

Cooking for One (or Two)



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LESSON**

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Introduction

Preparing a meal for family or guests often brings a sense of accomplishment. But making a dinner you'll be eating alone can seem like a big effort with small reward. Consequently, many of us pay little attention to the foods we prepare for ourselves and how we prepare them. That's unfortunate, because eating well can bring many rewards - enjoyment, a trim body, and good health and a reduced risk of many diseases.

It doesn't have to be difficult to cook tasty, nutritious meals for one or two people. This information provides you with timesaving tips, menus and recipes for preparing meals that are delicious, inexpensive and healthful.

Choosing or preparing healthful meals

1. Eat a grain food (preferably whole grain) at every meal. Grain foods including breads, rice, crackers, pasta, bulgur, tortillas, cereals, and bagels provide valuable energy and many nutrients, and they are naturally low in fat. Choose whole-grain products whenever possible for maximum nutrition and fiber.
2. Eat a protein-rich food at every meal. Protein helps the body repair tissues and fight infections. Protein-rich foods include meat, chicken, fish, peanut butter, cheese, milk, dried peas, beans, and lentils.
3. Eat a fruit or vegetable at every meal. Fruits and vegetables contain many important nutrients and phytochemicals (naturally-occurring



compounds that promote health). Most are also good sources of fiber, helping to maintain regularity and lower the risk for some diseases.

4. When you cook, make extras. Then freeze the leftovers in single-serving containers. Casseroles, meatloaf, soup, and pasta dishes freeze well and taste great reheated. (Be sure to heat leftovers until "piping hot" to help ensure food safety.)
5. Eat a wide variety of foods each week. Variety helps you get all the essential nutrients and makes eating more fun! Enjoy trying a new fruit, vegetable, or grain product each month.

More tips for easy, healthful eating

- Purchase low-fat frozen dinners or entrees. You can quickly create a healthful meal by adding a slice of whole-wheat bread, piece of fresh fruit, and a glass of milk.
 - Buy frozen and canned fruits and vegetables (as well as fresh). The canned and frozen ones still offer good nutrition and are often less expensive than fresh fruits and vegetables. They're also easy to keep on hand.
 - Drink water or a non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverage with every meal and between meals. Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water each day to avoid dehydration and constipation. This is especially important during hot weather. Also, as we get older our sense of thirst diminishes; so don't wait until you feel thirsty to drink up!
 - When you go out to eat, take home whatever you don't finish. Most restaurant portions are large and can be split into two or three reasonable portions. Just be sure to refrigerate foods within two hours to keep the food safe. Always reheat leftovers thoroughly.
 - Invite a friend or relative to join you for dinner or eat at a senior meal site when possible. Socializing helps you enjoy good food and good
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health!

Getting Ready to Cook for One or Two

If you're like most Americans whose busy lifestyles keep them running, you're probably not interested in making a career out of meal planning and preparation. And you shouldn't have to-if you take a little time to plan ahead.

For a few minutes on the weekend or during your lunch break, think about what you'd like to eat during the week. Flip through the menus and recipes in the back of this booklet to inspire your creativity. You may even want to page through a healthy cooking magazine or cookbook for ideas. Don't feel compelled to write a detailed daily meal plan-keep it simple. You'll have more success if you allow yourself flexibility.

Be sure to anticipate those inevitable evenings when you'll be too tired or rushed to make anything. Prepare a few stand-by meals that you can have in the freezer and simply heat up. Opt for a healthy frozen entrée (see "The Frozen Dinner Debate,"). Or make a fast-and-easy meal from well-selected prepared foods (see "Perking Up Prepared Foods,").

If you have easy-to-make, healthy and enticing foods on hand, you'll be much more enthusiastic about eating well.

Surveying Your Kitchen

An adequately stocked kitchen will make it easier to prepare a quick bite before leaving for a class or meeting, or to pull together an impromptu supper for friends. You don't need a gourmet kitchen to cook and eat well. Just make sure you have some of these basic utensils:

- Two saucepans - a small one for soups and sauces and a medium one for cooking pasta or steaming vegetables
- Vegetable steamer - place in medium saucepan to steam veggies
- Small non-stick skillet - perfect for stir-frying
- Baking sheet(s)/baking pan(s)
- Microwave-safe dishes - if you use a microwave oven
- Colander or strainer
- Paring knife - for peeling and slicing small fruits and vegetables
- Larger knife - for chopping and cutting larger fruits and vegetables and slicing meats
- Two cutting boards - one for meats and one for fruits, veggies and breads
- Wooden spoons and plastic spatula - which won't damage your cookware
- Measuring cup and measuring spoons
- Storage containers with lids - for leftovers
- Heavy-duty plastic freezer bags and labels - for marking contents and dates on frozen foods

Your cabinets don't have to be bulging with exotic ingredients before you can make marvelous meals. Just keep some of these ingredients on hand:

- Herbs and spices such as oregano, basil, thyme, chili powder, curry powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, salt and pepper
 - Olive oil and canola oil - for cooking and quick salad dressings
 - Fat-free, reduced sodium chicken or vegetable broth
 - Flour, sugar, brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder
 - Condiments such as vinegar, mustard, salsa, Worcestershire sauce, reduced sodium soy sauce and jam
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- Pasta, quinoa, couscous, bulgur or kasha - use for quick meals and salads, or in combination with leftovers
- Quick-cooking brown rice
- If there's room in your freezer, keep a small assortment of whole-grain breads and rolls - pull out individual pieces to thaw slowly or defrost in the microwave.

