



PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

VIRTUAL PEER GROUP NEWSLETTER

Pathways to Independence is a supportive community of British Columbians with disabilities who meet to share information, solutions and receive updates on matters related to independent Living.

The Newsletter is for community, about community and with contributions from community.

Virtual meetings will be held throughout the year, on no fixed schedule and a newsletter is sent, at minimum, quarterly.



Paul Gauthier
Executive Director
Individualized Funding
Resource Centre Society

individualized
FUNDING
resource centre



Table of Contents

Season’s Greetings	2
Pathways To Independence November 15th, 2023 Meeting Notes	2
Surveillance Policy.....	2
Sexual Health Support for the Private Employer: Introduction to Education and Training	4
Ministry of Health CSIL Updates	5
International Student Work Permits	9
Tis the Season!	9
Twelve Quirky Winter Traditions from Around the Globe	9
An Ancient New Year’s Celebration	12
Canadian Alternatives to Turkey	13
Beef Wellington	13
Mustard Crusted Ham.....	15
Root Vegetable Crumble.....	15
Blood Orange and Fennel Salad.....	17
Contact and Contribute to Pathways!	18

Season's Greetings

The Pathways team sends warm holiday wishes to all of the Pathways To Independence members and families. As the year comes to a close we reflect upon the rewarding relationship we have built with you, the Pathways community.

We really appreciate what you bring to the group and are grateful for your continued participation and support.



We have all had a busy year, with many changes and events, and are looking forward to sharing 2024 with you all!

Wishing you a holiday filled with joy and laughter. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives, and we are looking forward to another wonderful year together.



Pathways To Independence November 15th, 2023 Meeting Notes

Surveillance Policy

Inquiries around home surveillance and the legalities have been made, so Hilary Currie, Executive Assistant at the Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society (IFRC) created a document package for persons with disabilities. Using Overt Video Surveillance, published by the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner of British Columbia in 2017 was the primary reference so as to meet provincial laws.

The package has two documents, the Surveillance Policy for employees and the Breaking down the Surveillance Policy, which is an information sheet for employers which outlines legal aspects of surveillance employer responsibilities and employee rights.

Contact Hilary at Hilary@IFRCSociety.org to receive copies of both documents.

Breaking down the Surveillance Policy

Installing surveillance equipment in your home may seem like a logical decision, but collection and use of employee's personal information through video surveillance may violate BC privacy law and lead to costly liabilities unless done lawfully.

Although Video surveillance should only be used as a last resort after exhausting less privacy-invasive alternatives. Employers must be able to defend their decision and prove that there are no other alternatives.

1. Why do I need a Surveillance Policy when it's my home?

- 1.1. To protect the privacy rights of your employees and anyone who comes inside your home.
 - 1.1.1. This includes people who pass by outside but may be caught on camera through a window.

2. What type of Surveillance can I use, and when?

2.1. There are two types of surveillance, **covert and overt**.

2.1.1. **Covert surveillance:** Covert surveillance is when you suspect someone of unlawful activities and you want to catch them by placing hidden cameras and NOT informing the employee they are under surveillance.

2.1.1.1. **The employer must be able to justify their decision to use covert cameras.**

2.1.1.2. The employer must thoroughly document the suspicions, dates and times of recordings.

2.1.1.3. The employer may use the cameras only when the person named in your documentation is on shift.

2.1.2. **Overt surveillance:** Overt surveillance is when the use of surveillance is openly transparent and used as a day to day method of surveillance and protection.

2.1.2.1. Employees must be provided with a policy that they can acknowledge, understand and accept. The signed policy goes into their individual personnel files.

2.1.2.2. The policy explains that due to the circumstances of their workplace, and in this case the circumstance is that the employer is a Disabled Person who is vulnerable as a result of the disability and there are no other less privacy-invasive alternatives to monitoring the security of the home (their workplace) and the employer's safety.

2.1.2.3. Transparency is key and expected so the explanation of the purpose should be meaningful and promote understanding:

"As a private employer, the purpose of surveillance in my home is to have an added level of workplace supervision for my personal safety and security due to me being a person with a significant disability and reliant on personal care support, miscellaneous vendors and others to access my home.

The workplace for my employees is my personal home and there is no other effective and less privacy-intrusive means of meeting my need for safety and security than surveillance. Surveillance will be not used for any other purpose, and information may not be used for other purposes unless required by governing law in British Columbia for legal purposes."

The above paragraphs under 2.i.3 demonstrate transparency and validate why, as a person with a disability, there are no other methods.

