

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 mealtimes.** – 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

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Preheat oven to 425° F.
2. Cut the cabbage in half and then quarters, slice out the core to discard (or put into the compost), and then cut the cabbage quarters 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!

Eat Smart Idaho can help you learn how to eat well for less. For information on Eat Smart Idaho classes, contact the Nutrition Instructor in your county:

Panhandle: Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai & Shoshone Counties
208-292-2525

North Central Idaho: Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis, & Nez Perce Counties
208-883-2267



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Source: MF2784 [Everyone to the Table: Family Meals Serve Us Well, Fact Sheet \(ksu.edu\)](#); [USU Extension's "Create Family Mealttime" 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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