Shopping for One or Two

With the variety of foods found in today's grocery stores-from bulk almonds to ready-to-cook marinated vegetable kebabs-and with many stores open 24 hours a day, it's simpler than ever to shop wisely and easily. Still, shopping for one or two poses some special challenges:

- If you don't go food shopping more than once a week, how can you keep fruits and veggies on hand until the next trip?
- How can you purchase small enough quantities?
- How can you store foods efficiently?

The answers may be easier than you think.

Picking Up Produce

These suggestions may help you keep vegetables and fruits on hand, and to make better use of what you have bought.

- Choose some fresh vegetables and fruits that keep well for a week or more: artichokes, beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, kale, onions, parsnips, potatoes, winter squash, sweet potatoes, apples, grapefruit or oranges.
 - Shop with a friend. Try sharing a head of cabbage or a melon.
 - Buy fruits and vegetables in season; they will be cheaper and most flavorful at these times.
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- Don't wash vegetables until ready to use; they will stay fresh longer
- Pop unused portions of red and green peppers, onion or mushrooms into a plastic freezer bag to use later in pastas or stir-fries, or as extra pizza toppings.
- Keep fruit where you will see it and remember to eat it, whether it is stored in the fridge or in your fruit bowl.

Fresh, Frozen, Canned or Dried?

Fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables are all healthy choices. Making sure you're eating at least five servings of vegetables and fruits a day is more important than worrying about what form they're in. There are a few guidelines to keep in mind, however.

- Read labels on frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. Avoid those with extra sodium and sugar added.
- Choose canned fruits in their own juice or light syrup, rather than heavy syrup, which contains a lot of sugar and calories.
- Keep in mind that dried fruit is high in calories. Although it is very healthy, eat it in moderation to keep your calorie intake under control. One serving of dried fruit is equal to one-quarter cup.

Add a variety of frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables to your shopping cart. That way you will always have some on hand, even after you've eaten all your fresh produce.

Keeping Costs Low

- Shop by comparing cost to find the foods on your list that will fit your budget. To compare cost look at the unit price and the cost per meal or serving.
- Buy regular cooking oats, rice or grits instead of instant.
- Shop the days specials are offered.
- Use smaller amount of meats, poultry and fish in recipes.

- Feature beans and grain products such as rice or pasta.
- Plan for leftovers to freeze and reheat another day.

To Buy or Not to Buy in Bulk

Buying foods in smaller packages may be best if you cannot eat all of a larger package before it goes bad. It can also be better if the temptation to eat too much of special treats is hard to overcome.

- Buy a quart or half gallon of milk instead of a whole gallon.
- Buy a half dozen eggs instead of a whole dozen.
- Buy a few cookies from the bakery instead of buying whole box.

Prepackaged, individual-serving grocery items tend to be more expensive than larger or bulk quantities. At times you may prefer the convenience of individualized portions. Avoiding waste may be another reason to keep small-quantity items on hand. On other occasions, you'll want to save money by buying in bulk. Here are a few ideas for bulk buying:

- Find a supermarket with a bulk foods section. There you can buy three ounces or three pounds of pasta for the same unit price as prepackaged versions.
 - Choose foods that store well to buy in large quantities, such as cereal, pasta, dried fruit, dried beans, lentils and whole grains like rice and barley. Other foods, such as bread, grated cheese and ground or whole-bean coffee may be stored in the freezer for long periods of time. If you plan to keep staples such as whole wheat flour, wheat germ or nuts for an extended period of time, it is best to refrigerate them.
 - Buy frozen vegetables in bags, rather than boxes. That way you can use as much as you like and easily tie up the bag to store the rest.
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- Buy fish, poultry or lean cuts of meat on sale and freeze them. Remember, you don't have to buy meat as it is packaged. Ask the butcher to give you smaller or leaner cuts.
- Buy the largest container you can use without waste.

The Frozen Dinner Debate

Frozen dinners make for quick and easy meals. But be sure to read nutrition information carefully. Some dinners can be high in fat, calories and sodium. Here is an easy rule of thumb for choosing healthy meals: Select frozen entrée's that contain no more than 10 grams of fat per 300 calories and fewer than 800 milligrams of sodium per serving.

Take note that the proportion of vegetables in frozen entrée's is usually small. Microwave or steam your own vegetables to add to your meal. Balance out your frozen dinner by including not only extra vegetables, but a salad, whole-grain roll, side of fruit and a glass of lowfat or nonfat milk.

Food Storage Know-how:

"Are these eggs still okay to eat?" "How long will my lunch meat remain fresh?" Many of us find ourselves wondering how long to keep certain foods, and how to best store them. Following are some guidelines to help you know how long foods keep on the shelf, in the refrigerator freezer, and when to throw them out.

Foods like oils, herbs and flour simply lose flavor quality if they are stored for too long. If the recommended storage time for one of these foods has elapsed, but it smells fine, it will not have as good a flavor as when it was fresh. The food will be safe to eat, however, according to manufacturers.