3. Requirements of Overt Surveillance

3.1. A small sign stating the home is under camera surveillance should be visible when someone walks through the main entry.

3.2. Cameras must be positioned in such a way that they do not record members of the public walking outside on property that is not owned, or rented, by the employer. I.e., sidewalks, streets, other buildings/apartments around the home.

- 3.3. There must be limited access to video and/or images, with the technology secured. Recommended for access be limited to the employer, the employer's legal representative or authorized personnel.
 - 3.3.1. The employees should know who has access so they can direct inquiries appropriately.
- 3.4. The employer's surveillance policy must state how long the video and/or image recordings will be stored for, before they are destroyed or overwritten.
- 3.5. The policy must inform employees that video and/or image recordings are considered the private and confidential information of the employee's personnel file.
 - 3.5.1. Employees may lawfully request to view, or request copies of, the contents of their personnel file, which will include any or all video captured of them.
 - 3.5.2. Employers must lawfully oblige but can ask for reasonable time in order to use masking technology to protect the identifying information of other individuals who might be in view, including the employer.
 - 3.5.3. The policy should provide contact information for the employees to use when making their request.

4. Record Storage

- 4.1. Any images or recordings that you save from the camera must be in a secure location with only authorized persons having access.
- 4.2. There are different options for managing and securing access; computer, your iPhone, so when considering your camera options, review the access control that can be used.
- 4.3. Typically, keeping surveillance video is 12 months, then it can be overwritten or destroyed.
 - 4.3.1. The 12 months is the norm in the event there is an incident that comes to light in the months following.
 - 4.3.2. Surveillance is sensitive information and access must be very limited, to ensure compliance with the Privacy Act.

5. Privacy Masking Technology

- 5.1. Masking is a camera feature that applies one or more privacy filters to raw surveillance video streams or recordings.
- 5.2. The mask function blurs or pixelates a specific area covered by cameras.
- 5.3. When considering camera purchase, review the functions with the seller.

Sexual Health Support for the Private Employer: Introduction to Education and Training

Contact Hilary at Hilary@IFRCSociety.org to receive copies of the document and the consent form.

Background

The purpose of this document is to provide Employers, who are persons with disabilities and their Employees, who are Personal Care Attendants/Caregivers with guidelines and tips on how to build positive communication between the two on the matter of the Employer's sexual health, and how an Employee can consent to support the Employer's sexual health in a knowledgeable, respectful, ethically, and compassionately nonsexual manner.

The educational components of the document it confirm to caregivers that their role is nonsexual, and that they are there to support the employer with any physical adjustments they may need, whether it is positioning or assistive devices without being a part of the intimacy.

The document can also aid employers and employees in communicating this topic in a positive, respectful and comfortable manner.

Discussion

Adults with physical disabilities have sexual needs just like any other adult. Having a disability does not mean that a person is incapable of sexual or emotional intimacy. Physical limitations may make sexual intimacy difficult because a person with a physical disability may require physical adjustments to engage in intimacy. Making adaptive changes with the aid of a Caregiver to fulfill sexual intimacy needs can cause an individual stress and requires compassion and patience.

The guidelines are meant to “guide”, not to dictate what a caregiver must or must not do. Supporting the employer is optional and should come from a place of knowledge and comfort. They are intended to optimize communication and trust with a goal of improving and maintaining positive morale and safety by providing direction in the respectful support of sexual expression.

Caregivers are your important allies and employers can gain insight on how it feels for a caregiver to be involved and how to overcome that oftentimes awkward challenge of obtaining the caregivers permission in a respectful, non-sensual, appropriate manner.

The document includes, but is not limited to, the following topics;

1. Understanding the Caregiver Role
2. Supporting Values
3. Sexual Activity and Expression
4. Sexuality
5. Developing Education and Training for Employees
6. Care Planning
7. Understanding Consent
8. Communication
9. Resources
10. Consent to Sexual Health Support Form

[Ministry of Health CSIL Updates](#)

ACE Executives Tim Louis and Paul Gauthier had two meetings with the Ministry of Health (MOH) Executives in October 2023.

Tim Louis gave a meaningful presentation on the history of the CSIL program, because the Executive office at the MOH has seen a change in people over the years and the current holders of those positions may not have been aware of the important history of the program and how ACE has been instrumental in helping the MOH with the CSIL program with topics such as:

- The changes to the CSIL Funding approach over the years.
- How key changes came to be.
- Outlined key parameters of funding between CSIL and the Health Authorities.

