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Warm Your Winter with Energy-Saving Investments

Most of us can agree the holidays wreak havoc on our household budgets. Just like many investments we make, spending money on your home's energy efficiency may help offset your future energy bills.

Choose ENERGY STAR appliances and electronics.

When buying new appliances, choose ENERGY STAR-certified models. For example, a new ENERGY STAR refrigerator uses about 20 percent less energy than a standard new refrigerator, and 46 percent less than one made in 1980. A new ENERGY STAR clothes washer uses nearly 50 percent less energy than a standard washer.

Install a programmable thermostat.

According to EnergyStar.gov, the average American household spends half of its annual energy bill on heating and cooling the home. Having the ability to control your temperature setting throughout the day saves energy, money, and keeps your home at its optimal comfortable temperature.

Increase ceiling insulation.

If your ceiling is uninsulated or scantily insulated, consider increasing your insulation to up to R-38 to reduce heating costs by 5 to 25 percent.

Seal ducts.

Leaking ductwork accounts for more

than 25 to 30 percent of heating costs in an average California home. Consider hiring a contractor to test the tightness of your ducts and repair leaks and restrictions in your duct. Many utility companies have programs to assist you.

Install high-efficiency windows.

If you are planning to replace your windows, choosing ENERGY STAR windows can reduce your heating and cooling costs and lower your household energy bills by an average of 12 percent. Visit energystar.gov to find out where ENERGY STAR-certified products are available in your area.

Seal Doors and Windows

If you don't plan on investing in new energy efficient windows this year, take a closer look at the seals around your doors and windows. Cold air finds its way into your house through gaps you may not even consider. When it's cold indoors, you tend to run the heater more often. Overworking your heating system will come back to bite you on your energy bill. Seal any gaps you find with caulk or window and door sealing tape. This will also be a big help when summer rolls around.

Install Dual-Flush Toilets

Dual-flush toilets are slowly catching on here in the U.S. but have been saving Europeans up to 30% in water consumption for years! It's simple: dual-flush toilets allow you to choose between a smaller flush for liquid flushes and up to a 1.6-gallon flush for solid waste.

January Calendar

January 1 - New Year's Day

January 18 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 1-7 is Celebration of Life Week

January is National Radon Action Month

Homeowner Tip



Keep Winter Pests Outdoors

Check the foundation for small cracks or openings where mice or other pests can tunnel in. Seal up as many "entrances" for pests as you can. You may be surprised to learn that insects like ants, stinkbugs, ladybugs, wasps, beetles, and cluster flies will also seek the warmth of a house during winter. And if these sorts of visitors set up shop indoors, the spiders in your home will have plenty to feast on this winter. Consider professional pest control if necessary.

Learn More About Radon During National Radon Action Month

Most homeowners know very little about this naturally occurring, odorless, colorless gas. January is National Radon Action Month which makes this the perfect time to learn more about how you can keep your home radon-free and your family protected.

Is radon gas really dangerous? Radon can become airborne and inhaled. According to the EPA, it is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

My house is brand new. Do I still need to test its radon levels? No home is exempt - from newly constructed houses to 19th century fixer-uppers. Also, your neighbor's home might test at a remarkably different radon

level than those around it.

What's the best way to test my home's radon levels? Hire a professional who specializes in radon detection. Radon levels will be tested over the course of a few days to correctly analyze results.

What should I do if my house tests high for radon levels? Using a radon mitigation system to correct a house's radon levels is relatively inexpensive. The system draws radon from beneath your home and releases the gas to the outside. The average cost of a mitigation system ranges from about \$800-\$1,500.

For more information on radon, visit RadonResources.com



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Warm Up With The 7 Ingredient Ultimate Butternut Squash Soup

Butternut squash is a nutrient rich vegetable loaded with vitamin A, folate, vitamin E, magnesium, calcium, and potassium and has no cholesterol.

INGREDIENTS

1 butternut squash peeled, seeds removed and cut into 1-inch chunks
2 yellow onions chopped
2 TBS olive oil
5 cups of water or low sodium vegetable broth
1/2 cup of white wine or broth
Sea salt to taste
Dried or fresh dill weed or fresh rosemary.

INSTRUCTIONS

Lightly heat your olive oil in a soup pot.

Sauté your onions until slightly soft.

Add squash chunks and sauté for 3 minutes. Add the wine (or broth) and cook for another 3 minutes.

Add the water and cover your pot.

Cook for about 40 minutes or until the squash is very soft, stirring about every 15 minutes.

When cooking is complete, use a whisk or vegetable masher to “mash” the squash until you have a thick soup with some small chunks of squash. Alternatively, you can blend the soup.

Add salt, lightly to taste.

Serve hot, garnished with dill or rosemary.



Recipe of:
avivaromm.com
Photo by Nataliya Vaitkevich