Foods like eggs, milk products, meat, chicken, seafood and tofu are subject to bacterial contamination. Eating these foods after they have spoiled could result in food-borne illness. Dates printed on many food products can help you decide what stays and what goes.

- "Sell by" dates tell the store how long to display the product for sale. Don't buy something after this date. If you already have it at home, it may be safe for a few more days (see chart).
- "Use by" or "Best if used by" dates are the last dates recommended for use of the product at peak quality.

When freezing foods, it is a good idea to label containers with the name of the dish and the date that you put it in the freezer. Use the following chart to help you with food storage:

Useful Information

Food Measurement Equivalents

3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon

4 tablespoons = 1/4 cup

5 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon = 1/3 cup

8 tablespoons = 1/2 cup

12 tablespoons = 3/4 cup

16 tablespoons = 1 cup (8 ounces)

2 cups = 1 pint (16 ounces)

4 cups (2 pints) = 1 quart (32 ounces)

8 cups (4 pints) = 1/2 gallon (64 ounces)

4 quarts = 1 gallon (128 ounces)

Common Abbreviations Used in Cooking

Abbreviation	Full Term
c	cup
t or tsp	teaspoon
T or Tbsp	tablespoon
oz	ounce
fl oz	fluid ounce
pkg or pk	package
pt	pint
qt	quart
gal	gallon
pd, lb or #	pound
gm, g	gram
mg	milligram
l	liter
f.g.	few grains
sec	second
min	minute
hr	hour
sec	seconds
med	medium or moderate
lg	large
pinch	less than 1/8 teaspoon
dash	less than 1/8 teaspoon
sq	square
doz	dozen
F	Degrees Fahrenheit
C	Degrees Celsius
° or dg	degree

Cooking Terms

Bake: Cook by dry heat in an oven. When applied to meats and poultry, this cooking method is called roasting.

Baste: To brush or spoon a glaze, a sauce, or drippings over a food as it cooks, to add flavor and to help keep the surface moist.

Batter: Thin mixture of flour and water that can be poured into pan or onto griddle.

Beat: To agitate one or more ingredients rapidly using a brisk up-and-over motion to add air to a mixture. Or, use an electric mixer.

Blanch: To cover with boiling water for a specific, brief time. A quick cold water rinse often follows the heat. Use to prevent spoilage during freezing, or to loosen skins for peeling.

Blend: To combine two or more ingredients thoroughly until they seem to be one.

Boil: To cook in liquid that is heated until bubbles rise to the surface and break. Bubbles form throughout the mixture.

Braise: To brown meat in a small amount of fat, then cook slowly in a covered container with a small amount of liquid.

Broil: To cook by direct heat next to an open flame or hot coals.

Brown: To give a cooked surface to a food (such as meat or flour) by applying high heat. Also occurs during baking and roasting.

Chop: To cut into small pieces with a sharp knife or scissors.

Core: remove the seeded, inner portion of a fruit.
Cream: To work one or more foods until soft and creamy.
Cube: To cut evenly shaped pieces which are equal on all sides.
Cut: To work fat into dry ingredients with a pastry blender or two knives, with the least possible amount of blending.
Dice: To cut into tiny cubes.
Dough: Thick mixture of flour and water that can be rolled, kneaded or dropped from spoon.
Drizzle: To pour a light amount, from a spoon, over food.
Fold: To gently combine two or more ingredients by cutting vertically through the mixture and turning it over by sliding the mixing tool across the bottom of the bowl or pan with each turn.
Fry: To cook in heated fat.
Grate: rub foods against grater to divide into small pieces.
Knead: To mix using a pressing motion and also folding and stretching.
Marinate: To allow food to stand in an oil and acid mixture to add flavor or tenderize.
Mince: To cut or chop into very small pieces.
Mix: To combine two ingredients by stirring or in any way that makes two or more foods appear as one.
Pan-broil: To cook uncovered on a hot surface (usually in a fry pan). Fat is poured off as it accumulates.
Pan-fry: To cook in a small amount of hot fat.

Parboil: To boil until partially cooked.

Pare: To cut off the outer covering or skin with a knife or peeler.

Poach: To cook food by slipping it into a hot liquid.

Reconstitute: To restore a former condition by adding water.

Roast: To bake.

Roux: A mixture of melted fat and flour used to make gravy or white sauce.

Sauté: To cook in a small amount of fat.

Scald: To bring to a temperature just below boiling so that tiny bubbles form at the edge of the pan.

Scallop: To combine pieces of food with a sauce or other liquid.

Sear: To brown surface of meat quickly with intense heat.

Shred: To rub a large food across a surface with medium to large holes or slits, often using a grater, to make small pieces.

Sift: To mix flour with air.

Simmer: To cook in liquid below the boiling point. Bubbles before reaching the surface.

Steam: To cook in steam, with or without pressure.

Stir: To mix with a circular motion.

Stir-fry: To cook quickly in a small amount of hot fat, stirring constantly.

Toss: To mix ingredients lightly by lifting and dropping with a spoon, or a spoon and a fork.

Whip: To beat rapidly to add air.

Whisk: To beat ingredients together, using a wire whip or whisk, until they are well blended.

Source: Kids a Cookin, Kansas State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program, <http://www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu/Site.aspx?page=Terms> accessed November 6, 2013

Healthful Substitutions

Do you have a recipe you want to change to make healthier? Changing ingredients in a tried and true recipe may take some trial and error. However, there are some ingredients that most times can be substituted and still contribute to a good overall product.