- Tim also outlined the current CSIL Market which he stated is disproportionately affected by the tight labour market and the difficulties in recruitment and retention.

The presentation was well received.

1. New CSIL Hourly Rates

- 1.1. The rate of \$33.40 was increased to \$34.73 effective April 1st, 2022, and on April 1st, 2023 increased to \$37.07.
- 1.2. A further increase to \$37.81, plus up to 1% cost of living* will come into effect April 1st, 2024.
 - 1.2.1.*The cost of living is determined upon confirmation of the Consumer Price Index applicable to 2024.

The statement from the MOH and the Health Authorities was that the increase will enable CSIL Employers to budget for more expenses and to provide a pay increase to employees. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, due to additional sick pay and statutory holiday requirements being folded into the increase which has further widened the gap in parity.

2. Sick Days and Statutory Holidays

- 2.1. For the five day paid sick days that all workers are entitled to (after 90 days of employment) annually now, the Ministry has confirmed that the costs are figured into the increase to the rates so that CSIL Employers will no longer apply to their Health Authority for reimbursement.
- 2.2. The financial impact of having to pay additional statutory holidays has worsened the hardship now that the Day for Truth and Reconciliation is no longer reimbursable.
- 2.3. As a result of (2) 2.1 and (2) 2.2, many CSIL Employers are having to pay out many thousands of dollars and there are few to no funds remaining to provide pay increases to employees.

3. Surplus Funds

- 3.1. Discussed was that CSIL Employers are hearing from their case managers Health Authority personnel from the Contract office that they should use their surplus funds to cover the additional expenses for sick days and statutory holidays. However, many CSIL Employers may only be able to carry a small surplus, which cannot support these expenses.

In preparation for the October meetings, ACE researched and presented a comparison of the CSIL rate increases alongside the Union pay rate increases.

The comparison of the CSIL rate increases alongside the Union pay rate increases;

- Showed there is no parity.
- The Union employees get their wages increased, and for CSIL Employees – the hourly rate increase also has to pay for the sick days and the statutory holidays in addition to the usual employer expenses, so employees cannot be given the same percentage wage increase.
- The CSIL employees' hourly wages were always meant to reflect the highest tier on the pay grid of \$30.89 per hour, which the ACE Executive demonstrated by putting forth the following grid obtained from the union website.

Rates effective April 9, 2023

Grid level 10				
Step	Annual	Monthly	Bi-weekly	Hourly
1	50,043.71	4,170.31	1,918.17	27.4024
2	51,400.36	4,283.36	1,970.17	28.1453
3	52,803.18	4,400.27	2,023.94	28.9134
4	54,252.18	4,521.02	2,079.48	29.7069
5	56,416.81	4,701.40	2,162.45	30.8921

The following chart was created by ACE for purposes of discussion with the MOH Executives. Information was taken from the Union website and ACE has requested that the MOH confirm accuracy of the percentages.

ACE used 2% for sick pay for the purposes of conversation, with the understanding that many CSIL Employers have different staffing models which may have more part time workers, with results in more sick pay being paid out and therefore becomes more than 2%.

Some employers in the Pathways meeting stated that they were paying out as high as 10% to 12%.

Actual rate increase with additional Sick time (5 days) and 1 additional SH (Sep 30)

	UNION	CSIL	Variance	Notes
2022 - 2023	4.24%	3.99%	-0.25%	Sick days and SH (Sep 30, 22) were reimbursed by HA
2023 - 2024	10.99%	10.74%	-0.25%	Sick days were reimbursed up to Jun 30, 2023.
Less: Sick time (Jul23 - Mar24)		-1.50%	-1.50%	Some CSIL clients (with big surplus) were asked to use their surplus to cover the sick time (2%/12*9)
Less: SH (Sep 30, 23)		-0.20%	-0.20%	Sick Time and SH were included in the increase.
Actual increase 23-24	10.99%	9.04%	-1.95%	Actual variance is 1.75% (not including the .25% variance explained in Section I above)
2024 - 2025	13.99%	13.74%	-0.25%	
Less : Sick time		-2.00%	-2.00%	
Less : SH (Sep 30)		-0.20%	-0.20%	
Actual increase 24-25	13.99%	11.54%	-2.45%	Actual variance is 2.20% (not including the .25% variance explained in Section I above)

4. CSIL ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

4.1. In the new ratification agreement, we know there are other benefits which we have been unable to locate, which the Health Authorities are able to offer, such as Sick Pay for ten days.

