

WINTER WONDERLAND

There is hope! To the Anglo-Saxons, February was known as *Lenet monath*, or lengthening month, because the sun begins to noticeably linger a little longer each day. But as long as the winter season is upon us, we should not just “grin and bear it”, but savor it with warmth and good health.

Warm Your Home Without Raising the Heating Bill

MOOD LIGHTING

A lit candle can bring calm and a feeling of warmth to any situation—that bookwork you’re dreading or a family dinner. Soybean candles are a recent addition to the market that are made with the oil of the bean, a plentiful resource on American farms. They don’t emit the harmful formaldehyde and soot that paraffin candles do. Beeswax candles are another alternative. Go to www.lumia.us to purchase online. Use lamps rather than overhead lighting as they will create a gentler mood and install dimmers on them. Choose lamp shades lined in gold tones for a softer, warmer glow.

THE CANDLE THAT BURNS FOREVER

Save remains of candles rather than tossing them. Clean them by removing labels and cutting off burnt wicks. Melt candles and wicks in a large pot that you don’t care about. Toss in a broken crayon for unpredictable coloring. As candles melt, remove wicks and any dirt. Let wax settle and then pour directly into a mould. Creative uses for molds range from milk cartons to frozen juice cans to small paper cups. www.waxedout.com

SCENTS THAT SOOTHE

Conjure up memories of Christmas and family gatherings by putting a few sliced apples in a saucepan and covering with water. Add 2 cinnamon sticks and 6 to 12 cloves. Simmer uncovered and keep adding water as it will boil off.

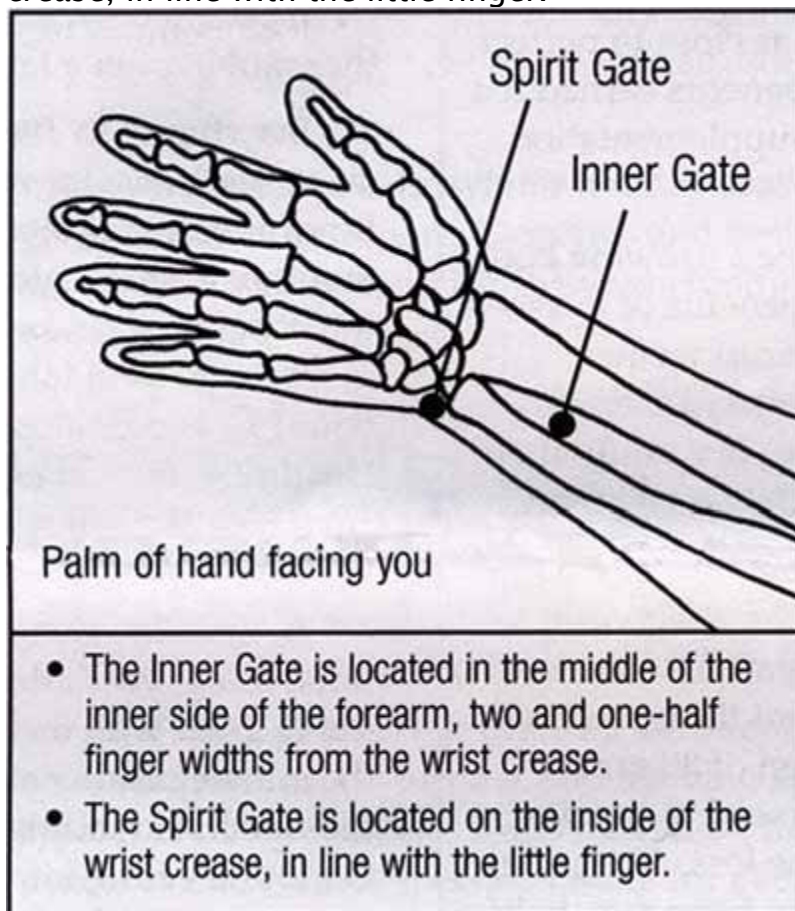
UNDER THE COVERS

If all else fails, get in bed. Flannel is a cold-weather staple. The softest cotton sheets are made from pima or Egyptian cotton, very durable and luxurious. The softness and quality of your sheets depends more on the type of cotton than thread count.

