Food for Thought

August 2024

Family Meals Serve Us Well

Family meals are more important than ever – and worth the effort!

Why Eat Together?

- Children and teens who share meals with their families tend to eat more fruits, vegetables and dairy foods, and less fried food and soft drinks.
- Family meals increase the likelihood that teens will stay away from drugs and alcohol as well as have an improved school performance.



What Makes a Family?

A recent poll revealed that 60% of Americans believe "If you consider yourself a family, you ARE a family!" There are benefits to eating with others no matter our age, life stage, schedule or situation.

Where Can You Begin?

- **Turn off the TV.** Remember, it's not a member of the family! Let phone calls and text messages wait until later–make sharing the meal the priority.
- Fix meals together. Children learn cooking skills and appreciation of foods and family.
- Avoid too many rules for mealtime. Instead, try to model the actions and behaviors you would like children to show.
- **Keep the meal pleasant.** Positive meals have lasting effects that are passed to your children and are valued for life.

How to Make Family Meals Happen:

- **Schedule family meals.** Set aside time on the calendar just like you schedule other important activities, appointments and events. Make it non-negotiable.
- Plan ahead. Make recipes ahead that you can freeze or use the slow cooker or pressure cooker.
- **Keep meals simple.** Choose a protein, whole grain, vegetable and/or fruit and you will have a balanced healthy meal to serve to your family. It doesn't have to be fancy.
- Plan family meals besides dinner. Find 15 to 30 minutes when you and your family can sit together to recap the day. Maybe a bedtime snack or picnic in the park before soccer practice.
- Parents don't have to do everything. Get the kids involved in the
 planning, shopping, preparing and clean-up of meals. When kids are
 involved in the process, they are more likely to consume the foods you
 offer them.
- Eliminate distractions. Turn off all electronic devices, including the tv and focus on each other. This should be a time to relax, share and reconnect.



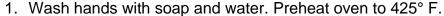
Bite Size Zucchini Pizzas

- 1 large zucchini
- 3.5 oz mozzarella, shredded
- 1 jar of pizza or spaghetti sauce
- 1. Wash hands with soap and water.
- 2. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 3. Wash the zucchinis and cut into about 15 pieces that are around 1 in thick. Place them on the parchment paper lined baking sheet.
- 4. Spoon pizza sauce on the zucchinis and cover with shredded mozzarella. Bake for about 25 minutes.
- 5. Allow to cool for about 10 minutes. Serve and enjoy!

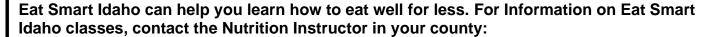
Optional: Add other toppings of your choice.

Parmesan Roasted Cabbage Wedges

- 1 medium cabbage
- 4 tablespoon oil, avocado
- 2 teaspoon sea salt (or kosher salt)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper, ground
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated



- 2. Cut the cabbage in half and then guarters, slice out the core to discard (or put into the compost), and then cut the cabbage guarters into 1 to 1 ½ inch wedges.
- 3. Place the wedges onto a parchment paper lined baking sheet and brush with avocado oil.
- 4. Sprinkle salt and pepper and put 1 Tablespoon of freshly grated Parmesan cheese on each wedge.
- 5. Roast in oven for 25 minutes and enjoy!



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Source: MF2784 Everyone to the Table: Family Meals Serve Us Well, Fact Sheet (ksu.edu); USU Extension's "Create Family Mealtime" Campaign Promotes Making Family Meals a Priority | USU; Family Nutrition Program Recipes | Extension | West Virginia University (wvu.edu) retrieved 08/01/24

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