

Times Remembered
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Before my grandson, Colton was born, my daughter and her husband Steve always spend Christmas Eve night with us. After he came along they spend Christmas Eves with us until he was about 4 years old. I sure miss those times when they spent the night. Now they come up on Christmas Day for dinner and gifts. Colton's

Christmas Memories

older and it's the thing to do now at his house.

After they left Steve's parents get-togethers in Corbin they stopped in Irvine and we attended Candlelight Service at our church, Calvary Baptist. Candlelight Service was very special to me, but because of the COVID-19 and we are unable to have it this Christmas. I will miss it terribly. Perhaps some of the churches might be having a Christmas Eve service, but it will probably be outside, a drive-up celebration where everyone sees each other from a distance and waves at each other and goes their separate ways. I guess that's better than nothing, but not as great as indoor candlelight service.

Some of the best memories I have was seeing Colton in his bright, red striped pajamas sitting in his little red rocking chair near the tree listening intently to my reading of the birth of baby Jesus and "The Night before Christmas."

He began rubbing his eyes and wanting to know when Santa would

be there. I insisted that we go to the kitchen and get milk and cookies for Santa and an apple for Rudolph. He perked up after he became focused on getting Santa's goodies.

Shortly after that, he fell sleep in Daddy's arms and Tara took him up to bed. Bob and Steve sat into the late hours talking and putting together toys.

The next morning he woke up early and was ready to rip into his packages. I told him to wait until everyone got up so he back tracked and got his Mommy of bed quickly and they came downstairs.

Everyone gathered round the Christmas tree and began ripping into their presents. Colton was so excited with his basketball, his car garage with all the cars in it, and a tricycle and his Jeff Gordon race car.

Everything is different now; it's so difficult and it feels lonely because we aren't going to be able to be with our kids on Christmas Day. They coach girls' basketball and the KHSAA re-

quired them to go back to practicing on December 14. Therefore, they are exposed to approximately twenty girls every time they practice and three of them have already had COVID-19.

Tara doesn't want to expose Bob and myself to COVID because we both are at risk. So they are dropping off our presents and picking up presents and food from our front porch. Then they will head back to Georgetown and eat. Next we will do Face Time or get on Zoom and watch each other opening gifts. Not exactly kosher but it's better than nothing. I haven't hugged them since March. Sounds awful but I'm sure there are many other families in the same boat.

There will be no intimacy this year, COVID-19 has become the Grinch that stole our Christmas. God willing, by next Christmas everyone will be vaccinated and our families can be back in our house and we can hug them tightly.

I know that God loves us and he will never leave us nor forsake us. AMEN!

Kitchen Diva by Angela Shelf Medearis

Stress-Busting Foods

A few years ago, Dr. Mehmet Oz asked me to create a recipe containing foods that help to naturally reduce stress and to do a cooking demo on "The Dr. Oz Show." I found that the following ingredients have stress-reducing properties:

* Red, Orange and Yellow Bell Peppers -- These peppers contain vitamins A and C and folate, which help give you more energy and repair cell damage caused by stress. When under prolonged stress, the body gets depleted of vitamin C, an antioxidant that fights the free radicals that get released when you're stressed. These free radicals have been shown to cause cancer.

* Turkey -- An amino acid called L-tryptophan contained in turkey triggers the release of serotonin, which is a feel-good, muscle-relaxing brain chemical. L-tryptophan has a calming effect. Turkey also contains tyrosine, an amino acid that helps your brain produce the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine. Activating those chemicals helps your brain work faster and be more effective at handling complex mental problems.

* Spinach -- Dark green vegetables are powerhouses of vitamins that help replenish our bodies in times of stress. Many dark green vegetables also contain potassium, which is good for our nerves and can calm them.

* Quinoa and Brown Rice -- Quinoa is rich in vitamin B, which has a calming effect on the body and helps relieve feelings of stress and anxiety while enhancing your mood. Brown rice is a healthy carbohydrate and boosts serotonin levels, which has a calming, soothing effect. All whole grains contain B vitamins and fiber, and also supply serotonin-producing carbohydrates that do not spike blood sugar levels. When you eat a carbohydrate, your body sends an amino acid called tryptophan into the brain to trigger the manufacture of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that makes you feel tranquil and better able to cope.

* Low-Fat Cheese, Greek Yogurt -- The whey and protein in milk products like cheese and yogurt help your nerves stay healthy, stabilize your blood sugar, stops you from feeling those extreme highs and low when you eat sugar, and has been shown to decrease anxiety and frustration. When consumed over a period of time, the calcium in dairy also has been shown to calm muscles and help keep blood pressure in check.



