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# HEALTHY CHOICES FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES

 Cooperative  
Extension Service



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## Making time for family meals

September is National Family Meals Month. Studies have shown that families that eat meals often together have better eating habits and family dynamics. The skills built at family meals can help us handle life's tough spots. Eating as a family helps self-esteem and can give each person a sense of well-being. It's even been shown to keep kids out of trouble. The more family meals that kids share, the less likely they are to take part in drinking alcohol, smoking, or using drugs. And kids who eat meals with their family up to four times a week have been shown to have higher test scores and succeed in school.

More than 80% of people surveyed eat together more often since the COVID pandemic began. Now that life is busy again, try to keep routine family meals. Is the family busy in the evenings? Try eating breakfast together before the day starts. Or try



to get together for breakfast, lunch, or an early dinner on the weekends.

Family meals don't just mean a mom, dad, and two kids sitting around the table. A family meal can be with someone you live with and think of as family. This could include roommates, domestic partners, single parents and kids, grandparents, and grandchildren.

People who live alone might consider calling a loved one or inviting a neighbor to eat at the same time.

### How to make family meals easy

Choose a day for planning. Some people do this on the weekend. Look at your week and figure out what meals the

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## BASIC BUDGET BITES

### Leftovers

Using leftovers is a great way to cut down on food waste and save time. They can be a great snack, the next day's lunch, or even turned into a quick meal. You can make larger meals earlier in the week and use the leftovers later in the week or put them in the freezer. Be careful with leftovers to make sure the food is safe when you eat it. Look at some ways you can use leftovers:

#### Grains

- **Rice:** Use rice to make rice pudding and fried rice, or add it to meatballs, soups, and casseroles. You can also freeze it. You should add a small amount of liquid when you reheat leftover rice.
- **Bread:** If your bread, leftover rolls, hamburger, or hot dog buns are getting a little dry, try different recipes. Croutons, toast, stuffing, breadcrumbs, or French toast are all good options. Use day-old bread to make French toast. If you have one or two hamburger or hot dog buns left in the package, use them to make cheesy toast by topping with any kind of cheese, and broiling in the oven until the cheese is melted and lightly browned. Add canned tuna for a tuna melt!
- **Pasta:** Use in a pasta salad or casserole. Freeze it for later use in casseroles, soups, vegetable dishes, or as a side dish with a sauce.

#### Fruit

Add leftover fruit to salads or smoothies. Mix it with yogurt, cottage cheese, or pudding. Leftover fruit is also great in baked goods such as muffins or quick breads. Overripe bananas make excellent banana bread or muffins, or freeze them to use in fruit smoothies. You can freeze fruit

juice in ice cube trays and use it for flavoring and chilling fruit drinks.

#### Vegetables

Use vegetables in soups, salads, omelets, pasta dishes, and casseroles. Leftover baked potatoes are great for a topping for shepherd's pie, or in potato casserole or potato soup. You can scoop out the potato pulp and use it to make twice baked potatoes. Freeze chopped raw onions, celery, or green peppers to use in soups, stews, or casseroles.

#### Protein

- **Baked beans:** Use in casseroles or to make chili.
- **Roasts:** Slice to make sandwiches or shred for use in tacos, enchiladas, or barbecued meat. You can also cube it and use it to make beef and noodles or freeze it for use in casseroles.
- **Steak or chops:** Slice thinly and make fajitas (cooked with onions, peppers, and fajita seasoning). Make a sandwich by topping meat with sautéed peppers, onions, and cheese. Top a tossed salad with sliced steak for a quick meal.
- **Turkey or chicken:** Use turkey or chicken in casseroles, soups, tacos, or enchiladas. You can thinly slice the meat to make sandwiches, or you can shred it to make chicken or turkey salad sandwiches. Cube it to make chicken or turkey and noodles or freeze it for later use in casseroles or soups.
- **Ham:** Use ham to make ham and cheese sandwiches (either hot or cold). Or slice, freeze, and use it later for sandwiches. Cube it and use it in casseroles or soups.

Source: Adapted from UNL Extension Food and Nutrition

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family can eat together. The whole family should help select the menu, even kids! Meals don't have to be hard. Try soup and sandwiches with a side of fruit. Or breakfast for dinner on nights when you don't have much time. Check out [PlanEatMove.com](http://PlanEatMove.com) for some great recipes that are sure to please!

Adapted from The Family Meals Movement



## SMART TIPS

### Whole grains

Next time you go shopping, help keep your family healthy by choosing whole grains. Whole grains have a fiber-rich outer bran layer, a germ, and a starchy endosperm. Refined grains (such as white bread, white pasta, and white rice) have mostly just the endosperm.

The fiber in whole grains aids in digestive and heart health. Whole grains also have extra vitamins, minerals, and nutrients. No matter which whole grain you choose, make sure the ingredient list includes whole grains or that the label reads "100% whole grain."