So now you’re warm and cozy but still having difficulty falling asleep—or perhaps one of your children is not sleeping as well as you’d like. Increasing evidence

finds that acupressure can aid in sleep disturbances. The following exercise, stimulating the Spirit Gate and Inner Gate, has been found to calm the heart and alleviate anxiety, resulting in a more sound sleep. This calming and balancing effect is also desirable for doulas to use when helping a mom during labor and then can be passed on to the mom for some self-help during postpartum and parenting.

The Inner Gate is in the middle of the inner side of the forearm, about 2 ½ finger widths from the wrist crease. The Spirit Gate is located on the inside of the wrist crease, in line with the little finger.



Healthy Choices

CHEESY FETISH

Host a cheese tasting. Invite one or more friends to sample your spread of dried and fresh fruits, nuts, herbs and breads. And don't forget the cheese; from soft dessert types like **Saint Andre** to tangy blues like **Cabrales**. For some in-depth guidance in the often daunting grocer selection, refer to *The Cheese Primer* by Steven Jenkins. Yes, it's fattening, but it also provides you with calcium, protein, and may slow cavity formation. The heavier the cheese, the more calcium it contains. A few samplings to look for:

Stilton is a crumbly blue with green and blue streaks. Pair with walnuts.

Manchego is made of sheep's milk, sweet and mild. Pair with grapes.

Livarot is soft, nutty, and salty. It goes well with apples and walnuts.

FLU-SHOT ALTERNATIVES

When you get a flu shot you are injected with strains of the actual virus. This causes your immune system to temporarily weaken as it fights off the germs. During this time, if you are exposed to the virus, you will get the very flu that you were just vaccinated for. This "window period" lasts about three weeks. Unless you are over 65 or in the last two trimesters of a pregnancy, you may want to reconsider getting the vaccine. Why not try a more natural route? Dr. Susan Lark recommends the following ideas:

Keep your body on the **alkaline** side as acids cause nasal and bronchial congestion, making you more susceptible to wintertime illnesses. The old orange juice tactic may not be the best—it causes more acidity. Go for lots of **water** and herbal teas instead. Take **Echinacea** at first sign of cold or flu symptoms or before and after you travel. If you get fully sick, stop taking it until the worst is over. You shouldn't take it for longer than six consecutive weeks as its efficacy wanes over time. **Colloidal silver** has proven antibiotic properties, preventing bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. Take ½ teaspoon of [ASAP Solution](#) (the only patented colloidal silver on the market) every two to four hours for an acute infection. **Colostrum**, the first milk provided by all mammals, is another cold-buster. Take 500 mg twice a day, in capsule form, on an empty belly. **Vitamin C** never hurts either. Get 500–1000 mg one to three times a day. Rub **eucalyptus oil** mixed with a carrier oil on your chest or back to relieve congestion or carefully dab it around the outside of your nostrils. Try [The Nurturing Place's RespirRate](#) for a ready made product that is safe for adults and children.

HERE AND THERE

Don't forget about those New Year's resolutions! If a friend or family member is trying to adopt a healthier lifestyle as one of theirs, you could volunteer to be a walking buddy or cook healthy meals together.

When carrying groceries from store to car to home, do 10 to 15 biceps curls with one bag in each hand.

If you have a desk job, treat yourself to some keyboard yoga at www.ivillage.com.

To prevent seasonal dry skin, take warm showers instead of hot. Scalding water washes away natural softening body oils. Apply [moisturizing products](#) while your skin is still damp.

WINTER MUSINGS

There is a privacy about it which no other season gives you. . . Only in the winter can you have longer quiet stretches when you can savor belonging to yourself.

--Ruth Stout

Let us love winter, for it is the spring of genius.

--Pietro Aretino

Every mile is two in winter.

--George Herbert

If it is really religion with these nudist colonies, they sure must turn atheists in the winter time.

--Will Rogers

Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle—a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream.

--Barbara Winkler