



Recipes for Success

Cooking at Home for All Stages of Life

WRITER JENNIFER CHANDLER

There is no excuse. No matter where you are in life—a working single, a busy mom, an empty-nester cooking for two—you can put healthy, home-cooked meals on the table if you are armed with a few strategies.

With time being at a premium, preparing your own meals is often exchanged with on-the-go meals at fast-food or casual dining restaurants. Not only are these choices usually more expensive than eating at home, but they are also not figure-friendly.

Meals prepared and eaten at home are often more nutritious than those from a restaurant. Home-cooked meals are usually not fried or highly salted, plus soda and sweetened beverage consumption is typically lower around the dinner table at home. You are in control of portion sizes and what ingredients you decide to use or omit in your meals. Nutrient-packed fruits, vegetables and dairy products are much better choices than the fatty sides often served when dining out.

SOLO SUPPERS

Cooking for one is often a challenge because most recipes are made to feed four. Waste is another issue since you rarely use all of fresh ingredients like bell pepper, onion and greens.

Tips

Shop at a store or farmer's market that sells fruit and vegetables in bulk instead of in packages, so you can buy only what you need. Many large grocery stores have meat counters where you can select individual steaks, chops, chicken breasts and fish fillets. You also can buy ground meats in any amount you wish.

Most foods freeze well including breads, meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts. Storing food in your freezer helps prevent waste and keeps foods fresher longer.

Cook meals in advance, and freeze single-sized portions. For example, make a casserole or stew, and freeze individual-sized servings. Then take out only the amount of food you need.



DINNER FOR TWO

The key to cooking for two without waste lies in your approach to shopping and planning. With a little forethought, you can have easy, healthful and enticing meals every night.

Tips

Prepare one-dish meals. Hearty soups, pastas and stir-frys make for quick and simple cooking.

Use extras wisely. Plan meals so that you can use the extra food in new dishes. Roasted chicken one night will make great chicken salad or chicken enchiladas later in the week.

With only two palates to please, cooking can be more fun. Explore ethnic cuisines and try new recipes.



BUSY PARENT

The challenge of a busy parent is finding the time to prepare a healthy meal that appeals to both you and the kids. With music lessons, ball practice, play rehearsal and work schedules, it can be tough.

Tips

Prepare extras and freeze for easy reheating on a busy day. It is just as easy to make a large stock pot of spaghetti sauce as to make a smaller portion.

If your child only eats chicken fingers—instead of picking up the fast-food version—make a healthy, baked rendition at home with crushed cornflakes.

Develop a repertoire of a few quick and easy meals that can be prepared in 30 minutes or less. There are many cookbooks geared toward “speed cooking.” ●

