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MAKING TIME TO EAT TOGETHER PROMOTES HEALTHFUL EATING HABITS

Gathering around the table to eat as a family has all kinds of benefits. Family meals allow parents to be role models who create a supportive environment for the entire family.

August is Kids Eat Right Month™, when the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and its Foundation focus on the importance of healthful eating and active lifestyles for children and their families.

"Research shows that families who regularly dine together are more likely to eat more fruits, vegetables and fiber and are less likely to eat fried foods," says Kristen Gradney, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Academy Spokesperson in Baton Rouge, La.

"Eating together promotes healthy weight in children, perhaps due to more nourishing food choices, and can encourage them to try new foods," she says. "Families who eat together tend to be closer because it encourages conversations. Children feel more comfortable sharing their feelings, which can help lessen behavioral problems and may improve their grades."

Here are some ideas to help you make and enjoy family meals after a busy day:

**** Keep it simple.** Don't try to make meals that need a dozen ingredients or more. With your kids, develop a small collection of favorite go-to recipes to help you get in and out of the kitchen in less than 30 minutes.

**** Choose ingredients that multitask.** Save time by stocking up on ingredients you can use for more than one meal. Grill six chicken breasts tonight for dinner instead of three, then reheat the leftover chicken tomorrow and make fajitas.

**** Drive past the drive-through.** A trip to a favorite takeout place might seem like a speedy way to get dinner on the table, but it could be adding to your family's collective waistline. A simple homemade meal, with lean protein, whole grains and fresh (or frozen or canned) vegetables can provide the nutrients your family needs — without the extra salt, added sugars and saturated fat. Serve with low-fat or fat-free milk and fruit for dessert.

** Make family meals a habit. Tell every family member to be home for dinner at a set time. They'll start to look forward to this special family time and arrange their schedules around it.

** Make it fun. Add some excitement to family meals with theme dinners: Use a checkered tablecloth for an Italian-inspired meal, or prepare an Asian dish and eat with chopsticks. Have a picnic ... in a park, your backyard or on the living room floor.

** Share the experience. Talk and listen to each other while you eat. Have everyone at the table share something that happened that day or week — funny, weird, scary, good or bad.

Start your new tradition today, making a commitment to eating at least one meal together each week. Before you know it, dinner will be a time everyone in the family looks forward to. For more healthful eating tips, cooking videos, and recipes visit Kids Eat Right at <https://www.eatright.org/for-kids/>

Children often love breakfast for dinner, fondly referred to as “Brinner,” by 11 year old Gavin Smith. Here are two recipes to make “Brinner” special!

GERMAN APPLE PANCAKE

2 apples, peeled and sliced
1/4 cup apple cider
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon honey
1/3 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 cup self-rising flour
2 teaspoons sugar
Vegetable cooking spray
1 tablespoon powdered sugar

Combine apples and cider in a small saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat until softened. Drain; set aside, add cinnamon and honey and keep warm.

Combine milk, vanilla and eggs, stirring well with wire whisk. Add flour and sugar and whisk together. Set aside.

Wrap handle of an 8-inch nonstick skillet with foil; coat skillet with cooking spray. Preheat skillet in oven at 425° for 2 to 3 minutes. Pour batter into hot skillet. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes or until puffy and browned.

Remove from skillet. Top with warm apple mixture, and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve immediately. Makes 2 breakfast servings or 6 dessert servings.

BREAKFAST CASSEROLE 2018 Maryland Agriculture Calendar (1 Acre Farm)

1 pound pork breakfast sausage
Nonstick cooking spray
2 cups croutons
10 large eggs
1 1/2 cups 2% milk
1 teaspoon ground mustard (dry)
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese

Cook the sausage in a large skillet until no longer pink. Drain the fat. Transfer to a plate to cool. Spray a 13x9 baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Preheat oven to 350°F. Evenly spread the croutons across the bottom of the dish. Cover croutons with a layer of the cooked sausage. In a large bowl, combine the eggs, milk, mustard, salt, pepper and whisk until well combined. Pour egg mixture over the sausage. Top with cheese. Bake uncovered for 50-60 minutes (cheese should be bubbling and turning golden brown). Let cool a few minutes then slice and serve.

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