



Happy Holidays from our table to yours!

From wild turkey, to sweet potatoes, to pecans, Mississippi is filled with staples for the best holiday spreads. Whether you've harvested your turkey or purchased one from the grocery store, you're off to a great start in filling your table for holiday gatherings. Arguably though, the sides are the most important component to the meal. Being able to provide a wide array of options helps to tempt even the most particular of palettes.

Sweet potatoes, a favorite Mississippi crop, is one of the most versatile foods for the season. Whether fried, boiled, or baked, they can hold their own at the dinner table. Yams or sweet potato casserole, that is the question, and every family has their preferred answer. No matter if you add sugar or spice, sweet potatoes are always a solid, rich food, and can be one of the healthiest choices at the table.

Since we mentioned healthy, don't forget about the heart healthy pecan! If things are a little crazy, this should be your favorite nut. From appetizer to dessert, the pecan can fill all the plates in between. We like them fresh out of the shell or with a little toast. They also add a little something special to stuffing or those sweet potatoes.

When it comes to just desserts, the sweet potato & pecans can deliver all you need. The pecan pie and the sweet potato pie are among the top finishers when it comes to rounding out the most festive of meals. With a little molasses here or some whip cream there, the individual subtleties from pie to pie are what make your favorite pie the best.

We all can agree our recipes have flair, and with that flair comes uniqueness. Those are the flavors we look forward to on the table year to year and enjoy them with family, friends, & fond memories.

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CATTLE MARKET NEWS



When is an Hour of Operator Labor, Not Just an Hour of Operator Labor?

By: Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky

As an Extension Economist, I regularly have the opportunity to talk about cow-calf profitability. I usually start with revenues, talking about calf prices and making assumptions about weaning weight and weaning rate. Then I walk through costs like winter feed (hay), pasture maintenance, breeding, vet/medicine, trucking, sale expenses, etc. While there is always room for discussion, most of these expenses can be estimated on a "per cow" basis by making some reasonable assumptions. At some point in the discussion, I bring up the topic of labor. Some cow-calf operations hire a significant amount of labor, but for a lot of these operations the majority of labor is unpaid operator labor.

The classic economist approach to valuing unpaid labor is to value it at its opportunity cost. By that I mean if the farmer could be making \$20 per hour doing something else, their labor on the farm should be valued at \$20 per hour and be treated as an expense. On the surface, it's hard to argue with this logic, but it is also not the way that most farmers think about the value of their time. For this reason, I tend not to treat labor as an expense, but instead make the point that any return must be sufficient to adequately compensate the operator for the time they spend. This allows each individual in the room to evaluate whether that return is sufficient and place whatever value they feel is appropriate on their time.

One danger of this approach involves not fully considering other expenses that often accompany operator labor. To illustrate this, consider two very different operator labor hours - an hour spent manually clearing fence rows and an hour spent on a tractor baling hay. A producer clearing fence rows may be using a set of loppers to cut small saplings, they may have a smaller set of clippers for briars and weeds, and they may even have a chainsaw they use on occasion when needed. An overly eager economist could talk about depreciation on that chainsaw and the other equipment, as well as the fuel being used when the chainsaw is operating, but clearly these costs are pretty minimal. The point here being that the vast majority of the cost associated with an hour clearing fence rows is time.

On the contrary, time is a much smaller portion of the total cost of an hour spent baling hay. Beyond the hour of labor, the producer baling hay is running both a tractor and hay baler. Fuel costs are much more significant, as is depreciation on both pieces of equipment. The same can be said of maintenance and repairs associated with the additional use of the equipment. Choosing not to place a value on an hour spent clearing fences is one thing, but not placing a value on time spent baling hay is very different. Obviously, I am describing two extremes here, but hopefully it helps to illustrate the point I am making. Sometimes an hour of operator labor is not just an hour of operator labor, especially if there are a lot of other expenses being incurred during that hour.

My experience has been that most farmers prefer time spent running machinery over time spent doing more manual labor. In fact, many producers are willing to trade manual labor hours for more machinery hours pretty readily. Cleaning out fence rows on a hot day is tough work, but the expense beyond the value of the time spent is pretty minimal. Conversely, that same hour spent baling hay comes with a lot of additional expenses beyond the value of that time. The point being that choosing not to value operator labor is the choice of the farmer, but that farmer still needs to make sure they are valuing other costs incurred during those operator labor hours. Failing to do so has the potential to greatly underestimate total costs for the operation.

LEE COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION ANNUAL BOARD MEETING WILL BE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST, 5:30 PM, AT THE LEE COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE.



FORESTRY

Christmas Tree Farming



Mississippi has a vibrant Christmas tree industry. Two dozen growers across the state produce a variety of Christmas trees every year. Mississippi has a humid, mild climate, and producers can sell a tree in 4–5 years. Most growers operate choose-n-cut farms; customers visit the farm to choose a tree, which is then cut and sold to them for decorating at home.

