILADA SWEET POTATOES**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 3 whole medium-sized sweet potatoes, washed and scrubbed
- Olive oil
- ½ onion, diced
- 2 cooked chicken breast, sliced into 1-inch small pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small red bell pepper, diced
- 1 small orange/yellow bell pepper, diced
- ½ can black beans, washed and rinsed
- 1-inch small pieces
- 1 small green bell pepper, diced
- ¼ can black beans, washed and rinsed
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. sweet (or smoked) paprika
- 1 can red Enchilada Sauce
- 1 cup shredded Mexican cheese (or cheddar or mozzarella cheese)
- 1 lime, juiced
- ¼ cup cilantro
- Handful of cilantro leaves, chopped
- Extra lime wedges - to serve
- 1 Avocado, diced - to serve, optional
- Salsa - to serve, optional

**INSTRUCTIONS:**
Wrap sweet potatoes in one piece of paper towel and microwave on high for 10 minutes. Remove carefully from microwave and pierce all over with a fork, wrap again and microwave for a further 5-10 minutes or until soft (if the centers are still a little hard, don’t worry they will continue to cook in the oven later). While the sweet potatoes are cooking, heat a small amount of oil to a pan over medium heat, add the onions. Once transparent (about 1-2 minutes), add the chicken, garlic and peppers. Cook until the garlic is fragrant. Add the seasonings and continue cooking until chicken is completely coated in the seasonings. Mix in the beans and enchilada sauce. Remove the sweet potatoes from the microwave and allow them to cool for about 5 minutes until they are just warm enough to handle then carefully slice them in half. Use a spoon to scoop out the flesh of the potatoes, leaving 1cm ‘wall’ inside the skin. Transfer the flesh into a medium-sized mixing bowl, setting the skins aside. Add the chicken/fajita mixture to the flesh in the bowl, mix it through until completely combined. Stir in the lime juice and half of the cheese. Arrange the skins on the same baking tray/sheet, and stuff them with the fajita sweet potato mixture. Sprinkle with cheese and the cilantro leaves. Put them back into the oven for 15-20 minutes until cheese is bubbling and starting to brown. Serve with any leftover cilantro leaves, lime wedges, avocado pieces and salsa if desired.
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