



11 THINGS FROM UKRAINIAN GRANDMOTHERS

11 Things to Take Out After 60

After sixty, the grandmothers in my village took these quiet dangers out of their homes. Here is each one in an American house. Keep this list in your kitchen drawer.

with love, Maria

Your list: tick each one when it is done

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| ☐ The glass thermometer | ☐ The door that needs a key from inside |
| ☐ The long housecoat at the stove | ☐ The generator in the basement |
| ☐ The big pot, carried full | ☐ The dowry chest |
| ☐ The wall of jars in the cellar | ☐ The money in the jar |
| ☐ A drink kept in crystal | ☐ The little brown bottle |
| ☐ The shoebox of receipts | |

Tonight: take the PM bottle from your nightstand and put it into a bag. Put the bag by your front door, so it goes with you to the pharmacist.



1 The glass thermometer

The silver tip is mercury. It turns into vapor in the air of a room, and you breathe it without smelling anything.

- ☐ Look in your medicine cabinet, the junk drawer and the sewing box. Look for an old barometer on the wall too.
- ☐ Do not put it in the trash. Close it in a jar and take it to your county's drop-off for household hazardous waste.
- ☐ Buy a digital thermometer. It costs about ten dollars.
- ☐ If one ever breaks, use no vacuum and no broom. Lift the beads with stiff paper and a piece of tape.



2 The long housecoat at the stove

A wide sleeve hangs away from the arm, so it touches the flame before you feel anything.

- ☐ Stop cooking in a robe with loose sleeves.
- ☐ Wear one with snug cuffs, or roll your sleeves above the elbow and put on an apron.
- ☐ Cook on the front burners when you can, so you never reach across the fire.



3 The big pot, carried full

«виварка» — the boiling pot

Full of water it weighs more than twenty pounds, and the water is boiling.

- ☐ Your «виварка» is the big stockpot, the canner or the turkey fryer. Never carry it full of something hot.
- ☐ Ladle the soup into containers right there at the stove.
- ☐ Lift the pasta out with a strainer insert or a spider.
- ☐ Empty the canner with a cup before you move it.
- ☐ If you no longer cook for twelve people, give the big pot to a young family who does.



4 The wall of jars in the cellar

A three-liter jar weighs about nine pounds. Home-canned vegetables are good for about a year, and compote with the pits inside even less.

- ☐ Go through your pantry and basement shelves this week.
- ☐ Anything bulging, leaking, rusty or dented on the seam goes out. When you are not sure, throw it out.
- ☐ Eat the home-canned jars older than a year first, or let them go.
- ☐ Move the heavy jars and big cans to between your knee and your waist.
- ☐ Next season, can in pints. Last year's jars are eaten or given away before a new one is filled.



5 A drink kept in crystal

Old crystal is lead crystal. Lead moves slowly into a drink, more the longer it stands.

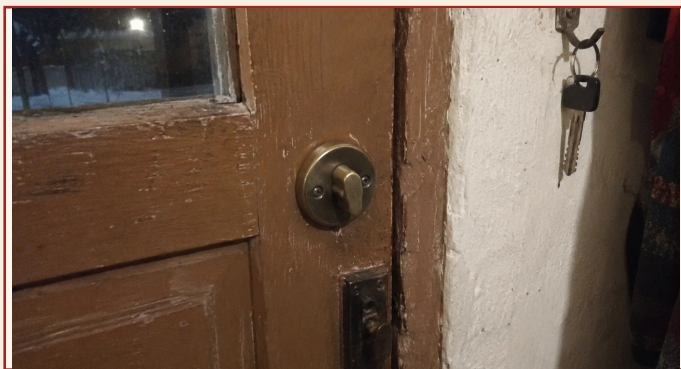
- ☐ Open your china cabinet. If a crystal decanter holds whiskey, sherry or port, pour it back into its own glass bottle today.
- ☐ One drink from a crystal glass at dinner is fine. Keeping a drink in crystal is not.
- ☐ Use the good glasses on an ordinary Tuesday, or give them now to someone who will.



6 The shoebox of receipts

Thirty years of paper hides the few papers your family will need. Keep one thin folder they know.

- ☐ Keep tax returns and their papers for seven years.
- ☐ Keep bank statements and utility bills for one year, unless you need them for taxes.
- ☐ Keep the papers for buying and improving the house until you sell it, and seven years after.
- ☐ Keep the will, the deeds, car titles, discharge papers and insurance policies forever, in one folder your family knows.
- ☐ Shred everything else. Many banks and libraries hold free shredding days.



7 The door that needs a key from inside

In smoke and in the dark, you may not find the key, and the door will not open without it.

- ☐ Walk to every outside door in your house.
- ☐ If one needs a key to open from inside, replace it with a thumb-turn deadbolt, around thirty dollars. Check your local code.
- ☐ Until then, hang the key on a hook right beside that door, always the same hook, so your hand finds it in the dark.



8 The generator in the basement

The fumes are carbon monoxide, with no smell and no color.

- ☐ Never run a generator in the garage, even with the door open.
- ☐ Run it outside, at least twenty feet from the house, with the exhaust pointing away from the windows.
- ☐ Keep the gasoline in a shed, not in the basement.
- ☐ Put a battery carbon monoxide alarm on each floor, near the bedrooms.
- ☐ If you already have one, read the date on the back. They wear out in seven to ten years.



9 The dowry chest

«скриня» — the dowry chest

The linen waits for children who now sleep under duvets far away. Given by your own hands, it carries its story.

- ☐ Your «скриня» is the linen closet and the cedar chest.
- ☐ Keep two sets of sheets for each bed.
- ☐ For each child or grandchild, choose one thing. Write on a card who made it and when, and give it yourself at the next holiday.
- ☐ The clean extra towels and blankets can go to an animal shelter, which always needs them.



10 The money in the jar

Cash at home draws the phone calls: your grandson is in trouble, a man will come for the money.

- ☐ Put your hidden money into an insured bank or credit union account.
- ☐ Keep only a small envelope at home for a power outage.
- ☐ Today, choose a family code word.
- ☐ Say this out loud to your children: nobody in our family will ever send a driver to pick up cash.



I am writing my grandmother's
ways down in a small book. You
are on my list, so you will hear
first when it is ready.

Maria

11 The little brown bottle

The old heart drops contain phenobarbital. Most PM pills contain diphenhydramine or doxylamine, and after sixty-five these can bring confusion and falls in the night.

- ☐ Its American cousin is the PM pill on your nightstand: Tylenol PM, Advil PM, ZzzQuil, Unisom, Benadryl.
- ☐ Put every sleep aid you bought without a prescription and every old bottle into one bag.
- ☐ Take the bag to your pharmacist and ask one question: which of these should I not take at my age?
- ☐ The leftovers go into the take-back box at the pharmacy. It costs nothing.