4.2. ACE requested confirmation on this and other benefits which ACE may not be aware of.

- 4.3. What we are trying to demonstrate is that CSIL Employers have not been given the tools needed to offer the same kind of wage and benefits.
- 4.4. Both are restricted by the CSIL Expense Guidelines and the financial updates.
5. The Ministry of Health Executives have agreed to examine and verify the information ACE provided to them, and to determine what information the Health Authority can provide on the kind of expenses and the financial totals, that CSIL Employers are putting through.
- 6. Health Benefits – Lack of Parity**
- 6.1. In the CSIL Expense Guidelines 2023, benefits are an optional, allowable expenses
- 6.1.1. Medical Premiums based on the current government monthly rates either per person or a family of two adults.
- 6.1.1.1. It is noted that in BC we do not have medical premiums.
- 6.1.2. Extended Health and Dental Benefits
- 6.2. Not included as a CSIL Eligible expense but is included in the Union benefits employee package which we located;
- 6.2.1. Life Insurance
- 6.2.2. Long Term Disability
- 6.2.3. Accidental Death and Dismemberment
- 6.2.4. Being able to reimburse 50% of the cost for a physicians note when required as proof of illness or injury.
- 6.2.5. Union employees also receive an additional five (5) days paid sick days.
- 6.3. Under the Union agreement, that Health Authorities pay 100% of their employee's benefits premiums.
- 8. Retro Pay Funding**
- 8.1. Some CSIL Employers were still waiting for their retro pay funding.
- 8.2. Fraser Health has admitted that they were experiencing delays but hope to be able to send it out soon.
- 8.3. Update Fraser Health notified CSIL Employers,**
- 8.3.1. Fraser Health Finance was sending out letters to update CSIL Employers on the increases for Fiscal 2022-23 payments.
- 8.3.2. CSIL Employers will receive funds in their CSIL bank account by December 15th and January 1st 2024
- 8.3.3. Letters and funding increases for fiscal 2023-34 will follow once the process for fiscal 2022-23 is completed.
- 8.3.3.1. FH Finance expects the fiscal 2023-24 increases to be completed two weeks after the fiscal 2022-23 payments are made.

8.4. Some CSIL Employers in Vancouver Island Health Authority ha not yet received their retro pay funding either.

8.5. **Update Vancouver Island Health Authority**

8.5.1. CSIL Employers are reporting they have been receiving the Retro pay.

9. **Payment to Family Member Policy**

9.1. MOH confirmed to ACE that the Payment to Family Member Policy exemption is being renewed.

9.1.1. It will likely mirror the April exemption, to exclude Legal Representatives and Power of Attorneys.

9.1.2. CSIL Employers can send in a request to your health authority to have an exception that would allow Legal Representatives and Power of Attorneys to be hired as care staff.

9.2. MOH will be communicating with the Health Authorities with the exemption renewal/extension notice.

International Student Work Permits

Government of Canada, Revised Requirements to Better Protect International Students December 7th, 2023

The waiver on the 20-hour-per-week limit on the number of hours international students are allowed to work off campus while class is in session will be extended to April 30, 2024. International students already in Canada, as well as applicants who have already submitted an application for a study permit as of December 7, 2023, will be able to work off campus more than 20 hours per week until that time.

The Federal Government continues to examine options for this policy in the future, such as expanding off-campus work hours for international students to 30 hours per week while class is in session.

[Click to read the Full News Release](#)

Any additional updates on these topics which were discussed in our last Zoom meeting, will be sent out in January 2024.

The next meeting between ACE and the Ministry of Health will take place in February 2024, after which a Zoom meeting will likely be held to bring everyone up to date.

Tis the Season!

Twelve Quirky Winter Traditions from Around the Globe

Author: Laura Kiniry, 2020

Feeding Animals in Winter – Lithuania

On the coldest days of the season, it's a long-standing Lithuanian tradition to head out into the wilderness and feed animals whose typical food supply might be buried beneath heavy mounds of snow. Local residents bring potatoes, hay, and vegetables like manglewurzel (a type of beetroot) for such wildlife as deer, hare, and wild boar.

Soaking in Yuzu-filled Baths – Japan

Winter's cold days and long nights require a bit of pampering. That's why, in Japan, it's common to draw steaming baths filled with yuzu, an aromatic, citrus fruit that's something between a grapefruit and lemon. The fruit can be whole, halved, or placed within a cloth bag to slowly release its scent, which is believed to ward off colds and to ease both the body and the mind. This customary practice has taken place since at least the early 1700s and is tailored to the winter solstice, though many Japanese people practice the soothing ritual all season long. It's also considered a good luck ritual for the coming year (so start filling up that tub!).

