

## Cooking for 1 or 2 can be simple and healthy



"It is so difficult to cook just for me!" "I never know what to make for dinner — it's just the two of us!" "I don't like to waste food; but I always have so many leftovers." "I am too busy to cook." Does this sound familiar to you? If so, then you probably know the difficulty of facing meals each day and not knowing what to prepare that is healthy and tasty at the same time. To avoid this frustration, you may turn to unhealthy fast food or pick at food that is not good for

you. Whether you are cooking for one or two or you are on the go, there are other options. You can learn how to cook in ways that are healthy, tasty, fun, and not wasteful. Begin by reminding yourself that a nutritious eating pattern will help you stay healthy and give you more energy.

### Shop for Small Quantities

Find creative ways to purchase small quantities of food so that food is not wasted. Preparing small quantities of food enables you to grab healthy food, especially if you are on the run. For example:

- Buy ready made foods sold in single servings such as canned soup, tuna, fruit, healthy frozen meals, pudding, etc. Be sure to read the labels to find products that are low in fat and sodium.
- Buy individual servings of frozen vegetables or buy a large package that you can open and reseal.
- Buy salad at the salad bar rather than larger amounts of salad items.
- Buy produce that keeps longer in the refrigerator such as broccoli, carrots, sweet potatoes, apples, pears, oranges, etc. Pack the veggies in small zip lock bags that can be easily taken with you in the car or for work.
- Buy fresh milk in small quantities or keep nonfat dry milk on your shelf.

### Use Your Freezer

Remember your freezer and think of ways that you can put it to work for you.

- Repackage fresh meat, poultry, and fish into single portions and freeze for later use.
- Cook ahead of time. Homemade items such as soups, stews, and casseroles can be portioned into individual containers and frozen for future meals. Be sure to label and date the containers.
- Store bread and coffee in the freezer to keep it fresh for a longer period of time.



### Be Creative with Leftovers

The use of leftovers is an excellent way of stretching what is prepared and avoiding waste at the same time. Consider these ideas:

- Bake an extra chicken breast that can be used to make chicken salad the next day.
- Leftover rice can be used in a stir-fry or eaten with warm milk and some fruit for breakfast.
- Leftover vegetables can be used in an omelet.
- Chili can be used to top a baked potato for lunch the next day.

### Try New Recipes

Don't be afraid to try new things. Food preparation can be fun rather than a daily chore.

To help to get started purchase or borrow from a library a cookbook written for healthy eating as well as cooking for one to two.

### Cooking for One or Two Cookbooks and Web sites

There are many cookbooks on the market today that are written for people who are cooking for one or two. The books are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at the local book store or on-line. Following are two examples:

- Betty Crocker's New Choices for Two, by Barbara Kanerva Kyte and Katherine Greenberg
- Healthy Cooking for 2 (Or Just You); Low-Fat Recipes With Half the Fuss and Double the Taste, by Francis Price, RD

The web sites below are examples of the many sites that address cooking for one or two.

- <http://homecooking.about.com/library/archive/blmisc37.htm> (cooking books)
- [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn521w.htm](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn521w.htm) (more tips)

### Make Mealtimes Pleasant Experiences

Even when eating alone or with another person, you can make mealtime a special part of the day. Create a pleasant atmosphere by setting the table with a nice table cloth, placing a decoration or candle on the table, and playing some nice music.

Vary the locations where you serve your meals. Try eating on the deck in the summer or by the fireplace in the winter.

Also, you can invite a friend to enjoy mealtime with you or host a pot luck for a group of friends.

Whatever you do, remember that cooking for one or two doesn't have to be a burden. It can be accomplished by inexpensive ways that provide tasty

# The Daily News

**Oct. 20, 2008**

and nutritious meals that are enjoyable. Remembering these simple tips — and adding some of your own — can help you to live for a “Healthier Tomorrow”.

*This column was written by Alice Valoski, Nutritionist and WELL Program Director at the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh*

*For more information on this article, please call 412-6243217. CHA is a part of the Department of Epidemiology in the Graduate School of Public Health*



**Electronic  
Edition  
McKeesport, PA**

*at the University of Pittsburgh. It is one of 33 Prevention Research Centers in the United States funded by the Centers for Disease Control. For questions or more information contact David J. Fetterman, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Center for Healthy Aging at 412-383-3121 or visit [www.healthyaging.pitt.edu](http://www.healthyaging.pitt.edu).*