Instead of	Use
All-purpose (plain) flour	Whole-wheat flour for half of the called-for all-purpose flour in baked goods
Bacon	Canadian bacon, turkey bacon, smoked turkey or lean prosciutto (Italian ham)
Butter, shortening or oil	Applesauce or prune puree for half of the called-for-butter, shortening or oil in quick breads Note: To avoid dense, soggy or flat baked goods, don't substitute oil for butter or shortening.
Butter,	Cooking spray or nonstick pans or oil to prevent sticking

margarine, shortening	
Buttermilk	Put 1 tablespoon white vinegar or lemon juice in a 1 cup measuring cup, add milk to the 1 cup line. Allow to stand 5 minutes before using.
Creamed soups	Fat-free milk-based soups, mashed potato flakes, or pureed carrots, potatoes or tofu for thickening agents
Dry bread crumbs	Rolled oats or crushed bran cereal
Fresh herbs	Same herb, dried, use 1/3 amount of fresh (example: 1 teaspoon dried instead of 1 tablespoon fresh)
Eggs	Two egg whites or 1/4 cup egg substitute for each whole egg
Enriched pasta	Whole-wheat pasta
Evaporated milk	Evaporated skim milk
Fruit canned in heavy syrup	Fruit canned in its own juices or in water, or fresh fruit
Full-fat cream cheese	Fat-free or low-fat cream cheese, Neufchatel or low-fat cottage cheese pureed until smooth
Full-fat sour cream	Fat-free or low-fat sour cream, plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt
Ground beef	Extra-lean or lean ground beef, chicken or turkey breast

	(make sure no poultry skin has been added to the product)
Iceberg lettuce	Arugula, chicory, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach or watercress
Margarine in baked goods	Trans fat-free butter spreads or shortenings that are specially formulated for baking Note: If ingredient lists include the term "partially hydrogenated," it may have up to 0.5 grams of trans fat in one serving. To avoid dense, soggy or flat baked goods, don't substitute diet, whipped or tub-style margarine for regular margarine.
Mayonnaise	Reduced-calorie mayonnaise-type salad dressing or reduced-calorie, reduced-fat mayonnaise
Meat as the main ingredient	Three times as many vegetables as the meat on pizzas or in casseroles, soups and stews
Oil-based marinades	Wine, balsamic vinegar, fruit juice or fat-free broth
Salad dressing	Fat-free or reduced-calorie dressing or flavored vinegars
Seasoning salt, such as garlic salt, celery salt	Herb-only seasonings, such as garlic powder, celery seed or onion flakes, or use finely chopped herbs or garlic, celery or onions

or onion salt	
Soups, sauces, dressings, crackers, or canned meat, fish or vegetables	Low-sodium or reduced sodium versions
Soy sauce	Sweet-and-sour sauce, hot mustard sauce or low-sodium soy sauce
Syrup	Pureed fruit, such as applesauce, or low-calorie, sugar-free syrup
Table salt	Herbs, spices, fruit juices or salt-free seasoning mixes or herb blends
White bread	Whole-wheat bread
White rice	Brown rice, wild rice, bulgur or pearl barley
Whole milk	Reduced-fat or fat-free milk

Source: Guarino, A.M., Human Nutrition and Food, Louisiana State University, Louisiana Cooperative Extension at <http://www.extension.org/pages/32348/recipe-substitutions> accessed November 5, 2013.

Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

Use this chart and a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, and other cooked foods reach a safe minimum internal temperature.

Remember, you can't tell whether meat is safely cooked by looking at it. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

Why the Rest Time is Important

After you remove meat from a grill, oven, or other heat source, allow it to rest for the specified amount of time. During the rest time, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful germs.

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)	Rest Time
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160	None
	Turkey, Chicken	165	None
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145	3 minutes
Poultry	Chicken & Turkey, whole	165	None
	Poultry breasts, roasts	165	None
	Poultry thighs, legs, wings	165	None
	Duck & Goose	165	None

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	Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165	None
Pork and Ham	Fresh pork	145	3 minutes
	Fresh ham (raw)	145	3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140	None
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg dishes	160	None
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165	None
	Casseroles	165	None
Seafood	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.	None
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.	None
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.	None
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.	None

Source: FoodSafety.gov at
<http://foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html> accessed November 5,
 2013

Food Storage Chart

Food	Shelf	Refrigerator	Freezer	Comments
Bread	2-4 days	1-2 weeks (will stale)	3 months	
Cheese, hard (Cheddar, Swiss)		4 weeks opened	6 months	Wrap well after opening
Chicken, fresh		1-2 days uncooked; 3-4 days after cooking	9 months uncooked; 4-6 months cooked	
Cream cheese		2 weeks	Doesn't freeze well	
Eggs, fresh		4-5 weeks in shell; 2-4 days separated; 1 week hard- cooked	Freeze egg whites only; 12 months	Discard eggs with even slight crack in shell
Eggs, hard- cooked		1 week		