The Þorrablót Festival - Iceland

Iceland's Þorrablót is a mid-winter festival that dates back centuries and takes place in the fourth month of the Icelandic pagan calendar (mid-January through mid-February). Because it's based around a sacrificial ritual meant to keep things on earth favorable with Þorri, or Old Man Winter, Icelanders deliberately kept the event under wraps once Christianity took over, beginning in 1000 A.D. Now that the festival has been revived, the storytelling traditions of old aren't nearly as prominent, but dining on a massive feast of foods that are dried, salted, putrified, and preserved in whey remains the norm. Dishes like sviðakjammí (sheep head with the eyes intact), súr hvalur (pickled whale blubber), and hákarl, a fermented Greenland shark that "puts hair on your chest," says Iceland native Björg Rós Guðjónsdóttir, laughing, are par for the course.

Kimjang Gatherings – South Korea

Each year toward the end of November or beginning of December, extended families, friends, and various communities throughout South Korea gather to mark the start of winter with Kimjang: in essence, the preparing and storing of kimchi. This mix of fermented vegetables (most notably napa cabbage) spiced with a variety of flavors, including garlic, ginger, and gochugaru, or Korean pepper flakes, is a Korean food staple. It's also one that's quite labor-intensive to make, which is one of the reasons kimjang has become such a collective practice over the millennia. In fact, UNESCO says kimjang "reaffirms Korean identity and is an excellent opportunity for strengthening family cooperation," and is why the agency added it to their Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013.

Kukeri – Bulgaria

A Bulgarian tradition that dates back thousands of years, Kukeri are groups of men (and now women) who don monster-like masks and elaborate costumes made of fur, animal skins, and feathers—the uglier, the better—held together by belts of huge hanging bells, and then dance around to scare away evil spirits. In the past, they often went door to door, but today these "Bulgaria guardians" appear mainly in mini-plays performed throughout towns, and at festivals. Most notably Surva, the International Festival of Masquerade Games, takes place in western Bulgaria's Pernik each January. Musicians often accompany these marvelously scary creatures, lending an extra air of festiveness when they appear.



The Nine Nines - Mongolia

With temperatures often well below zero, Mongolia's winters can be especially brutal, so residents have found a unique way to pass the time. It's called "The Nine Nines," and is a series of nine-day increments that break up the country's most harrowing season into measurable (and manageable!) parts. The Nine Nines begins the day after the winter solstice and lasts for 81 days, beginning with the first nine-day

allotment: the freezing of vodka made from milk. After the fourth “9,” in which it’s so cold that the horns of even a four-year-old ox will freeze and fall off, the onset of warmer weather begins. Mongolia’s nomadic herders first originated this method of tracking winter days hundreds of years ago, and now it’s a part of local life: one that’s especially hopeful with the arrival of the fifth “9,” when boiled rice stops congealing.

The Lohri Festival – Northern India

Although the Lohri Festival began in India’s Punjab state as a celebration of the annual harvest season, this ancient folklore-filled celebration is now prevalent across northern India, and places where large Punjabi communities reside. Typically held in mid-January, its festivities includes plenty of singing and dancing around a roaring bonfire, lots of vibrantly colorful attire, and loads of delicious eats, most notably sweets like gur rewri, a crispy sweet made with brown cane sugar and coated in sesame seeds, and the festival’s most prominent dish: sarson ka saag (mustard greens) served with a helping of unleavened makki di roti bread. Lohri also marks the beginning of longer days and is especially significant for new brides and babies who receive lots of gifts on the occasion.

Playing Tombola – Southern Italy

All across southern Italy, tombola, or “Italian bingo” as it’s often called in the U.S., calls to mind evenings of fun and laughter that transcend generations around the holidays. The game is a standard in regions like Puglia, Basilicata, and Campania in the weeks between Christmas Eve and the feast of the Epiphany (January 6), especially alongside a sweet bread snack such as panettone or pandoro and maybe a glass of prosecco or two. To play Tombola, participants get one or more individual playing cards, each one adorned with a series of random numbers that often represent symbols. For example, two means “the child,” and 14, “the drunkard.” As each number is selected at chance, the players mark those numbers on their card. The first player to cover all their numbers wins. To up the ante, family and friends sometimes offer prizes—typically something like a piece of chocolate or a picture frame.

