



Kinship Link

Volume 15, Issue 3

March 2019

March is National Nutrition Month Smart Tips for Successful Meals

Pro Kinship for Kids

Inside this issue:

Smart Tips for Successful Meals continued	2
Foodborne Illness: Guess Who Came to Dinner?	2

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Preparing food at home can be a great way to save money, express creativity, and stay on track with healthful eating. However, cooking can also be a challenge for many people. With a few tips and tools, cooking at home becomes a little bit easier for everyone!

Keep a Well-Stocked Pantry

If you don't have time to plan meals some days or have unexpected guests, a well-stocked pantry can relieve some of the pressure when it comes time to make a meal. Keep the following on hand for quick, easy-to-fix dishes.

Shelf Stable Products

- Dried or canned beans, peas, and lentils (such as black, garbanzo, kidney, white, and pinto beans; green, yellow, or split peas and lentils)
- Canned vegetables with no added salt (such as tomatoes, olives, artichoke hearts, green beans, and corn)
- Whole grains (such as brown rice, quinoa, oats, millet, and whole-grain pasta)
- Pouches or canned fish and chicken

- Olive, canola, or other vegetable oils
- Herbs and spices

Frozen Foods

- Vegetables (such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, and Brussel sprouts)
- Fruit (such as berries, cherries, and bananas)
- Whole wheat pizza dough
- Frozen poultry or seafood

Don't Stress! You don't need to be a master chef in order to whip up something tasty and nutritious. You can create healthy and tasty meals without a recipe. For example:

- ◆ Pasta with sautéed veggies and baked fish
- ◆ Black bean and vegetable burrito
- ◆ Scrambled eggs with cheese, salsa, and whole grain toast

If you don't have an ingredient, try substituting with something similar:

- * Making black bean burgers but running short on black beans? Try them with pinto beans instead.
- * Having pasta but forgot the sauce? Toss together canned tomatoes, a drizzle of

olive oil, and season with herbs to provide the extra flavor.

- * If you're missing sour cream, plain Greek yogurt can be used in its place in chili, on potatoes, and in baked goods.
- * Cauliflower can replace broccoli in casseroles and soups.

Mix and Match

These easy combinations pair well and contain many items you may already have on hand:

- Whole grain pasta with garbanzo beans and canned tomatoes, seasoned with basil, and served with a medley of microwaved frozen vegetables on the side.
- Quinoa with black beans, corn, and bell pepper, dressed with olive oil and lime juice.
- Salad with lettuce, hard boiled eggs, tuna, tomatoes, and olives and dressed with a little olive oil or vinegar.



Smart Tips for Successful Meals continued

Invest in the Right Tools to have on Hand

While you may be able to improvise, the following kitchen tools make working in the kitchen easier.

- Baking sheets and roasting pans
- Stock pot, sauce pans, and skillets
- Tongs and spatulas
- Slotted and mixing spoons
- Potholders and towels
- Colander or strainer
- Mixing bowls in various sizes
- Separate cutting boards for raw and cooked foods
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Chef knives and vegetable peelers



Foodborne Illness: Guess Who Came to Dinner?

Food poisoning is the common term many people use to refer to foodborne illness. There are almost 9.4 million cases of foodborne illness each year in this country that are caused by 31 different pathogens. Almost 56,000 cases will be severe enough to require hospitalization. 1,351 deaths are possible each year. The people who are most susceptible are the very young, pregnant women, the chronically ill, and the elderly. Young children are susceptible due to their immature immune systems. Pregnant women, actually their unborn baby, are susceptible because the mother's immune system is slightly reduced during the months of pregnancy and the pathogen can be transferred to the fetus. Chronic illnesses could compromise a person's immune system, or the medical treatment they are receiving for their condition may adversely affect their immunity leading to foodborne illness susceptibility. Likewise, the elderly are susceptible because of aging and also because of the incidence of other chronic diseases that affect the immune system.

Some symptoms of foodborne illness are similar to flu symptoms. Many foodborne illness symptoms include nausea, diarrhea, fever, stomach cramps, and vomiting. Severe illnesses may cause septicemia or meningitis. Pregnant

women may miscarry. Many of the deaths that are caused by foodborne illness are in the elderly. The severity of the symptoms may depend on how much food was eaten and the age and health status of the person. A common misconception is that people can tell if food is spoiled by the way it either looks or smells. The truth is that harmful pathogens are present everywhere and food can be contaminated if it is not handled properly. Many of the pathogens or bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses are very hard to get rid of, but their spread can be controlled by careful food preparation.

These four basic principals can be followed to prepare food and keep it safe.

- **Wash hands and surfaces often.** Wash hands before handling food. As you prepare food, wash hands often with soapy water, and keep everything clean that is in contact with food.
- **Prevent cross contamination.** Raw food can have bacteria on it that can contaminate other food. Wash hands, utensils, cutting boards, and work surfaces with hot soapy water after contact with raw meat and poultry.
- **Cook foods to proper temperatures.** Meats should be cooked to an internal

temperature of 160 degrees F. Use a meat thermometer to check temperatures. Never cook meat in an oven below 325 degrees F. Meat should not be pink and juices should be clear. If reheating foods, they should also reach a temperature of 165 degrees F or come to a full rolling boil. Drinking raw milk or eating raw or undercooked meat is risky and should be avoided by anyone who is susceptible for foodborne illness.

- **Store food at a safe temperature.** If foods should be served cold, be sure they remain cold and not at room temperature. The refrigerator should be maintained at a temperature between 35 and 40 degrees F. Hot prepared food should be held at 135 degrees F or higher until food service is completed. Then, the food should be packaged in shallow containers (2 to 3 inches deep maximum) and refrigerated. If leftovers can't be eaten in 4 to 7 days, freeze until needed for a future meal.

