Food $ense

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program

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UW Extension
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Creative Cooking From Your Pantry

Almost everyone experiences some frustration with planning meals, even when they like to cook! We want to serve our families healthy meals that are quick and easy!

Sometimes the foods we have on hand seem to be an odd assortment of foods, or foods we just haven't found a way to use.

Try these creative ways to use foods on hand:

- Change a recipe to use foods you have on hand or to make it healthier.
- Put familiar foods together in a new way.
- Create your own recipe for a one-dish meal; give it a special name.

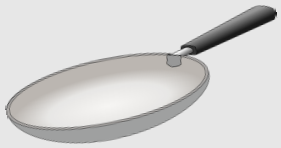
Ideas for quick, easy healthy meals, starting with a pantry staple:

- **Pasta sauce:** Use any kind of pasta and add drained, rinsed canned vegetables.
- **Canned soups:** Add more vegetables or canned tomatoes.
- **Macaroni and cheese:** Add tuna, or canned, diced meat. Add peas or a favorite vegetable for a great casserole.
- **Beans and rice:** Any variety of drained canned beans and any rice work; add onions, garlic, green pepper if you have it, and canned tomatoes or sauce. Leftover ham or sausage is nice but necessary.
- **Canned fruit:** Adding a chopped unpeeled apple makes a delicious dessert.

Source: *EFNEP Creative Cooking*

Vegetable Fried Rice

Eggs and rice—combine two low-cost foods.



2 cups cooked white or brown rice
2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup celery, chopped
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1 package frozen vegetables (10-oz.) or 1 can mixed vegetables, drained
1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
Dash of pepper
2 eggs, beaten

1. Cook rice, following directions on package.
2. Heat oil in skillet or large frying pan on medium heat. Add celery and onion; stir and fry for 2 minutes. Add cooked rice and stir for 5 minutes.
3. Add vegetables, soy sauce and pepper to the pan and cook until frozen vegetables are tender. Remove rice mixture from pan, and pour in eggs.
4. Stir to scramble and cook until done. Put rice and vegetables back into pan, stir to combine.
5. Refrigerate leftovers.

Source: *What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl*

Save Time in the Kitchen
Plan Ahead

Look for recipes with few steps and ingredients, that don't take long to fix. Foods that cook on top of the stove are usually quicker.

Do some preparation steps ahead, if you can. Thaw frozen meat by putting in refrigerator the day before or brown and drain ground meat for your recipe ahead of time.

On a day when you do have time to cook, fix enough chili, casserole or soup for two meals. Put half in your refrigerator to eat in a day or two. Put the other half clearly labeled with date and what it is, in the freezer to eat later in the month.

Get help from other family members. Even young children can help by washing fresh fruits or vegetables, tearing up lettuce, and setting the table.

Source: *Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program booklet Stretching Your Food Dollars*

Dangerous Food Safety Mistakes

Some food safety mistakes can have serious consequences. Here's some common food safety mistakes that could cause serious illness.

Mistake #1: Tasting food to see if it's still good.

Why: You can't taste (or smell or see) the bacteria that cause food poisoning. Tasting only a tiny amount can cause serious illness.

Solution: Throw food out before harmful bacteria grows. Check the Safe Storage Times chart to be sure.

Mistake #2: Not washing your hands.

Why: Germs on your hands can contaminate the food that you or others eat.

Solution: Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and clean running water.

Mistake #3: Putting cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat.

Why: Germs from the raw meat can spread to the cooked meat.

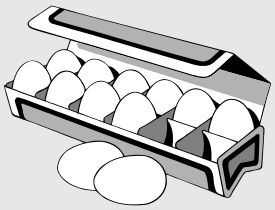
Solution: Always use separate plates for raw meat and cooked meat, including poultry and seafood.

Source: *foodsafety.gov*

Scrambled Egg Muffins

A morning surprise for the entire family!

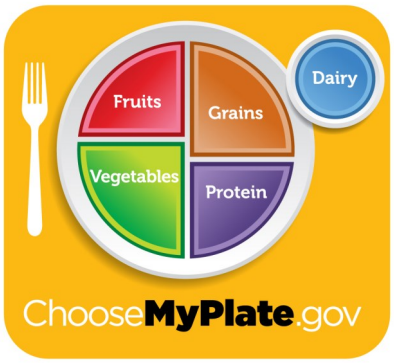
2 cups washed vegetables, diced (broccoli, red or green bell peppers, onion)
6 eggs
1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 cup shredded low fat cheddar cheese



1. Preheat oven to 350°. Spray muffin tin with nonstick spray. Add chopped veggies to the muffin tin.
2. Beat eggs in a bowl. Stir in salt, pepper, and garlic powder.
3. Pour eggs into the muffin tin and bake 20-25 minutes. To add cheese, remove the tin from the oven during the last 3 minutes of baking. Sprinkle the cheese on top of the muffins and return the tin to the oven.
4. Bake until the temperature reaches 160°F or a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.

