

Bring Family Mealtime Back on Track

Plan easy, nutritious meals to prepare
and share together



Family Mealtime Made Simple

If you're like most American families, your hectic work schedules, long commutes, and your children's ever-growing list of extra-curricular activities have made sitting together at the dinner table a distant memory. The fact is that only one-third of American families dine together regularly.

Yet research indicates that we should strongly consider bringing back family mealtime. That's because there is evidence to suggest that children who dine regularly with their family consume more fruits, vegetables and beneficial nutrients, have a better understanding of basic cooking skills and have a greater sense of family values and traditions. Children who dine with their family tend to benefit in other ways. For example, they are:

- Less likely to be overweight or consume snack foods, processed meats, soft drinks and fried foods
- More likely to perform better in school
- Less likely to smoke, use drugs or drink alcohol

So despite your chaotic schedule, consider bringing family meals back to your dinner table, even if it's only once a week. In the process, make a conscious effort to enhance the nutritional value of your meals. The entire family will reap positive health rewards.

Finding time to feed your family in such a fast-paced world can be difficult, but it's not impossible. With a few simple tricks, you'll be back on the road to healthful, family-centered meals in no time.



Get Family Mealtime Back on Track

Try these simple tips:

- Involve the whole family in the menu-planning process, requesting that each family member choose the menu for one night each week.
- Consider planning three to four quick and easy meals for evenings in which preparation time is limited.
- To save time and money, plan weekly menus before you head to the grocery store.
- Make a list of ingredients you'll need for each menu. Follow with a quick inventory of your fridge and pantry and see what staples you have on hand to prepare them.
- Make a grocery list of items you'll need to purchase in order to make your upcoming meals complete. Don't forget to re-stock any staples you'll be using.
- If you're really crunched for time, purchase ready-cut fruits and veggies in the produce department for fast meal preparation.
- Post the weekly menu for all family members to see. Keeping the menu in view will help you remember when to thaw certain items, or have veggies and other ingredients prepped and ready to go.
- If you know the week ahead will be hectic, consider preparing double batches of recipes and serving them on more than one night. Or prepare and freeze a few of the menu items when you have time to cook (e.g., on a weekend afternoon) so all you need to do is thaw and reheat during the week.
- Prepare lunches and snacks for you and your children the night before. That way, when you wake up the next morning, all you have to do is grab these items and go.
- Recruit your children for meal preparation! Not only will their help be useful, but they will gain a better understanding and appreciation for the effort that goes into each meal. What's more, if they help prepare the food, they may be more willing to try new or unfamiliar dishes.



- Don't be afraid to buy convenience foods like Heinen's gourmet, prepared entrees or pre-roasted chickens. Choosing Healthy Appetite-labeled foods ensures the main entrée meets healthy nutrition criteria. Just select a Healthy Appetite-approved side dish, steam some vegetables, and your meal is complete.
- Remember, if you keep your pantry, fridge and freezer filled with enough of the basics for three or four family meals, you'll never have to order out!

Resources

For more tips and strategies on preparing healthy meals, please visit the following Web sites:

American Academy of Pediatrics | www.aap.org

American Dietetic Association | www.eatright.org

Here's to Your Good Health

You can enjoy tremendous health benefits when you make small but significant changes in the way you eat. A great first step is to take advantage of the Healthy Appetite program, designed by Cleveland Clinic and Heinen's. For nutrition tips and meal ideas, please visit www.heinens.com/healthyappetite. Here's to your good health!

Healthy Appetite

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