* Avocado -- The monounsaturated fats and potassium in avocados help lower blood pressure. Avocados have more potassium than bananas. Monounsaturated fat also helps keep receptors in the brain sensitive to mood-boosting serotonin.

* Basil -- A great source of folate, which helps to repair cell damage caused by stress.

This is the healthy, stress-reducing recipe I created for "The Dr. Oz Show." Enjoy and relax!

STRESS-BUSTING STUFFED BELL PEPPERS

- 8 red, yellow or orange bell peppers, or a mixture of all (about 4 pounds)
- 2 tablespoon canola or olive oil, divided
- 1 medium-sized yellow onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 16 ounces fresh Italian turkey sausage, removed from casing, or ground turkey
- 1 (16 ounce) jar chunky salsa, mild or hot
- 2 cups fresh baby spinach, rinsed and chopped, or 1 (10-ounce) package chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed to remove moisture
- 2 cups cooked quinoa or cooked brown rice, or mixture of both
- 1 cup low-fat Cheddar cheese
- 2 large avocados, peeled and pits removed, sliced
- 1/2 cup low-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh basil leaves

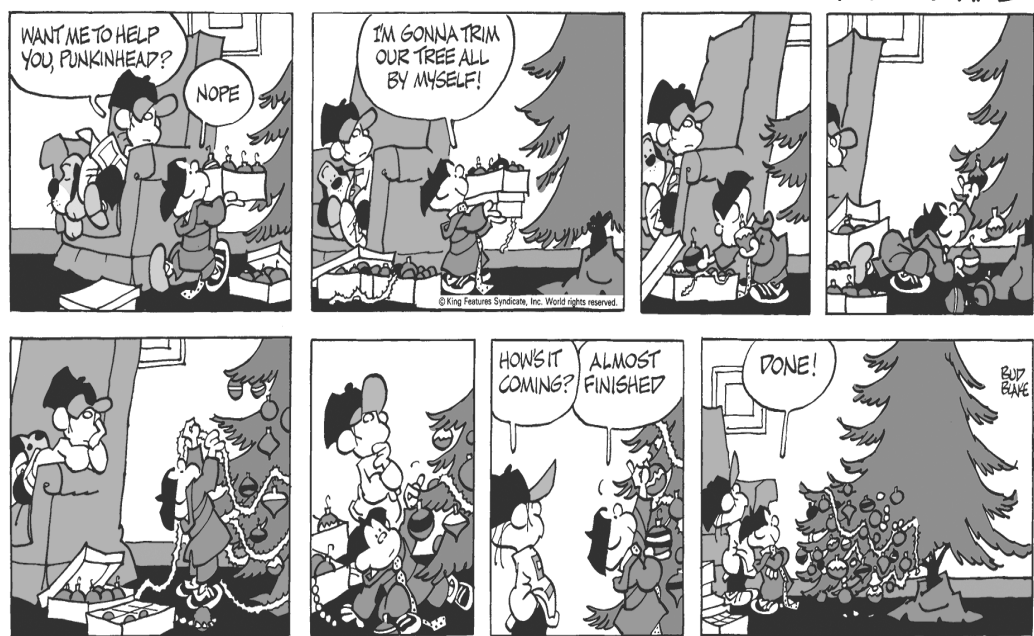
1. Heat oven to 375 F. Cut the peppers in half lengthwise, slicing from the stem to the bottoms, leaving the stems intact. Remove the white pithy ribs near stem and down length of inside. Remove the ribs and seeds, and discard. Place the peppers in a shallow 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Drizzle the peppers with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Cover the dish with foil, and bake the peppers 15 to 20 minutes, until they start to soften.

2. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, salt, black pepper, chili powder and cumin; cook until the vegetables are softened, about 3 minutes. Add the sausage or ground turkey, breaking it apart with a fork and cooking until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the salsa and spinach. Cook, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat. Stir in the cooked quinoa and/or brown rice.

3. Fill the pepper halves with the turkey mixture. Cover with foil. Bake 20-25 minutes until peppers are tender. Remove foil and sprinkle peppers with cheese. Return to oven; bake, uncovered, until cheese has melted. Top peppers with avocado slices, yogurt and basil. Makes 8 servings, 2 stuffed pepper halves per serving.

 Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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LAFF-A-DAY



GRIN & BEAR IT