Source: *Iowa State University Extension*

Building MyPlate



Use the MyPlate model to plan healthy, balanced meals for your family. Including a variety of foods can make meals interesting for your family and help them get the nutrients needed for a healthy lifestyle.

Make half your plate fruit and veggies. Choose colorful vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and broccoli that supply important vitamins and minerals.

Add a whole grain such as brown rice, whole-wheat pasta or a whole-grain tortilla. Whole grains provide more nutrients, like fiber, than refined grains. Be sure to look for the word *whole* in ingredient lists.

Include a small portion of lean protein. For variety make eggs, nuts, or seafood the protein on your plate. Keeping meat portions small helps to trim grocery bills. For a real money saver, serve cooked dry beans in place of meat.

Choose fat-free or low-fat milk. It provides the same amount of calcium for your bones and teeth as whole milk, but has less fat. Compared to other dairy products such as cheese or yogurt, milk is the best buy.

Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way. Indulge in a naturally sweet dessert—fruit! Fruits provide nutrients important for health, such as potassium, fiber, vitamin C and folic acid. Most fruits are naturally low in sodium and calories. Try a fruit parfait made with yogurt or baked apples with cinnamon.

Source: *ChooseMyPlate.gov*

Dear Sue Keeney…

Meet Sue Keeney--your source of research-based information about nutrition and health! Readers of all ages like Sue's practical tips on eating for good health, stretching the food dollar & more!

Submit your question to Sue Keeney at fyi.uwex.edu/foodsense/ask-sue-keeney/

Dear Sue,

My family has such different schedules we rarely eat together. Are family meals really that important?

Mary Meelmaker

Dear Mary,

Research has shown that family meals offer a variety of benefits to children and parents. Family meals help to provide regular, consistent opportunities to share experiences and offer a sense of belonging to all members of the family.

Family meals are associated with improved dietary intake among family members. Studies show that children who eat family meals eat more fruits, vegetables and drink fewer sweetened beverages.

Not every meal has to be a sit-down dinner. The most important thing about family meals is to make them frequent, fun and family-centered. Limit distractions, such as the TV or phones.

Family meals can be simple with shared responsibility among family members. Teaching children the enjoyment of cooking and having them involved in mealtime preparation helps them develop skills they can use for a lifetime.

Sue

Source: *The Big Benefits of Family Meals, Sean Botherson, North Dakota State University*

Apps to Make Healthy Easy

There are many health and nutrition apps available for download. They can help you find healthy recipes, use leftovers, track your food and physical activity and manage diseases, such as diabetes. Before downloading, consider these SMART tips:

- What is the **S**ource of the app? Try to find information about the person or organization that created it.
- Does it **M**eet your needs? Do the recipes or workouts require equipment or skills that you do not have?
- What **A**ctions will you take? Does the app provide information that is easy to understand and use?
- What do **R**eviewers say? Read online reviews that tell you how well the app works.
- Do you have the **T**ime? If the app involves tracking what you eat or your physical activity, will you use it regularly?

Source: *University of Missouri Extension*

GOAL: Write one tip you will try in order to make family meals easier.

_____

_____

Kids in the Kitchen...

Make Mealtimes Fun

When you eat with your children, it is more likely that they will eat healthier and more balanced meals. Conversation-starters can add fun to mealtimes.

Some conversation-starters might be:

- If you could be any type of animal, what would it be and why?
- Describe one of our family traditions you really like.

Talking about food can be a conversation-starter too:

- Ask your kids which food groups are on their plates.
- Talk about where the food comes from: animals, plants, garden, store, etc.
- Share what foods taste like: sweet, sour, spicy, juicy, etc.

Source: *Extension Services -West Virginia University*

MyPlate Tip

Make Healthy Meals More Fun

WNEP education is supported by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), UW-Extension, FoodShare Wisconsin, and local partners. In Wisconsin, FoodShare can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about FoodShare, call (715) 395-1304 or go to http://access.wisconsin.gov. To learn more about the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program in your county, please contact:

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