

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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New Cookware in the Picture?

If you're thinking ahead to Christmas presents all ready and a new set of cookware is a possibility, here's a quick rundown on your choices. There's a new option in the bakeware department, and old questions about safety of some others have shown up again.

Let's start with the new product - silicon, or *Silpat*. Even though professional bakers in Europe have been using silicon baking pans for some time, these products have only been in our market for a few years. While I haven't seen silicon pie pans, just about everything else from muffin tins to Bundt cake pans now has a silicon version. The big advantages of silicon pans are that heat goes through them easily and evenly, so cakes and breads bake evenly. Also, since the silicon itself doesn't hold the heat, as soon as you take the bread out of the oven the baking stops. There's less chance of over-baking. Additionally, nothing sticks to them. Cakes come out smoothly, and the pans are super easy to clean.

They come in a variety of bright colors, red, blue, etc., which can make them nice for an eye-catching present. However, and this makes them a bit strange to work with at first, they are flexible! They bend and fold. So you need to have space to store them where they won't get crushed. Some require a metal frame or rack to keep them flat and to make them easier to move when full and hot.

Going on to the ones we're more familiar with, aluminum and Teflon have been around for years but some folks keep questioning their safety. Aluminum became a

source of worry when early research into Alzheimer's disease found aluminum in the brains of these patients. However, further research has proven that the aluminum is only the *result*, not the cause, of the illness. Once a person's brain begins making the tangled cells that identify Alzheimer's, then those damaged cells start to collect aluminum. Besides, we get much more aluminum from foods, water and medicines such as antacids than we ever would from using aluminum pans. If you have an old pan that you can't get clean because it's pitted with tiny holes in the metal inside, then it's time to get rid of the pan. Otherwise, aluminum is safe. Anodized aluminum, the heavy thick aluminum pans, do not pit or stain as badly as thin, lightweight pans.

Teflon-lined pans, the common non-stick ones, have been getting a bad rap recently. While it is true that one of the chemicals used to make Teflon has been labeled a 'likely' cause of cancer, by the time the Teflon is finished there is none of that ingredient left. Using finished Teflon is not going to cause cancer. Even if you ate some Teflon chips, they would go right through you and not cause any problems.

But if you put an empty non-stick pan on high heat and leave it sit there for at least 8 minutes, the Teflon will start to break down. The gas it gives off as it is destroyed can make you feel like you have a bad flu. It can kill birds. Pay attention to the cooking and don't heat empty non-stick pans. Otherwise, don't worry about Teflon.

What else should you worry about? Imported ceramics have been known to contain high levels of lead. Use them for decoration, not cooking. Unlined copper pans can put dangerous amounts of copper into acid foods. Unless the pan is lined use it for decoration too. The one exception: copper pans are the best for meringues.

Here's a great fall fruit salad, uncooked, to make use of the delicious pears on the market these days. Don't let pears get too cold or they turn brown inside. Enjoy!

Fall Fruit Salad

1 medium pear, diced	1 orange, peeled and chopped
2 bananas, sliced	1 cup raspberries or grapes
½ cup chopped dates	1/3 cup toasted pecans or walnuts

Dressing:

1 cup low-fat or fat-free vanilla yogurt 1/4 tsp cinnamon
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg (or cardamom)

Combine dressing ingredients in small bowl. Refrigerate 1 hour to blend flavors.

At serving time combine fruit in medium bowl, drizzle dressing over and toss to combine. Serve immediately. Keep leftovers refrigerated.

Serves 6.

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