



Family and Consumer News

McDowell County Center

July—September 2012

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Save Money During North Carolina's Sales Tax Holiday



North Carolina is offering two tax free weekend events during 2012. The first tax free weekend applies to general merchandise, and the second applies only to Energy Star products. Plan your kids' back-to-school shopping, along with the purchase of any major appliances, around these two

events to take advantage of the best savings.

The tax free weekend for general merchandise purchased in North Carolina is scheduled for **August 3-5, 2012** and applies to the following items:

- Clothing, footwear, and school supplies under \$100
- Sports and recreation equipment under \$50
- Computers under \$3,500
- Computer equipment under \$250

In North Carolina, the Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday is scheduled for **November 2-4, 2012** and applies to the following Energy Star purchases:

- Clothes washers
- Freezers
- Refrigerators
- Central air conditioners
- Room air conditioners
- Air-source heat pumps
- Geothermal heat pumps
- Ceiling fans
- Dehumidifiers, and
- Programmable thermostats



Smart Shopping Strategies for Tax Free Weekend:

The best way to save even more during tax free weekend is to use good common sense. For example, make sure that you compare prices at several different stores, whether online or in person, and use coupons when you can.

In addition, don't buy anything you don't need just because of the tax free

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Save Money During North Carolina's Sales Tax Holiday

weekend. After all, the sales tax rate in North Carolina is 5.75%, so that amount - plus any local sales tax, if applicable - is what you'd be saving during the sales tax holiday. In reality, you may find that you're able to save more money during the week before or the week after the sales tax holiday, so don't confine yourself to doing all of your back-to-school shopping during North Carolina's tax free weekend event.

North Carolina's Department of Revenue offers a detailed list of exempt items during the August sales tax holiday at http://www.dornrc.com/taxes/sales/holiday_exempt.pdf



September 7th-16th

- Clogging
- Pig races
- Petting zoo
- Camel rides
- Competitive exhibits
- Rides for all ages
- Vendors
- Craftsmen
- Animal displays

If you would like to participate in the competitive exhibits and would like the "Pony Express" to pick up your entries, bring your non-perishable items (packed for transport) to the McDowell County Cooperative Extension Office by **August 19th**, along with a completed entry form.

Catalogs are available through our office or online at <http://www.mountainfair.org/> (under NC Mountain State fair, competition)



Our first ever joint ESMMWL and Zumba program kicked off on June 28th at the Marion Senior Center. We have 25 participants ranging in age from 14 to 60+ and everyone is having a blast! Participants are learning how to make healthy lifestyle choices while dancing their way to a healthy weight with the help of our amazing Zumba instructors. The program meets once a week for an hour and half for 12 weeks, so it's a pretty big commitment for our participants but they are all doing so great!

I am looking forward to the next few months and watching everyone's progress as we all work together to reach their goals.

For more information about how you can participate in a future ESMMWL/Zumba program, please contact our office.

11 Great Ways Your Smartphone Can Work Smarter in an Emergency



Consumer Action and AT&T offer these tips on how you can use your mobile phone to prepare for and respond to emergencies:

- 1. Be Prepared:** Use apps, such as FEMA’s emergency preparedness app, to develop and implement emergency preparedness plans for your family, colleagues and loved ones.
- 2. Stay Charged:** Use solar-powered and hand crank chargers and batteries. These chargers allow you to rely on your electronics and wireless devices even in a power outage.
- 3. Stay Connected:** Use database and location-based apps to find loved ones during and after a disaster. Register yourself with the American Red Cross “Safe and Well” database and search for other loved ones that have registered to say they are okay. You can also use AT&T FamilyMap, which provides peace of mind by enabling you to conveniently locate a family member from your wireless phone or PC and know that your family’s information is secure and private.
- 4. Keep It in the Cloud:** Store your important documents, such as personal and financial records, in a password-protected area in the Cloud. New cloud services allow you to access your vital information anytime from anywhere with Internet access and to safely store your work where it’s not vulnerable to a damaged or left-behind computer.
- 5. Get Help!** Consider downloading a smartphone global positioning satellite app. GPS phone trackers have the ability to deliver short messages and your GPS pinpoint location to a preferred list of contacts of your choosing in the event of an emergency.
- 6. Use Quick Response (QR) Codes:** QR code technology can help first responders prevent misdiagnoses and adverse drug reactions in treatment of emergency victims.
- 7. See & Be Seen/Send an SOS:** Use your smartphone as a flashlight when the power is down. There are flashlight apps for almost all smartphones (many of them are free) that use either your screen or camera flash to help you find what you need during a power outage—or help you to be found. Many flashlight apps even offer a Morse code SOS feature.
- 8. Help Others:** Apps such as Phone Aid offer a series of quick educational and instructive “how to” slideshows designed to help jog your memory on skills such as administering CPR. It also shows basic first aid measures you may need to perform while you wait for emergency personnel to respond.
- 9. Locate Resources:** Use mobile maps to find help and resources after a disaster. American Red Cross: Shelter View provides a searchable map of shelter locations by address, city, state and/or ZIP code and is updated every 30 minutes from the National Shelter System. It even includes the shelter capacity and how many residents are currently there.
- 10. Stay Informed:** Create a list of Twitter handles to follow during a disaster. For example, the U.S. Geological Survey is currently studying how they can give better earthquake information via Twitter. Their official handle, @USGSted, tweets out information on occurrences of earthquakes with magnitudes of 5.5 or higher.
- 11. Spread the Word:** Use social media and smartphone apps to help disseminate information about severe weather in real time and warn others. The NOAA Now app provides weather info from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, including reports of hurricanes, tropical storms, mainland storms and tornado and severe thunderstorm alerts.