Christmas tree species grown here must tolerate hot summers and occasional droughts. Several species are available. Among these, the Leyland cypress (*Cupressus × leylandii*) is the most commonly grown. It is actually a hybrid of Monterey and Nootka cypresses. The Leyland has excellent needle retention after cutting if kept in water. It is also non-aromatic, which is desirable for people with allergies to coniferous resins. Another frequently grown tree is the Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*). The needles are pale gray-green to blue-green. Needle retention is 2–3 weeks, so this tree should be purchased close to Christmas. It is also aromatic. A third tree commonly grown is the Eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana* ‘Burkii’) (Figure 5). This tree can tolerate more alkaline soil conditions. Again, needle retention is 2–3 weeks, and this tree is aromatic.

While Christmas tree producers have a 1-month retail season, the growing season is all year. Growers plant seedlings or rooted cuttings in winter, from mid-January until the end of February. Typically, 600–900 trees per acre are planted. Growers must choose a spacing that allows access between trees and trails for customers to use. Much of the growing season is spent mowing between trees and/or controlling weeds. The trees are fertilized to increase their growth rate. Pruning is done mid-summer to shape the tree and stiffen branches. Just as important as weed control is scouting for insects and disease. Many growers have a regular spray schedule for fungicides and insecticides to prevent diseases and pests.

Besides growing the crop, choose-n-cut producers must master marketing. The Southern Christmas Tree Association supports the industry in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The association helps provide marketing for members on its webpage. Also, many growers practice agritourism to expand their retail season. These operations might include alternative enterprises such as a corn mazes, pumpkin patches, or fruit orchards.

Growing Christmas trees is an excellent alternative source of income for landowners. Since Christmas trees can be grown in 4–5 years here, a large property is not necessary. Many producers operate “weekend” farms on just a few acres, growing several hundred trees for sale any given year. For more information on managing for Christmas tree production, consult the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service Publication 1463 *Tree Crops for Marginal Farmland—Christmas Trees*.

Excerpt from Publication 3173 (POD-09-23)

By Brady Self, PhD, Associate Extension Professor, Forestry; Adam Rohnke, Assistant Extension Professor, Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center; John Willis, former Assistant Professor, Forestry; Randall Rousseau, PhD, Extension/Research Professor (retired), Forestry; John Kushla, PhD, Extension/Research Professor (retired), Forestry.

<https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/alternative-markets-for-generating-forest-income-2>



Sweet Potatoes



Selection

- When selecting sweet potatoes, look for small to medium size with firm, smooth, even-colored skin.
- Avoid sweet potatoes with cracks, bruises, soft spots, or sprouting.
- In Mississippi, purchase fresh sweet potatoes from August through November when they are less expensive and more available.
- During the off-season, choose frozen or canned sweet potatoes to enjoy all year.

Storage

- Store fresh sweet potatoes in a cool, dry, dark, and well-ventilated space. Properly stored sweet potatoes can last for several weeks.
- Do not store uncooked sweet potatoes in the refrigerator because this will change the flavor and cause the centers to harden.
- Cooked sweet potatoes can be frozen for 10–12 months or refrigerated for 4–5 days.

Publication 3407 (POD-11-21)

By Kelli Whitten,

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Pecans

Cinnamon Walnut Pecan Pie Bites

Ingredients

- 15 pieces mini filo shells, frozen
- ¼ cup liquid egg substitute, fat-free
- 3 Tablespoons dark brown sugar
- ½ Tablespoon whipped butter or light buttery spread, room temperature
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 drop vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 Tablespoons walnuts, divided
- 2 Tablespoons pecans, divided



Thanks to Texas A&M University Extension for this [recipe](#)!

Preparation

- Wash under cool water and scrub with a vegetable brush just before using.
- When baking whole sweet potatoes, leave the skin on and prick them all over with a fork to allow steam to escape. The skin can be eaten and is rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- For a quick side dish, peel and cube sweet potatoes, and then roast or cook them on the stovetop.

Roasted Red & Sweet Potatoes

6 red potatoes

2 medium sweet potatoes

2 tablespoons oil

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Wash your hands well with soap and hot water.

Wash the potatoes under running water. Scrub off any dirt.

Cut the potatoes into bite-sized pieces.

Spread the potato pieces onto a large baking sheet.

Pour the oil over the potatoes.

Mix them with your hands until the potatoes are covered with oil.

Spread the potatoes into a single layer on the baking sheet.

Bake until the potatoes are brown and tender, about 25–30 minutes. Turn them twice while they are cooking.

Serve the potatoes while they are hot.

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.



Instructions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Spray a baking sheet with nonstick spray or line with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, combine egg substitute, brown sugar, butter, vanilla extract, cinnamon, and salt. Mix well.

Stir in 1 Tablespoon chopped pecans and 1 Tablespoon chopped walnuts into mixture. Arrange shells and evenly distribute the mixture among the filo shells.

Combine remaining nuts and sprinkle them on the top of the shells (a little less than 1/2 teaspoon per shell).

