

Senior Series

*The Ohio
Department of
Aging*



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Cooking for One or Two

Plan Meals in Advance

Planning meals in advance is a key to preparing appropriate and useful amounts of food. Try to plan meals on a weekly basis. When trying to prepare a weekly menu begin with the main dish or entree for each meal, building around the entree with breads/pastas/starches, vegetables, and fruits or fruit salads. Do not be afraid to try a variety of different foods and combinations of foods so that boredom with meals is avoided. Planning weekly meals allows for good use of leftovers and requires only one trip per week to the grocery store.

Cooking Can Be Easy and Enjoyable

There are ways to help remind yourself to cook smaller quantities, not large family feasts. Preparing smaller amounts of foods at each meal will help cut back on food waste and unnecessary leftovers. The following are a few ideas to keep in mind that will help to prepare smaller meals:

- prepare foods or meals in smaller pans and baking dishes

- purchase smaller quantities of foods and ingredients at the grocery store
- cut recipes in half so that the recipe is tailored to a smaller number of servings
- make use of cookbooks that have recipes that are designed for one or two people

All of these suggestions will help to reduce the amount of food that can be prepared or included in an entire meal.

When feeling tired or lazy, make use of prepared or processed meals and foods. Many frozen meals are delicious, healthy, and require only a microwave oven or conventional oven for preparation. Just keep in mind that all frozen meals are not well balanced, so it may be a good idea to add fresh fruits or vegetables, bread, or a tossed salad to the frozen entree for a meal. Also consider using frozen vegetables or side dishes to complement a homemade meal. Frozen meals are a good alternative to home cooking when meal preparation is not a priority, but also remember homemade meals are best able to satisfy picky tastebuds.

Try to make the best use of time when preparing meals. While the oven is pre-heating get necessary utensils and ingredients ready for meal preparation. While the main dish or entree is baking, prepare side dishes or salads and set the table for the meal. Wash dishes as food is being prepared to minimize clean up time after a meal. Using a few of these suggestions can make preparing and eating a meal even more enjoyable.

Make Use of Leftovers

Using leftovers is a great way to decrease food waste and to have tasty food available for later meals. With careful planning, larger meals can be prepared earlier in the week and leftovers used for meals later in the week. For example, baked chicken breasts prepared for dinner on Monday can be used the next day chopped up on a salad or shredded in a chicken salad sandwich. Chili that is eaten for dinner can be used as a baked potato topping the next day for lunch. Multiple meal ideas are endless and can be suited to personal food preferences.

When keeping leftovers, it is important to date and store them properly. Storage containers and storage bags that seal are necessary to keep leftovers fresh and

safe. Always date the leftovers so that they will not be kept too long in the freezer or refrigerator and possibly spoil. A general rule of thumb is that refrigerated leftovers may be kept for up to one week and that frozen leftovers may be kept up to three months. Remember to be aware of the expiration dates of all food items and leftovers—food does not last forever!

Make Eating Fun

Eating a meal can be very rewarding and is wonderful time for socializing with others. Try to create an “atmosphere” for meals by decorating the dining room table, using the fine china, getting out the silver, lighting the dining room with candlelight, and drinking from crystal glasses. Eat in different rooms around the house to add variety to your meals. Spice foods up with different herbs to try new and rewarding flavors. Hold weekly potlucks with friends so that all of you can look forward to trying new foods and socializing with one another. Simply make eating meals an exciting part of the day, whether having a quiet dinner by yourself or getting together with your closest friends for a formal dinner. Eating is a wonderful event, so make the most of every meal.

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