**AT&T is not responsible, nor liable for, any statements, claims, or services provided by third party apps mentioned above or your use of such third party applications.*

The Produce Lady Offers Free Video Canning Demonstrations

Dr. Ben Chapman, a food safety specialist with N.C. Cooperative Extension, joined Brenda Sutton, The Produce Lady, in two live, one-hour demonstrations on proper canning techniques. Green beans were the featured produce item on June 15 while June 28 featured peaches. Viewers can watch the recorded videos by logging on to www.ustream.tv/channel/the-produce-lady.

The Produce Lady program, supported with a grant from the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, teaches farmers and consumers the wonders of locally grown fruits and vegetables. The program demonstrates how to prepare fresh produce as tasty meals and snacks and advises how to preserve them to use throughout the year.



Fresh North Carolina green beans and peaches are available widely across the state from June to September, and can be purchased at local farmers markets. The Produce Lady live video stream featured the pressure canner method for preserving green beans so that consumers can enjoy nutritious, local green beans throughout the year. The peach demonstration included how to freeze peaches and how to make peach jam. For information on how to use canned green beans, peach preserves and other fresh or preserved produce, check out the recipes section of The Produce Lady website.

Tips for Storing Your Market Bounty



- Wash produce just prior to use. Washing prior to storing can decrease the storage life of fresh produce. Remove any deteriorating fruit as soon as you spot it.

- Store produce at the appropriate temperature—the fridge isn't always the best choice. Fresh produce including potatoes, tomatoes, winter squash and onions store well at or just below room temperature, preferably out of direct sunlight.

- Refrigerate freshly cut or sliced produce for maximum food safety.

- Keep fruits and vegetables in separate refrigerator drawers since many fruits and vegetables emit ethylene, a gas that promotes ripening.

- Line the crisper drawer with a paper towel to absorb moisture. High humidity is beneficial, but condensation is detrimental.

Quick Tip: Did you purchase produce that's not quite ripe? Speed the natural ripening process by placing produce such as tomatoes, peaches and pears in a closed paper bag with an apple or banana.

Join the NC 10% Campaign.... Be a "Locavore"!

Locavore (lo-ca-vore), noun: Someone who seeks out locally grown and produced foods

In North Carolina, we spend about \$35 billion a year on food. If we spent 10 percent locally--\$1.05 per day—approximately \$3.5 billion would be available in the local economy. Time to go shopping!



www.nc10percent.com

SUMMER RECIPES

Double Berry Freezer Jam

4 cups fresh whole blueberries
3 cups fresh strawberries
1 ½ cups sugar
1 (1.59 oz.) envelope freezer jam pectin

Pulse blueberries in food processor 2 to 4 times or until finely chopped, stopping to scrape down sides. Place in a medium-size bowl. Pulse strawberries in food processor 8 to 10 times or until finely chopped, stopping to scrape down sides. Add to blueberries in bowl. Stir in sugar, and let stand for 15 minutes.

Gradually stir in pectin. Stir for 3 minutes; let stand for 5 minutes.

Spoon mixture into sterilized canning jars, filling to ½ inch from top; wipe jar rims clean. Cover with metal lids, and screw on bands. Place in freezer.



Tomato-Zucchini Tart

½ (15 oz.) package refrigerated pie crusts
1 medium zucchini, thinly sliced (about ¾ lb.)
2 tsp. olive oil
3 medium plum tomatoes, sliced
½ cup fresh basil, chopped
1/3 cup (1 ½ oz) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1/3 cup light mayonnaise
½ tsp. freshly ground pepper



Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Fit piecrust into a 9-inch tart pan according to package directions; trim excess. Prick bottom and sides of piecrust using a fork.

Bake piecrust at 450 degrees for 9 to 11 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from oven, and let cool.

Reduce oven temperature to 425 degrees. Saute zucchini in hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 2 minutes or until tender. Arrange zucchini in bottom of prepared pie crust. Arrange tomatoes on top of zucchini.

Stir together basil, cheese, and mayonnaise. Drop by teaspoons evenly on top of tomatoes and spread gently. Sprinkle with pepper.

Bake at 425 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes or until thoroughly heated and cheese mixture is slightly melted.

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Canning Season is Here....

Test your Pressure Canners for Free!



A dial gauge canner has a pressure dial on the top that allows you to read the pressure inside the canner during the canning process. Dial gauges operate from 0 to 25 pounds of pressure, with most recipes and canning instructions calling for a pressure of either 6 or 11 pounds of pressure. Dial gauges **MUST** be tested every year for accuracy. Your dial gauge will be tested against a Master Gauge which will determine if your gauge is accurate, if you can compensate for your gauge being off, or if your gauge needs to be replaced.

The McDowell County Extension Center is offering a free service to check pressure canners with dial gauges until September. You must call 652-7874 to make an appointment.