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Fish, fresh		1-2 days uncooked; 3-4 days after cooking	2-3 months fatty types; 6 months lean types; 3-6 months shellfish- 4-6 months cooked fish	
Fish or chicken, canned	2-5 years unopened	2-3 days after opening		Transfer to glass dish after opening
Flour, white	6-12 months unopened; 6-8 months opened			
Flour, whole grain	1-2 months unopened	6-8 months opened		Bring to room temperature before baking for proper leavening

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Lunch meat, store sliced		2-5 days	1-2 months	
Lunch meat, sealed in package		2 weeks unopened; 3-5 days opened	1-2 months	
Meat (beef, pork, lamb)		3-5 days chops, steaks; 1-2 days ground, 3-4 days cooked	4-12 months, chops, steaks; 3-4 months ground; 2-3 months cooked	May be frozen up to 2 weeks in store wrap. If freezing for longer, use extra wrapping.
Milk		Up to a few days after "sell by" date		
Nuts	12 months sealed in can; 2-3 months opened	4-6 months	9-12 months	First lose flavor, later become rancid.
Oil (olive, canola, other vegetable)	1 year unopened; 4-8 months opened			A sharp smell means flavor quality is off

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Peanut butter, commercial	6-9 months	No need to refrigerate unless indicated on label.		
Tomato sauce, canned vegetables	12-18 months, unopened	1 week, opened		
Salsa, commercially canned	12 months, unopened	1 month, opened		
Sour cream		1-3 weeks	Doesn't freeze well	
Yogurt		Up to a few days after "sell by" date	1-2 months	Discard if you see mold

Cooking for One or Two

Once you have prepared your kitchen and have shopping under control, cooking for one or two can be a simple process.

Smart Snacking

Sometimes even a quick and easy meal takes too long to make. Your body functions best when it does not have to go for long periods of time without food. Keep small and healthy snacks on hand so you have energy to make, and room to enjoy, your delicious lunch or dinner.

You may associate snacking with negative eating habits. Snacking on nutritious foods in moderate quantities, however, may contribute significantly to meeting your daily nutrient needs. Some healthy snack foods are vegetables, fruits, lowfat yogurt, a handful of nuts, applesauce, air-popped popcorn, lowfat cheese, a slice of whole-grain toast with peanut butter and hummus spread on whole wheat pita bread.

Perking Up Prepared Foods

Prepared convenience foods are the salvation of many single people. But they sometimes lack the nutritional quality of home-cooked foods. It is possible, however, to use convenience foods as part of a diet to lower cancer risk. Try the following ideas:

- Lightly sauté fresh vegetables such as onions, mushrooms, peppers and eggplant and add to bottled or canned spaghetti sauce.
- Add a single-serving can of tuna and chopped veggies to pasta salad purchased from the grocery store deli counter.
- Top frozen pizza with lots of tomatoes, peppers, mushrooms, broccoli and onions.

- Add diced tomatoes, shredded carrots, raisins and pine nuts to quick-cooking brown rice or couscous. Season with a splash of balsamic or other flavorful vinegar.
- Add canned and rinsed black-eyed peas, thawed and drained frozen okra, diced tomato and sliced green onion to reduced sodium, canned tomato soup.
- Try a breakfast of whole-grain frozen waffles. Toast them and top with fresh or frozen fruit, hot applesauce or lowfat yogurt.
- Add raisins or other dried, chopped fruit to instant oatmeal or other hot cereal. Top with chopped walnuts and cinnamon.
- Stir-fry pre-chopped vegetables from the grocery salad bar and serve with rice and beans.
- For breakfast, try a cinnamon raisin bagel topped with lite cream cheese and apple slices.
- Open a can of fat-free refried beans and heat in the microwave, add veggies and salsa and roll mixture up in a tortilla.
- Add frozen corn, steamed and diced green and red bell peppers and cilantro to a can of reduced sodium black bean soup.
- Add grapes, chopped celery, dried cherries or golden raisins and walnuts to prepackaged salad greens and toss with your favorite lowfat dressing.

Reducing Recipes

Most recipes can be cut in half or in thirds. For easy references see the tables below. Some ingredients are difficult to divide, such as eggs. If the recipe you want to cut in half calls for a large egg, try using a small egg or just the egg white. In some cases, it may be easier to make the entire recipe and freeze the rest for later.

Half of a recipe	
<i>When the recipe calls for</i>	<i>Use</i>
1/4 cup	2 tablespoons
1/3 cup	2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons
1/2 cup	1/4 cup
2/3 cup	1/3 cup
3/4 cup	1/4 cup + 2 tablespoons or 6 tablespoons
1 tablespoon	1-1/2 teaspoons
1 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon
1/2 teaspoon	1/4 teaspoon
Third of a recipe	
<i>When the recipe calls for</i>	<i>Use</i>
1/4 cup	1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon
1/3 cup	1 tablespoon + 2 1/3 teaspoons
1/2 cup	2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons

Making Mealtime Safe

A meal isn't over until all the leftover food is stored safely. Make sure you have food storage containers, such as thick plastic bags or shallow plastic containers, to store any leftovers safely in the refrigerator or freezer. Leftovers should be refrigerated within two hours. Check the "Food Storage Chart" for how long you can expect to keep leftovers safely.

Making Mealtime Special

Sometimes eating alone is a welcome time of privacy and relaxation; at other times it can seem lonely. If you would prefer to have the pleasure of company at mealtimes more often, expand your dining circle. Get together one or two neighbors, co-workers or friends and invite each other for dinner once a week. The added cost balances out when it's your turn to be the guest, and you get a night off from cooking.