Source: eatright.org

RECIPE

# Cabbage Rolls

- 12 cabbage leaves
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon water



1. Wash hands with warm water and soap, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
2. Cover cabbage leaves with boiling water. Let stand until leaves are limp, about 4 minutes. Drain. When cool, trim away excess ridge on leaf for easier rolling.
3. Mix beef, rice, 1/2 cup tomato sauce, garlic salt, pepper, basil, oregano, onions, and green pepper. Put 1/3 cup in each leaf, starting at leaf end, roll, tucking in the sides.
4. Place seam side down in a 9-by-11-inch baking dish.
5. Mix remaining tomato sauce with the sugar, pour over rolls.
6. Cover and bake at 350 degrees F for 1 hour.
7. Remove cabbage rolls from baking dish, pour juice in a saucepan.
8. Mix cornstarch and water; stir into saucepan. Heat and stir until mixture boils, cook 1 minute.
9. Serve sauce with cabbage rolls.
10. Store leftovers in the refrigerator within 2 hours.

Makes 6 servings  
Serving size: 2 rolls

Nutrition facts per serving: 220 calories; 6 g total fat; 2.5 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 50 mg cholesterol; 560 mg sodium; 24 g total carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 9 g total sugars; 1 g added sugar; 20g protein; 0% Daily Value vitamin D; 6% Daily Value calcium; 15% Daily Value iron; 15% Daily Value potassium

Source: Plate it Up! Kentucky Proud Project <https://www.planeatmove.com/recipes/recipe/cabbage-rolls>

COOKING WITH KIDS

# Build Your Own Ramen

- 1 package ramen noodles (any flavor)
- 2 cups water
- 1 can (5 ounces) chicken or tuna
- 1 cup mixed vegetables or a vegetable of your choice
- Seasoning of your choice (garlic powder, onion powder, Italian seasoning, lemon pepper, or all-purpose seasoning.)

1. Wash hands with warm water and soap, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds.
2. Prepare ramen in a microwave (or stovetop) according to package instructions.
3. Add chicken or tuna and vegetables and heat for 30 seconds to 1 minute in the microwave until heated through.
4. Note: If using the seasoning packet included in the

package, try using only half of the flavor packet and adding your own spices.

5. Store leftovers in the refrigerator within 2 hours.

*Tips: Avoid food waste by using leftover rotisserie or baked chicken. Make it a family fun night by being in the kitchen together and letting everyone choose what veggies and protein to include.*

Makes 1 serving  
Serving size: 1 ramen bowl

Nutrition facts per serving:  
240 calories; 4 g total fat; 1 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 45 mg cholesterol; 710 mg sodium; 31 g total carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 3 g total sugars; 0 g added sugar; 21 g protein; 0% Daily Value vitamin D; 4% Daily Value calcium; 10% Daily Value iron; 6% Daily Value potassium

Source: <https://www.planeatmove.com/recipes/recipe/build-your-own-ramen>

PARENT CORNER

# Fun and engaging conversation starters

**W**e all know that talks around the dinner table are of great value. Here are a few ideas for starters:

- What is your favorite fruit or vegetable? How do you like to eat it?
- What are good qualities of a friend?
- What is your favorite thing about our family?

- Would you rather live in the mountains or at the beach? Why?
- If you were a season, which season would you be and why?
- What was your pit (low point) and peach (high point) today?
- Did you see or do a random act of kindness today? What was it?

Adapted from NDSU Extension



## FOOD FACTS

# Oats and Quinoa

### Oats

Oats have fiber which can lower cholesterol and help support the immune system. Oats boast antioxidant claims. Oatmeal is the age-old favorite for breakfast. You can add oats as a binder to meatloaf and burgers. Oats also work well in baked goods such as oatmeal cookies, as a crunchy topping to crisps and crumbles, and even in casserole dishes.

### Quinoa

Quinoa has all nine essential amino acids, making it a good protein source. Quinoa is a great source of magnesium and a good source of iron and folate. Making quinoa is similar to cooking rice. Simply follow the package instructions. Toasting quinoa before boiling it in liquid adds flavor, as does cooking it in vegetable broth. You can make quinoa in a rice cooker. Before cooking, use a fine mesh strainer to rinse the quinoa to remove compounds called saponins that can give the quinoa a bitter taste. Quinoa is fun for kids because it pops in your mouth when you chew it and it comes in many colors: beige, red, black, and even purple. Mix quinoa with beans or nuts for a tasty side dish or add to salads and stir-fries.

Source: eatright.org

## LOCAL EVENTS

**If you are interested in nutrition classes, contact your Extension office.**

VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[EXTENSION.CA.UKY.EDU/COUNTY](https://extension.ca.uky.edu/county)