Babies Napping Outside – Finland and Other Nordic Countries Nordic countries are especially known for their short days and low temperature during winter months, so their residents have discovered innovative ways to adapt to the outdoors—whatever the season. This includes things like jumping into ice-cold lakes, cross-country skiing through city parks, and allowing their babies to nap outdoors. In fact, in places like Denmark and Finland, mothers find that the crisp, fresh air lulls their little ones to sleep much more easily, ignites their appetites, and even inspires better z’s. One Finnish study noted that parents found an acceptable temperature range for some solid napping is between -16 and 41 degrees Fahrenheit [-26 and 5 degrees Celsius].

Beard Growing Contest – Manitoba, Canada

Beards are wild, rustic, and even sometimes sexy. They’re also a big part of Winnipeg’s Festival du Voyageur, a 10-day celebration that began in 1969 in Winnipeg as a way to celebrate the region’s French heritage and fur-trading past, which began as early as the 1500s. The festival’s beard-growing competition is one of its longest-running and most beloved events, with all lengths, styles, and shapes welcome. Most of the time, the crazier, fluffier, and curlier, the better. Contestants can choose between four distinct categories, including novelty bears (in which groomed mustaches are a welcome part of the ensemble), clean-shaven (in which participants are given the eight weeks before the festival to grow the most awesome, most delightful,



and dazzling beard imaginable), and open (meaning entrants create their own “beards” using whatever beads, baubles, and other extraneous materials they have on hand).

The Dongzhi Festival – Taiwan

Both China and its East Asian neighbors, including South Korea and Japan, mark the annual Winter Solstice (aka the year’s shortest day) with Dongzhi, a major festival celebration that dates back thousands of years. Every country and region has its own Dongzhi customs and traditions. This includes Taiwan, where residents dine on hot pots filled with mutton or duck to fight against colds and replenish their bodies for the coming year. Tangyuan, which are glutinous rice flour dumplings served up in a sweet soup, are another traditional favorite: a yang (warm) to help ward off the season’s yin (cold). As in most places that celebrate Dongzhi, Taiwan’s festivities are a day of family gatherings and honoring ancestors, which often means giving deceased family members an offering of food.



El Caganers – Barcelona, Spain

Anyone looking closely at the large Nativity scenes throughout Barcelona might be surprised to see an unusual figure, one typically hidden away in a corner with his pants down and a pile of poop behind him. This is what’s known as El Caganer, or “the crapper,” and he’s been a part of the city’s Bethlehem-inspired displays since at least the early 18th century. Although no one really knows its origins, there are several guesses. Some people believe he’s there to fertilize the earth, others that the defecating figure represents good luck, or perhaps it’s the fact that we’re never entirely prepared for what’s to come. While traditional El Caganers were depicted as male and either farmers or shepherds, more modern versions are based on everyone from Greta Thunberg to Deadpool. There are even Smurfs, Dali Lamas, and of course, plenty of Donald Trumps.

[An Ancient New Year’s Celebration](#)

The earliest recorded festivities in honor of a new year’s arrival date back some 4,000 years to ancient Babylon. For the Babylonians, the first new moon following the vernal equinox—the day in late March with an equal amount of sunlight and darkness—heralded the start of a new year. They marked the occasion with a massive religious festival called Akitu (derived from the Sumerian word for barley, which was cut in the spring) that involved a different ritual on each of its 11 days.

In addition to the new year, Akitu celebrated the mythical victory of the Babylonian sky god Marduk over the evil sea goddess Tiamat and served an important political purpose: It was during this time that a new king was crowned or that the current ruler’s divine mandate was symbolically renewed.

Following the first new moon after the vernal equinox in late March, the Babylonians of ancient Mesopotamia would honor the rebirth of the natural world with a multi-day festival called Akitu. This early New Year’s celebration dates back to around 2000 B.C. and is believed to have been deeply intertwined with religion and mythology. During the Akitu, statues of the gods were paraded through the city streets, and rites were enacted to symbolize their victory over the forces of chaos. Through these rituals the Babylonians believed the world was symbolically cleansed and recreated by the gods in preparation for the new year and the return of spring.

One fascinating aspect of the Akitu involved a kind of ritual humiliation endured by the Babylonian king. This peculiar tradition saw the king brought before a statue of the god Marduk, stripped of his royal regalia and forced to swear that he had led the city with honor. A high priest would then slap the monarch and drag him by his ears in the hope of making him cry. If royal tears were shed, it was seen as a sign that Marduk was satisfied and had symbolically extended the king's rule. Some historians have since argued that these political elements suggest the Akitu was used by the monarchy as a tool for reaffirming the king's divine power over his people.