Start a cooking club. Invite a couple of friends over and each of you can cook something different in large batches. When you are done divide up the food and each will have a variety of foods to take home for later.

Take part in your local congregate meal programs. Many communities have local churches or schools that host weekly meals. If you are a senior, see if meals are served at the local senior center.

For those times when you are cooking only for yourself and eating alone, think of it as a chance to take good care of yourself. Create a pleasant setting for yourself at the table. Set the table with a colorful tablecloth or place mat. Add a flower, light candles or play soft, soothing music. If the weather is nice, take a picnic to a patio or garden. For breakfast, you might even prepare a lovely tray, get under the covers and treat yourself to breakfast in bed. Mealtimes can be some of the most peaceful times of your day.

Remember the benefits of cooking for yourself. Cooking can be a creative outlet. You may be delighted with your new inventions. And even if you do have a culinary disaster or two (which happen to even the best of cooks), nobody has to know except you!

Meals Away from Home

Although you may have the best intentions to prepare healthy home-cooked meals, it sometimes seems so much easier to send out for food or to stop by the drive-through on the way home from work. That way you can eat without cooking or cleaning up. Eating out is on the rise and will likely increase in popularity as life gets busier, and more and more restaurants, take-out and delivery options become available to accommodate hectic schedules. Here are a few hints to help you enjoy eating out healthfully:

- Read the entire menu. There may be delicious "lite" or "heart-healthy" selections that you may not see unless you take the time to review all your options.
- Try something new. Ethiopian, Indian, Thai, Lebanese, Japanese and many other cuisine's offer a wide variety of plant-based dishes. It may give you some ideas for meals to adapt and make at home.
- Ask for extra veggies. Many restaurants are happy to accommodate such requests.
- Can't decide? Split two entrees with a friend. You will get more variety and nutritional value in your meal, without the extra cost.
- Order a healthy appetizer or bowl of soup as a main course and round out your meal with a small garden salad.
- If something is not clear on the menu, ask your server so you are not surprised about the flavor or fat content of the meal when it is served. Ask about the base of the sauce or soup that you are ordering. If it is stock, broth or tomato-based, for example, it will have fewer calories and less fat than a cream-based version.
- Ask for a take-home container when your entree is served. Take half of your meal and put it in the container for later, or ask your server to box it up for you. Then you will not be tempted to eat more than you need

to, and you will be glad to have a meal for the next day. Plus, you will have two meals for the price of one. Be sure to refrigerate leftovers within two hours of the meal. Always reheat leftovers thoroughly.

Fast Food: How to Avoid the Pitfalls

If you are eating healthfully for most meals, there is nothing wrong with consuming fast food occasionally. There are ways to enjoy the food, and leave some of the fat and calories behind.

- Downsize your order. Most fast food establishments offer tempting meal combos that include extra-large French fries and a 32-ounce drink. Or the friendly cashier reminds you that you can get a larger portion for only a few cents more. If you get the "super-size," share with someone else. Otherwise, order smaller-sized items.
- Watch the toppings and sauces. Hold mayo and "special sauces" on burgers. Leave extra cheese behind and choose vegetable toppings for your pizza.
- Bottled water, unsweetened iced tea, lowfat or nonfat milk, orange juice and other types of 100% juice are simple ways to make your fast-food meal healthier, rather than washing it down with empty-calorie soda.
- The skinny on chicken: Fried or "crispy" chicken patties can offer as much or more fat and calories than a regular hamburger. For a leaner sandwich, order roasted or grilled skinless chicken.
- At the salad bar, choose dark leafy greens, such as Romaine lettuce or spinach, which have many more nutrients than iceberg lettuce. Add veggie and bean toppings, and skip the cheese and bacon. Don't forget fruits; chopped kiwi or pineapple chunks make for healthful additions to your usual salad. Finally, choose a lite salad dressing.

Recipes

Apricot Ginger Chicken

1/4 cup flour

Salt and pepper, to taste

2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, about 6-8 oz.

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/4 cup apricot jam

1/2 cup canned apricots in light syrup or juice

1 tablespoon reduced sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon water

1/8 teaspoon ground ginger powder

Pinch of pepper

In plastic bag, place flour, salt and pepper and shake to mix. Add chicken breasts and shake again to coat. Heat oil over medium-low heat. Add chicken and cook, turning once, until cooked through, about 10-15 minutes. While chicken is cooking, mix remaining ingredients in small saucepan. Heat gently over low. Pour apricot mixture over top of cooked chicken and serve.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 324 calories, 44 g. carbohydrates, 1 g. dietary fiber, 9 g. total fat (2 g. saturated fat), 20 g. protein, 313 mg. sodium.

Quick Cheese Grits

- 1-1/2 cups water
- 6 tablespoons quick-cooking grits
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch pepper
- 1 pinch garlic powder
- 1/4 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 pinch paprika

In small saucepan, combine water, grits, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to a simmer and continue to cook, stirring often, until the grits reach a desired consistency. Remove from heat. Stir in cheese and paprika. Stir until the cheese is melted.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 153 calories, 23 g. carbohydrates, 1 g. dietary fiber, 5 g. total fat (3 g. saturated fat), 6 g. protein, 166 mg. sodium.