Bake in the oven until edges are crisp, 15–18 minutes.

Allow to cool slightly before serving. If you like, top each piece with a squirt of fat-free whipped cream topping. Enjoy!

Greenery to Fill a Holiday Home

The coming of winter does not have to mean the end of plant color. The holiday season offers many opportunities to bring color from the outside in. Be it a flowering stem or some ornamental greenery, you can find a plant to brighten your home. Nature offers a surprisingly wide selection from which to choose the perfect houseplant for the holidays. The following plants offer colors from white to red to green to match your holiday theme.

Flowering Stems

Amaryllis
Hyacinth
Paperwhite Narcissus
Phalaenopsis Orchid
Tulips



Colorful Foliage & Fruit

Azalea
Chrysanthemums
Cyclamen
Kalanchoe
Poinsettia
Thanksgiving Cactus
Jerusalem Cherry
Ornamental Peppers



Greenery

Dwarf Alberta Spruce
Italian Stone Pine
Lemon Cypress
Norfolk Island Pine
Rosemary



With so many choices available, these plants can be great gifts, serve as unique holiday decor, or become permanent additions to your interior or exterior landscape. Once you use the plants for the current festivities, you could try your hand at caring for them day to day and season to season. Whether bulb, flower, or tree, these plants offer many opportunities for the newest to most prolific of green thumbs the chance to cultivate their hobby well past the holidays. For more information concerning individual care on this wide variety of holiday plants, see this link: <https://extension.msstate.edu/publications/holiday-houseplants-o>

Bloom at Noon

November 12th
at the Lee County
Extension Office

This is your last chance to attend a Bloom at Noon program for this year! Our special guest will be Julie McDowell. She is the Market Manager of the Pontotoc Farmers' Market and will be discussing "What Producers do in the Off-Season". Tips and tricks will be provided to help local growers prepare for the upcoming spring & summer fruit & vegetable seasons. This program offers local growers and current farmers' market vendors the opportunity to invest in themselves as well as their future.

If you know someone interested in beginning or improving on their crops in order to successfully participate in local farmers' markets, this is the program for them! Please reserve your seating today. Call our office at 662-841-9000. Seating is limited!





TSC PAPER CLOVER CAMPAIGN

Tractor Supply Company is hosting the Paper Clover Campaign from November 29th (Black Friday) through December 15th, and you have the opportunity to participate! With every purchase of a paper clover, 100% of the funds raised go to 4-H, 90% of those to the state they were raised in & 10% to national 4-H programming.



4-H AGE ELIGIBILITY*

Cloverbuds 5 -7 Years

Junior Leaf 8-13 Years

Seniors 14-18 Years

*Age is as of January 1 of the current year.

Also, TSC will have available 4-H themed Christmas ornaments. The Barnyard Buddies collection will include a cow, a goat, and a pig. All proceeds from the ornaments will go to 4-H. Please keep this in mind during this season of giving when you are shopping in store or online.

Congratulations, Exhibitors!

State Fair Winners

Joshua Brown won second place at the State Fair in Public Speaking, Senior Level.



Milo Lauderdale won first in Photography Still Life, Cloverbud Level, with "Monarch on Milkweed".

LEE COUNTY 4-H CLUBS

Aggies 8-18
Bunny Bunch 5-18
Clodhoppers 14-18
Cloverbuds 5-7
Crochet 10-18

Expressive Arts 8-13
Foodie 4-Hers 10-18
Junior Leaf 8-13
Junior Master Gardener 8-13

Ropes & Reins 8-18
Shooting Sports 8-18
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) 5-13

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NOVEMBER



2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	01	02
03	04 Forestry Meeting 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	05 Foodie 4-H 10-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office - Back Kitchen	06 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	07 4-H Awards Program 5:45 PM Springhill Building	08	09
10	11 Cloverbuds 5-7 Junior Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	12 Bloom at Noon Clothoppers 14-18 5 PM Aggies Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	13	14 Expressive Arts 8-18 4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	15	16
17	18 STEM Club 5-13 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	19	20	21 Cattlemen's Board Meeting 5:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 <i>Happy Thanksgiving</i>	29 OFFICE CLOSED November 28th & 29th	30

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DECEMBER



2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
01	02	03 Foodie 4-H 10-18 5 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office - Back Kitchen	04 Crochet Club 10-18 4:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	05	06	07
08	09 Cloverbuds 5-7 & Junior Leaf 8-13 4:30 PM Rabbit Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	10 Clothoppers 14-18 5 PM Aggies Club 8-18 6 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	11	12	13	14
15	16 STEM Club 5-13 4:30 PM Ropes & Reins 8-18 6:30 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	17 Expressive Arts 8-18 4 PM Lee Co. Ext. Office	18	19	20	21
22	23 OFFICE CLOSED December 23rd- January 1st	24	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i>	26	27	28
29	30	31 <i>New Years Eve</i>	01	02	03	04

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