

Photography from A to Z

BY JOAN AIREY
Freelance writer

David Matthews has spent his entire career in photography including photojournalism and industrial commercial photography. A to Z Illusions is another extension of his creativity. Over the past few years he has enjoyed compiling a library of about 400 objects, taken from different angles to capture letters then reproducing them in sepia 4x6-inch prints.

While Matthews was a child he was bitten by the photojournalism bug when his first photograph was published in the evening issue of the *Echo* in England. He snapped the photograph on his 127 Brownie camera of a lorry (truck) carrying 10-ton blocks of stone that had crashed into a house.

"The photograph told the complete story and was featured on the front page, with my name. This was my first byline. That thrill and experience would be extremely satisfy-

ing. Many people tried to dissuade me from pursuing my dream, but due to my perseverance (some say stubbornness) I was able to photograph everything I wanted to, learning much about people, life and photography," said Matthews.

"The idea is not original. It is something I did years ago for fun, while volunteering at the local school in Alexander, Manitoba with the literacy program. A student was having troubles forming the shapes of letters so I invented a game to find letters among the desks and chairs in the classroom. That was the 'Ahaa' moment. I set out on a year's mission to photograph the alphabet using natural, everyday objects without using any touching up of the photographs," said Matthews.

Matthews also volunteers his time to help with the art program at the school.

"People's appreciation of my work is very rewarding. Watching people at a show looking at the photographs and the expression on their faces, and exclamations of wonder when the realization

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A TO Z: David Matthews with a display of his letter art photography at a craft show in Rivers.

that they are looking at a word dawned on them, is very pleasing," said Matthews.

"If you're going to take up photography, always have a camera with you and a constant yearning for searching for knowledge, and an open artistic eye with perseverance and willingness to listen. Always be willing to learn! I enjoy sharing the knowledge I have with others and on my website I offer

a newsletter with updates on A to Z photographic tips and answer photographic questions," said Matthews.

Matthews' website can be found at www.atozillusions.com. He markets his Lettergraphs from his website, at craft shows and finds the best marketing tool is word of mouth from happy customers. — Joan Airey writes from Rivers, Manitoba.

Thaw holiday foods safely

BY CAROL ANN BURTNES
University of Minnesota Extension

Holidays and food go together. If your plans include using frozen foods, thaw them safely to prevent a foodborne illness from spoiling holiday activities.

Keep foods at a safe temperature when thawing. Any bacteria that were present on the food before freezing will begin to multiply as soon as food begins to thaw and become warmer

than 4°C. Foods should never be thawed on the counter, in the basement, garage, dishwasher, on the back porch or in hot water. Although the centre of the food may still be frozen as it thaws, bacteria can grow in the outer layers of the food before the inside thaws.

When thawing, plan ahead so foods remain safe and maintain good quality. The three safe ways to thaw foods include: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave oven.

Refrigerator: Of the safe thawing methods, this is the best method to maintain the quality of the food. Planning ahead is the key to this method. A large frozen item (like a turkey) requires approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of weight. Meat, poultry and fish should be placed in a pan to catch drips during the thawing process. Place the pan of food on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.

Cold water: Submerge the food in a leak-proof plastic bag and put into a clean and sanitized deep pot or sink filled with cold water. Keep the water cold and clean by changing it every 30 minutes.

Allow 30 minutes per pound to defrost food.

Microwave oven: This method works best for small amounts of food. Leave approximately two inches between the food and oven's inside surface to allow heat to circulate. Microwave thawing is irregular, creates hot spots and may encourage bacterial growth. Cook the food immediately after thawing.

Kitchen gadgets such as thawing trays made of superconductive metal alloys allow frozen food to defrost quickly at room temperature. Follow these tips if you plan to use this gadget:

- Be sure the surface of the food lays flat against the tray's surface.
- To remain safe, raw meats and poultry should not be at room temperatures longer than two hours.
- Immediately cook the thawed food or refrigerate it immediately and use within one or two days.
- Clean the tray after every use with hot, soapy water to prevent cross-contamination of bacteria to other foods.

— Carol Ann Burtness is a food science educator with University of Minnesota Extension.

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A time to give thanks

BY ALMA BARKMAN
Freelance writer

I am thankful for pungent wisps of smoke upon the autumn air, and skeins of Canada geese unravelling across the western sky at sunset.

I am thankful for farmhouses nestled at the ends of tree-lined lanes, for neatly mowed ditches and dustings of wildflowers along country roads.

I am thankful for humble sunflowers standing with bowed heads, for pungent marigolds withstanding fall frosts, for maroon vines entwining themselves around a white trellis.

I am thankful for tardy robins feasting on clusters of orange berries, for brilliant blue jays landing in backyard feeders, for the cheery song of black-capped chickadees.

I am thankful for the laughter of little children waiting for big yellow school buses.

I am thankful for cheeky red squirrels scolding busy gardeners, and mellow cats sunning themselves on south windowsills.

I am thankful for green globe cabbages and big bold pumpkins, for bulging gunny sacks of new potatoes and braided ropes of yellow onions.

I am thankful for baskets of red tomatoes, clusters of orange carrots and a box of burgundy beets.

I am thankful for combines gobbling up fields of Prairie grain, and for the herds of cattle grazing in broad pastures.

I am thankful for provisions, and for all those who provide them.

I am thankful for plenty.

I am thankful for peace.



ALMA BARKMAN

— Alma Barkman writes from Winnipeg