Canadian Alternatives to Turkey

Brought to you by the Canadian Living Test Kitchen

Please note that the Pathways Team have not tested these recipes.

Beef Wellington

Wow your guests with this classic French beef-and-puff pastry entrée.

MAKES: 8 to 10 servings

HANDS-ON TIME: 1 hour

REFRIGERATION TIME: 1 hour

TOTAL TIME: 3 hours & 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1.125 to 1.35 kg tenderloin premium oven roast
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- Mushroom Duxelles
- 3 shallots
- 650 g cremini mushrooms
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup red wine
- 3 cloves garlic, finely grated or pressed
- 4 1/2 tsp prepared horseradish
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp dried thyme
- 2 tsp sodium-reduced soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 12 slices prosciutto
- 3 sheets (1 1/2 pkg) frozen butter puff pastry, thawed
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/4 tsp flaked sea salt



METHOD

Pat roast dry with paper towels and sprinkle with salt; rub to coat. In large nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; brown roast, turning occasionally, on all sides, 4 to 7 minutes. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Mushroom Duxelles: Meanwhile, In food processor, pulse shallots until minced; set aside. Working in batches, pulse mushrooms until finely chopped. In same skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat; sauté shallots, mushrooms and salt, stirring frequently, until no liquid remains, 10 to 15 minutes. Add wine, garlic, horseradish, mustard, thyme, soy sauce and pepper; cook, stirring frequently, until mixture begins to brown and no liquid remains, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat; let cool completely.

Assembly: Remove twine from roast, if necessary. On work surface, place two 2-foot long pieces of plastic wrap, overlapping 1 inch on long sides. Arrange prosciutto vertically in 2 rows along centre of plastic wrap, overlapping slightly to create rectangle large enough to enclose roast. Evenly spread Mushroom Duxelles over prosciutto, leaving 1-inch border. Place roast in centre; roll up prosciutto tightly, tucking in ends to seal completely. Roll up plastic wrap tightly; refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Stack 2 large, rimmed baking sheets to create double layer; line with parchment paper.

Place 1 pastry sheet on prepared baking pans. Cut second pastry sheet into 2 pieces, one 3 inches wide and one 7 inches wide. Place 1 long end of 3-inch piece against bottom end of pastry sheet on pan to create 13- x 10-inch rectangle; using fingers, press together to adhere. Carefully remove plastic wrap from roast. Place roast lengthwise in centre of 13- x 10-inch pastry; brush pastry surrounding roast with some of the egg.

Cover top half of roast with remaining whole pastry sheet; cover rest of roast with 7-inch piece, overlapping slightly. Using hands, press pastry against sides of roast to seal edges. Trim all but 1 inch of the excess pastry around base; crimp. (Use excess pastry to make decorative cutouts, if desired.) Brush all over with remaining egg; using tip of knife, score top. Sprinkle with salt.

Bake until instant-read thermometer inserted in centre of roast reads 120°F, 40 to 45 minutes. Let rest for 30 minutes before slicing.

Test Kitchen Tip: Assemble roast a day ahead; refrigerate, covered in plastic wrap, overnight. Before baking, brush pastry with remaining egg, then bake as directed, increasing cooking time by 5 minutes.

NUTRITIONAL FACTS: per serving

Per each of 10 servings:

about 521 cal

37 g pro

30 g total fat (14 g sat. fat)

24 g carb (3 g dietary fibre, 3 g sugar)

118 mg cholesterol

813 mg sodium

839 mg potassium.

% RDI: 3% calcium, 39% iron, 10% vit A, 2% vit C, 8% folate

Mustard Crusted Ham

This holiday-ready succulent ham boasts incredible flavour thanks to a crunchy mustard crust that's sure to delight all guests.

PREP TIME 15 minutes

TOTAL TIME 2 hours & 15 minutes

PORTION SIZE 24 serving

INGREDIENTS

1 fully cooked smoked bone-in ham (about 3.6 kg)

1/4 cup canola oil, divided

1 1/4 cup panko breadcrumbs

2 egg yolks

1/3 cup honey mustard

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

METHOD

Preheat oven to 325°F.



Place ham, flat side down, on rack in roasting pan; pour in 1 cup water. Cover pan tightly with foil; bake until meat thermometer inserted in centre registers 130°F, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, in skillet, heat 2 tbsp of the oil over medium heat. Toast bread crumbs, stirring frequently until golden, about 4 minutes. Transfer to bowl; let cool.

