

Touchstone Energy Brings Value to Co-op Members

This Month's Question:

My electric co-op became a Touchstone Energy Cooperative several years ago. What value does my co-op being a Touchstone Energy Cooperative bring to a member like me?

Dear Co-op Member,

Local electric cooperatives like yours have realized many benefits from our association with this national brand which was founded in 1998. This benefits not only the cooperative, but you the member-owner as well.



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives

We are now part of an alliance of more than 640 electric cooperatives in 45 states. As a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, your co-op pledges to

deliver reliable electricity and other services according to the four Touchstone Energy values of accountability, innovation, integrity and commitment to community.

That's a powerful promise – to live by these high standards when conducting business. This pledge – to put the best interests of customers like you first – contrasts greatly with the greedy Enron-type utilities of the world, which are focused on maximizing profits. If our consumer-focus was the only benefit of being a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, the member-owners would be well served.

Through our connection to Touchstone Energy, small cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota have access to a national support network, formerly unobtainable for a business our size in the Heartland. For example, our co-op members can conduct online home energy audits. "Get Charged!" energy education kits augment the curriculum of middle schools in our service area. Local economic development efforts can be promoted through a national Web site. These and other dynamic communication tools are helping us better inform and serve our members and communities – benefits you can see and realize.

Editor's Note: *Touchstone Energy Territory is a new column designed to answer the questions of local cooperative members concerning Touchstone Energy, electric cooperatives and utility issues. If you have a question for this column, please send it to Touchstone Energy Territory, c/o Member Services at your electric cooperative. (Our address is on Page 3.)*

Keep Your Guard – Outdoor Electrical Safety

Guard against accidental electrical contact/shock or other injuries resulting from sharp edges, moving parts or flying debris. When using electrical machinery outdoors:

- Wear safety goggles and hearing protection as recommended.
- Check amperage rating for outdoor extension cords. Rating should be higher than electrical equipment. Use only cords marked "for outdoor use."
- Shut off the power source of outdoor electrical equipment before connecting attachments.
- Use an adapter with a ground tab for a three-pronged plug. Never attempt to remove the third prong.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter outlet when operating outdoor electrical equipment.
- Operate outdoor electrical equipment only on dry days.
- Turn off and unplug electrical equipment when not in use.
- Keep electrical power extension cords out of the walking path of work area.
- Shut off the power source first before attempting to retrieve outdoor electrical equipment that has fallen in water.
- Never try to repair electrical equipment yourself.
- Keep outdoor electrical outlets and equipment unplugged, covered and dry between uses.

Kids' Corner Safety Poster "Watch power lines when hauling hay."



Brady Hoines, 11 years old

Brady is the son of Kyle and Vicky Hoines, Langford, S.D. They are members of Lake Region Electric Association, Webster, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents.

Delectable Desserts

Strawberry Rhubarb Angel Squares

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| 2 cups chopped rhubarb | 1/2 cup whipping cream |
| 1 (3 oz.) pkg. strawberry gelatin | 2 cups water |
| 1 (10 oz.) pkg. frozen strawberries in syrup | 1 (14 oz.) loaf angel food cake, cut into 1-inch cubes |

In a medium saucepan, combine rhubarb and water; cook over high heat for 8 to 10 minutes or until mixture comes to a boil. Stir in gelatin; cook an additional 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add frozen strawberries, stirring until berries break apart. Refrigerate 2 to 3 hours or until mixture begins to thicken. In a small deep bowl, beat whipping cream at high speed until stiff peaks form. In a 2-quart baking dish, layer half each of cake cubes, rhubarb mixture and whipped cream. Repeat layers. Refrigerate at least 3 hours or until set. Store in refrigerator.

Mrs. Wayne Johnson, Sisseton Cooperative Connections

Cream Puff Dessert

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| 1/2 cup butter or margarine | 4 cups milk, divided |
| Dash salt | 3 (3.4 oz.) pkgs. instant vanilla pudding |
| 1 cup water | 12 oz. whipped topping |
| 1 cup flour | Chocolate syrup |
| 4 eggs | |
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened | |

In a medium saucepan, melt butter. Add salt and water; bring to a boil. Add flour all at once, stirring until a ball forms; remove from heat. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each. Spread in a lightly greased 15x10-inch jelly roll pan. Bake at 400°F. for 15 to 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Cool. In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese; gradually add 1 cup milk. Add pudding and remaining milk; beat until smooth. Spread over cooled crust. Cover pudding mixture with whipped topping; drizzle chocolate syrup over all. Store in refrigerator.

Judy Swartz, Hamill Cooperative Connections

Pumpkin Crunch

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| 1 (29 oz.) can pumpkin | 1 tsp. ginger |
| 1 (12 oz.) can evaporated milk | 1/2 tsp. nutmeg |
| 4 eggs | 1 box yellow cake mix |
| 1-1/2 cups brown sugar | 2 cups chopped pecans |
| 2 tsp. cinnamon | 1 cup butter, melted |

Combine first 7 ingredients; pour into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle cake mix over pumpkin layer; top with nuts. Pour butter over all. Bake at 350°F. for 50 to 55 minutes or until golden brown.

Darlene Walz, Java Cooperative Connections

Cherry Angel Cream Cake

- 1 (10 or 12 oz.) prepared round angel food cake, frozen (for easy slicing)
- 1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 tsp. almond extract
- 1 (4-serving size) pkg. instant vanilla pudding
- 2 cups whipping cream, whipped
- 2 (21 oz.) cans cherry or peach pie filling

Cut cake into 1/4-inch slices; arrange half the slices on bottom of a 13x9-inch baking dish. In large bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk, water and almond extract; mix well. Add pudding mix; beat well. Chill 5 minutes. Fold in whipped cream. Spread half the cream mixture over cake slices; top evenly with one can pie filling. Top with remaining cake slices, then remaining cream mixture and then other can of pie filling. Chill 4 hours or until set. Cut into squares to serve. Store leftovers covered in refrigerator.

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Cherries in the Snow

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| 6 to 8 egg whites | 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened |
| 2 tsp. vanilla, divided | 1 (8 oz.) container whipped topping |
| 2 cups sugar, divided | |
| 1/4 tsp. salt | 1 can cherry pie filling |
| 2 cups miniature marshmallows | |

The evening before, combine egg whites, 1 tsp. vanilla, 1 cup sugar and salt; beat until very stiff. Spread in bottom of a greased 9x13-inch pan. Preheat oven to 450°F. Place in oven and turn off oven. Leave in oven overnight without opening door. The next morning, cream together cream cheese, 1 cup sugar and 1 tsp. vanilla. Fold in whipped topping and marshmallows. Spread over meringue; refrigerate 5 hours. Top with cherry pie filling.

Stella Hilden, Watertown Cooperative Connections

Caramel Pie

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| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened | 2 (9-inch) graham cracker crusts |
| 1 can sweetened condensed milk | 1 cup caramel ice cream topping |
| 1 (16 oz.) container whipped topping | 1-1/2 cups toasted coconut |
| | 1/2 cup chopped toasted pecans |

Blend together first 3 ingredients. Spread half of mixture into crusts. Drizzle caramel, coconut and pecans over all; repeat. Freeze until ready to serve.

Catherine Jungwirth, Ashton Cooperative Connections

Please send your favorite salad and garden produce recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2007. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.