Asset HealthTalk *Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know* November 2026



More than a Meal: *The Food that Connects Us*

November often brings people gathering around the table. For many, Thanksgiving is a time to reconnect with family and friends, share favorite recipes and reflect on what matters most. Whether you celebrate Thanksgiving or simply enjoy the changing season, this time of year can offer opportunities to strengthen one of the most important dimensions of wellbeing: *social connection.*



Food has a unique ability to bring people together. Often, what makes a dish special isn't the ingredients themselves, but the memories, traditions and people associated with it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), positive social connections can contribute to longer lives, better health and improved wellbeing, including a greater ability to manage stress, anxiety and depression. While connection can take many forms, sharing food has long been one of the simplest and most universal ways people come together.

During a season that can feel busy and overwhelming, mealtime traditions can also provide a sense of comfort and stability.

Preparing a favorite dish can become a small ritual that encourages us to slow down and be present, even when our calendars are full. Inviting a child to help mix ingredients, swapping recipes with a colleague or preparing a meal with a partner can turn an everyday task into a shared experience.

As Thanksgiving approaches, many conversations naturally turn to gratitude. Of course, connection doesn't require a large holiday gathering. Not everyone celebrates Thanksgiving, and not everyone spends the season surrounded by family. A quick coffee with a friend, sharing a homemade treat with a neighbor, checking in on a loved one or enjoying lunch with a coworker can be equally meaningful.

This month, as you try the featured Mexican shortbread cookie recipe, consider sharing it with someone. You might swap stories about favorite holiday foods, learn about a tradition from another culture or simply enjoy a few moments together.

"Social Connection," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cdc.gov, Accessed October 6, 2026.

"Social Wellness Toolkit," National Institutes of Health, nih.gov, Accessed October 6, 2026.



Hojarascas

(Mexican Shortbread Cookies)

Prep Time: 45 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Serves: 28

Dough:

2 3-inch Ceylon cinnamon sticks
½ cup shortening or lard*
½ cup sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

Topping:

1 3-inch Ceylon cinnamon stick
⅓ cup sugar

**Hojarascas (o-ha-RAS-kas) are traditionally prepared with lard, though this recipe also includes shortening as a convenient alternative.*

1. To prepare the dough, break the cinnamon sticks and add them to a small saucepan. Add 1 cup of water and bring the saucepan to a simmer. Let simmer about 8 to 10 minutes, until the liquid reduces to about ⅓ cup and turns a light amber. Allow the cinnamon tea to cool.
2. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment.
3. In a large bowl, beat the shortening or lard using a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment or a hand mixer on medium-high speed for about 3 to 5 minutes, until fluffy. Add the sugar and salt and mix until incorporated. Reduce the speed to low, add the flour and mix for about 30 seconds, until a crumbly dough begins to form. Slowly add the cinnamon tea, mixing until the dough is evenly hydrated (you may not need all of the liquid).
4. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough to ¼-inch thickness. Cut out cookies with a 2-inch cookie cutter and transfer to the prepared baking sheets. Reroll the scraps as needed to cut additional cookies. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 375˚F.
6. To prepare the topping, coarsely grind the cinnamon stick in a spice grinder, about 10 to 15 seconds. Strain the ground cinnamon through a fine-mesh strainer and mix with the ⅓ cup sugar in a shallow bowl. Set aside.
7. Bake for about 12 to 15 minutes, until the cookies are cooked through and lightly browned underneath but still pale on top. Let them cool slightly on the baking sheet. While still warm, gently toss them in the cinnamon sugar. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 cookie, Calories: 90kcal, Carbohydrates: 13g, Protein: 1g, Fat: 4g, Sodium: 40mg, Fiber: 0g, Sugar: 6g

Recipe adapted from: foodnetwork.com

8 Signs the Men in Your Life Are Doing Well

We care deeply for fathers, partners, brothers, sons, nephews, cousins, close friends, neighbors and colleagues.

In honor of Movember and men's wellbeing around the globe, here are eight telling signs based on our Asset Health Wellness Wheel that the men in our lives are not only doing well, but flourishing.

He takes care of himself, guilt-free. His physical health is a leading priority and has become part of his routine. He respects his body with quality, consistent sleep, balanced nutrition and regular movement.

He expresses emotional intelligence. He identifies, processes and communicates a range of emotions without shame. He also addresses his anxieties and doesn't avoid feelings. Our relationships with ourselves and others are central to the lives we lead.

He has a stable sense of self-worth. He embraces his skills, knowledge, and creativity without chasing validation from work, partners or pals. He's just doing the activities that bring him genuine peace and joy. Whether it's house projects, personal development, career-centered or pure passion, he is open to learning. The more we learn, the better equipped we are to solve problems and manage life's challenges.

He is respectful within his environment. He is attentive to the people and places he values most, such as keeping a shared home clean, safe and organized. He is also mindful of the greenspace surrounding him, making choices like reducing plastic use to protect the nature that nurtures us.

He practices healthy communication. He uses tactics like active listening, handles conflict constructively and respects personal boundaries. He builds authentic, supportive friendships where life's challenges and joys can be shared openly. Positive relationships benefits are profound, including a boost in longevity, self-esteem, coping skills, career success and more.

He maintains financial breathing room. He views money as a tool rather than stress. Freedom from financial stress is an intentional way of living that supports overall wellbeing.

He strives for work-life harmony. He maintains boundaries with work and balances his time with quality memories away from work. Research shows that leisure and play contribute to greater life satisfaction, reduced stress, successful aging, stronger relationships and even personal growth in the professional setting. It's a reciprocal benefit: time away from work helps us perform better at work.

He has defined his meaning and purpose. He sets goals that are in-step with his values, help guide his everyday choices and promote long-term motivation. Studies have shown understanding and cultivating meaning and purpose in our daily lives positively affects levels of happiness, along with mental, physical, emotional and financial wellbeing.

A balance of attention within these equally important dimensions of wellbeing supports overall thriving, no matter his age or current journey in life. If the guy you have in mind is hitting these targets in some capacity, chances are good he is doing just fine. He might even be living his best life. And it's deeply caring that you were checking in.

"Your Wellness Wheel: Why Balance Is Key to a Healthy Lifestyle," motivatehealth.com, Dec. 28, 2018.