Increase oven temperature to 400°F. In bowl, combine egg yolks, honey mustard, Dijon mustard, remaining 2 tbsp oil and 1/2 cup of the bread crumbs. Coat ham with mustard mixture; sprinkle with remaining 3/4 cup bread crumbs, pressing gently to adhere. Bake until crust is golden, about 15 minutes.

Test Kitchen Tip: Freeze any leftovers to add to soups, stir-fries, quiches and casseroles

Nutritional Facts: Per Serving

Sodium 903 mg

Sugars 2 g

Protein 29 g

Calories 220

Total fat 8 g

Potassium 415 mg

Cholesterol 93 mg

Saturated fat 2 g

Total carbohydrate 5 g

Root Vegetable Crumble

Try this creamy dish in place of mashed potatoes. The nutty herbed topping adds a nice crisp crust.

PREP TIME 30 minutes

TOTAL TIME 1 hours & 45 minutes

PORTION SIZE 10 servings

INGREDIENTS

4 cups cubed butternut squashes
 2 onions chopped
 1 large sweet potato peeled and cubed
 680 g mini yellow-fleshed potatoes halved or quartered
 4 cloves garlic sliced
 1/4 cup butter
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 2 cups sodium-reduced chicken broth
 1 cup whipping cream (35%)
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper



Topping:

1 1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs
 1/2 cup walnut chopped
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
 3 tablespoons butter melted

METHOD

Creamy Root Vegetables: In 12-cup (3 L) casserole dish, combine squash, onions, sweet potato, yellow-fleshed potatoes and garlic. Set aside.

In saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Sprinkle with flour; cook, whisking constantly, for 1 minute. Whisk in broth and cream; bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer, whisking constantly, until thick enough to coat back of spoon, about 3 minutes.

Whisk in mustard, salt and pepper; pour over vegetables. Bake in 400°F (200°C) oven until tender, about 1 hour.

Topping: In bowl, mix together bread crumbs, walnuts, sage and parsley; stir in butter. (Make-ahead: Refrigerate in airtight container for up to 2 days.) Sprinkle over vegetables. Bake in 400°F (200°C) oven until crumble is golden, about 15 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Nutritional Facts: per serving

Fibre 4 g
 Sodium 385 mg
 Sugars 6 g
 Protein 6 g
 Calories 345.0
 Total fat 21 g

Potassium 663 mg
 Cholesterol 52 mg
 Saturated fat 11 g
 Total carbohydrate 36 g

Blood Orange and Fennel Salad

Blood oranges add a splash of colour to this winter salad. Choose oranges that feel heavy for their size, and store them in your refrigerator or in a cool, dry place for up to a week.

PREP TIME 15 minutes

TOTAL TIME 15 minutes

PORTION SIZE 12 servings

INGREDIENTS

3 small blood oranges or Cara Cara navel oranges
 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
 2 teaspoons liquid honey
 1 clove garlic, finely grated or pressed
 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
 12 cups torn red or green leaf lettuce
 1 small bulb fennel, trimmed, cored and thinly sliced
 3/4 cups thinly sliced red onion



METHOD

Finely grate orange zest to make 1 tsp. Remove remaining peel and pith from oranges; cut oranges crosswise into generous 1/4-inch thick slices. Set aside.

In small bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, honey, orange zest, garlic, salt and pepper. Gradually whisk in oil in thin steady stream until well combined. (Make-ahead: Refrigerate in airtight container for up to 5 days.)

In large bowl, combine lettuce, fennel, red onion and oranges. Drizzle with vinaigrette; toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Facts: per serving

Fibre 2 g
 Sodium 82 mg
 Sugars 5 g
 Protein 1 g
 Calories 113
 Total fat 9 g
 Potassium 195 mg
 Cholesterol 0 mg
 Saturated fat 1 g
 Total carbohydrate 7 g

Contact and Contribute to Pathways!

Although Zoom meetings are not being held monthly, if you have a topic that you would like covered in a meeting or you would like to provide an update to resources for people with disabilities, please email pathways@ifrcsociety.org.

To send your contributions, feedback and questions to the Newsletter, send your email to pathways@ifrcsociety.org

Pathways To Independence Newsletters and pertinent documents are uploaded to the following locations. [IFRC Website Pathways](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED CONTRIBUTION TO PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE PEER GROUP