Modified from original source: Romanoff, J. (2006) Eating Well serves two, pg. 228. The Countryman Press, P.O. Box 748, Woodstock, Vermont 05091.

Your Favorite Recipe

Vegetarian Minestrone

- 1/4 cup diced onion
- 1/4 cup diced celery
- 1/4 cup diced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup canned, Italian-style diced tomatoes
- 1 cup canned white beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons elbow macaroni
- 2 cups fat-free, reduced sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1/4 teaspoon. basil
- 1/4 teaspoon oregano
- Salt and pepper, to taste (optional)

In medium saucepan, combine all ingredients except salt and pepper. Bring to boil, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, if desired.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 206 calories, 39 g. carbohydrates, 8 g. dietary fiber, <1 g. total fat (< 1 g. saturated fat), 13 g. protein, 686 mg. sodium.

Garlic Steak for One

- 1 small, extra lean steak, 4 oz.
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 clove garlic, sliced into 10 pieces
- Salt and pepper, if desired

Poke holes all over steak with fork, then make 10 little slivers with knife. Put garlic slices into slivers. On plate or in plastic bag, marinate steak in Worcestershire sauce at least 1 hour, turning once, in refrigerator. Away from direct flame, grill or broil steak until done to your liking, turning at least once. Do not char. Add salt and pepper, if desired.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 203 calories, 7 g. carbohydrates, 0 g. dietary fiber, 8 g. total fat (3 g. saturated fat), 24 g. protein, 387 mg. sodium.

Mashed Potatoes

- 1 medium red potato, washed and cut into quarters
- 2-4 tablespoons fat-free sour cream
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Steam or microwave potatoes until tender. Mash well with fork, adding sour cream to desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 162 calories, 36 g. carbohydrates, 3 g. dietary fiber, < 1 g. total fat (< 1 g. saturated fat), 4 g. protein, 33 mg. sodium.

Oven-baked Sweet Potato Fries

- 1 small sweet potato, cut into "French fry" sticks
- 1/2 teaspoon canola oil
- Salt, pepper, garlic powder and paprika, to taste
- Cooking spray

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In medium bowl, toss sweet potato sticks with oil and seasonings. Put sticks in baking dish sprayed with cooking spray. Bake 30 minutes, turning after 15 minutes.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 82 calories, 15 g. carbohydrates, 2 g. dietary fiber, 2 g. total fat (< 1 g. saturated fat), 1 g. protein, 6 mg. sodium.

Your Favorite Recipe:

Quick and Health Potato Soup

- 1 cups reduced sodium chicken broth
- 3/4 pound white potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 stalks celery, chopped
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1/2 cup fat-free half and half or milk
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme or Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon Kosher salt, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Bring broth to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add prepared vegetables to saucepan. Return to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, covered, 20 minutes. Let cool slightly, then puree until smooth or desired consistency using a blender (see tip below) or potato masher. Stir in remaining ingredients and cook 5 minutes more.

Tip: When using a blender with hot liquids remove the center piece of the lid. Loosely cover the hole with a clean folded kitchen towel and turn the blender on. If the center of the lid is not removed hot liquids will splatter out of the blender when turned on resulting in a messy kitchen a potential burns.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 220 calories, 41 g. carbohydrates, 3 g. dietary fiber, 1.5 g. total fat (0 g. saturated fat), 9 g. protein, 340 mg. sodium.

Modified from original source:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>

Chili Corn Muffins

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup corn meal
- 1-2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1/2 cup nonfat buttermilk
- 1 cup frozen corn, fully thawed
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons grated lowfat or nonfat cheddar cheese, divided
- 2 tablespoons canned chopped green chilies
- Cooking spray

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In medium bowl, mix together first 5 dry ingredients. In separate bowl, mix 3 liquid ingredients, corn, 1/4 cup cheese and chilies. Add to dry ingredients, stirring just until blended. Spoon mixture into 6 muffin cups sprayed with cooking spray. Place 1 teaspoon of remaining grated cheese on each muffin. Bake 25 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes 6 muffins. Per muffin: 166 calories, 26 g. carbohydrates, 2 g. dietary fiber, 4 g. total fat (1 g. saturated fat), 6 g. protein, 169 mg. sodium.

Macaroni and Parmesan Cheese

3/4 cup elbow macaroni
Boiling water
1 1/2 tablespoons flour
1 cup nonfat milk
1/4 teaspoon dried mustard powder
1/4 -1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1/4 cup lite (50% less fat) cheddar cheese, grated
1 cup chopped, lightly steamed broccoli or thawed frozen broccoli
Salt and pepper, to taste
Paprika (optional)

Cook macaroni according to package instructions. Meanwhile, in saucepan off heat, mix flour and cold milk until flour is completely dissolved. Add dried mustard, garlic powder and Worcestershire sauce and cook over low to medium heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Reduce heat to low and stir in macaroni and cheeses, until cheeses melt. Stir in broccoli. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If desired, sprinkle paprika over top before serving.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 345 calories, 43 g. carbohydrates, 2 g. dietary fiber, 9 g. total fat (5 g. saturated fat), 23 g. protein, 413 mg. sodium.

Green Beans Vinaigrette

- 1 1/2 cups cooked green beans (fresh, frozen or canned and drained)
- 2 tablespoons drained canned pimentos
- 1 tablespoon minced chives
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon honey

In medium bowl, mix together green beans, pimentos and chives. In separate small bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard and honey, then stir into green beans. Let set at least one hour for flavors to mature. Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 61 calories, 9 g. carbohydrates, 3 g. dietary fiber, 2 g. total fat (< 1 g. saturated fat), 2 g. protein, 22 mg. sodium.

Black Bean and Feta Tostado

- 1 whole wheat tortilla
- 1/3 cup canned nonfat, vegetarian refried black beans
- 2 tablespoons salsa
- 1 tablespoon canned chopped green chilies
- 1/4 cup chopped tomato
- 2 tablespoons reduced fat crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onion

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place tortilla directly on center oven rack. Bake 6 minutes, turning over after 3 minutes, then remove from oven. Mix beans with salsa and chilies. Heat over medium heat until hot, or heat in microwave. Spread bean mixture over crisped tortilla. Top with tomato and feta. Garnish with chopped green onion.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 213 calories, 38 g. carbohydrates, 7 g. dietary fiber, 5 g. total fat (3 g. saturated fat), 11 g. protein, 850 mg. sodium.

Honey Mustard Tilapia with Lime and Peppers

- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1 tilapia fillet, 3-4 ounces
- 1/4 small yellow pepper, cut in slices
- 1/4 small red pepper, cut in slices
- 1/4 small green pepper, cut in slices
- Salt and pepper, to taste (optional)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. In small bowl, mix together first 3 ingredients. Place fish in a shallow baking dish treated with non-stick vegetable spray. Pour lime marinade over fish, then top with pepper slices. Add salt and pepper, if desired. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake until done, about 12 to 15 minutes or until it flakes when tested with the tip of a knife.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 227 calories, 17 g. carbohydrates, 1 g. dietary fiber, 8 g. total fat (1 g. saturated fat), 23 g. protein, 117 mg. sodium.

Chicken Salad

- 3 oz. cooked skinless chicken breast, chopped into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon raisins
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped celery
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint (or 1/4-1/2 tsp. dried)
- 2 tablespoons fat-free mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon nonfat plain yogurt
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In medium bowl, combine all ingredients well. If desired, garnish with additional dollop of yogurt and sprig of fresh mint.

Makes 1 serving. Per serving: 251 calories, 15 g. carbohydrates, 3 g. dietary fiber, 8 g. total fat (1 g. saturated fat), 29 g. protein, 326 mg. sodium.

Sesame Brown Rice

- 1 cup fat-free, reduced sodium vegetable broth or water
- 1/2 cup long grain brown rice
- 1 tablespoon reduced sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

Bring broth or water to boil. Add rice, soy sauce and sesame oil. Cover and simmer for 30-40 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Fluff with fork and garnish with chives and sesame seeds.

Note: Use quick-cooking brown rice, if desired. Use package directions to adjust cooking time.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 219 calories, 37 g. carbohydrates, 2 g. dietary fiber, 4 g. total fat (< 1 g. saturated fat), 4 g. protein, 256 mg. sodium.

Duchess Potatoes

- 1-1/4 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
 - Salt and pepper
 - 1-1/2 teaspoons cold unsalted butter, plus more for parchment
 - 2 large egg yolks
 - 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoon heavy cream, divided
 - Ground nutmeg
1. Prepare a baking sheet by lining it with parchment paper. Butter the paper lightly and set aside.
 2. In a large pot, cover potatoes with cold salted water by 2 inches. Bring to a boil; reduce to a rapid simmer and cook until tender, 15 minutes. Drain in a colander, let sit 5 minutes, then return to pot. Add butter and, with a potato masher, mash until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Add 1 egg yolk, 2 tablespoons cream, and pinch of nutmeg; stir until combined.
 3. Spoon potatoes in 4 equal mounds on the parchment lined baking sheet, 2 inches apart. Use the back of a spoon to create small wells in the center of each. Freeze on the baking sheet until firm, 15 minutes.
 4. Preheat oven to 450°F.
 5. Whisk together remaining egg yolk and 2 teaspoons cream. Brush on potatoes and bake until golden, 15 minutes.

To make ahead: In step 3, freeze until completely frozen. Store frozen potato mounds in a freezer bag, tightly sealed up to one month. Remove potato mounds from the freezer as needed, bake as indicated in steps 4 and 5.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 161 calories, 26 g. carbohydrates, 2 g. dietary fiber, 4 g. total fat (2 g. saturated fat), 5 g. protein, 284 mg. sodium.

Modified from original source: Everyday Food, November 2012,
http://www.marthastewart.com/945642/duchess-potatoes?xsc=eml_edfsc 2013 11 12

Resources:

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- Bellows, L., Moore, R. and Gross, A. (Revised 10/13) Healthy Eating for 1 or 2. Colorado State University Cooperative Extension no. 9.351 at www.ext.colostate.edu/./Pubs/foodnut/09351.pdf
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- Slow Cooker and Food Safety, (2012) USDA FSIS at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/a181017c-cc51-4261-bfeb-f78cfc24c022/Slow Cookers and Food Safety.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/a181017c-cc51-4261-bfeb-f78cfc24c022/Slow_Cookers_and_Food_Safety.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)
- USDA ChooseMyPlate at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

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