



MEALTIME

*Keep It Simple ♦ Keep It Fun
Just Keep It!*



Why eat together?

"We argued. We sulked. We laughed. We pitched for favors. We shouted. We listened. It is still our family's finest hour."
— ERMA BOMBECK on shared family meals

NUTRITION

Studies show that most people, children, teens, older adults and singles, eat more balanced meals and a wider variety of foods when they eat with family or friends.

FAMILY TRADITION

Food served at the family table helps shape and give lasting meaning to our cultural heritage. Positive food memories created during childhood are cherished for life.

COMMUNICATION

Shared mealtimes offer a chance to communicate with neighbors, friends and family, helping to build a strong spirit of community and commitment to one another.

CULINARY SKILLS

Children learn basic cooking skills and to appreciate a variety of tasty foods when they are involved in mealtime preparation.

STEP 1

GETTING TO THE TABLE

Few would argue about the importance of family meals. But when reality strikes, any number of obstacles can get in the way of dishing up dinner.

WORK, SPORTS OR OTHER COMMITMENTS

- ◆ **Be flexible with the time of meals.** If children have after school activities, plan a late dinner or have breakfast together instead.
- ◆ **Be creative with where you place your plates.** Dinner doesn't have to always be on the kitchen table. Spread a blanket at the soccer field or have a "tailgater" in your car.

EVERYONE'S TASTE BUDS ARE DIFFERENT

- ◆ **Get kids involved.** Good kitchen helpers usually make good food tasters. Children learn best by doing, not watching.
- ◆ **Let every eater plan a day's menu.** Rotate meal planning to satisfy everyone's taste buds.

TOO TIRED TO PLAN, SHOP AND COOK

- ◆ **Keep mealtime simple and easy.** Dinner during the week should be nutritious, but quick. Save the complicated meals for when you have more time.
- ◆ **Share the responsibility.** Let one person shop, another cook – and don't forget the clean-up committee.
- ◆ **Stock your pantry** and freezer once a month with some quick to fix staples to dish up anytime, anywhere.
- ◆ **Make a list** of quick family favorites to keep on hand for those extra hectic times.

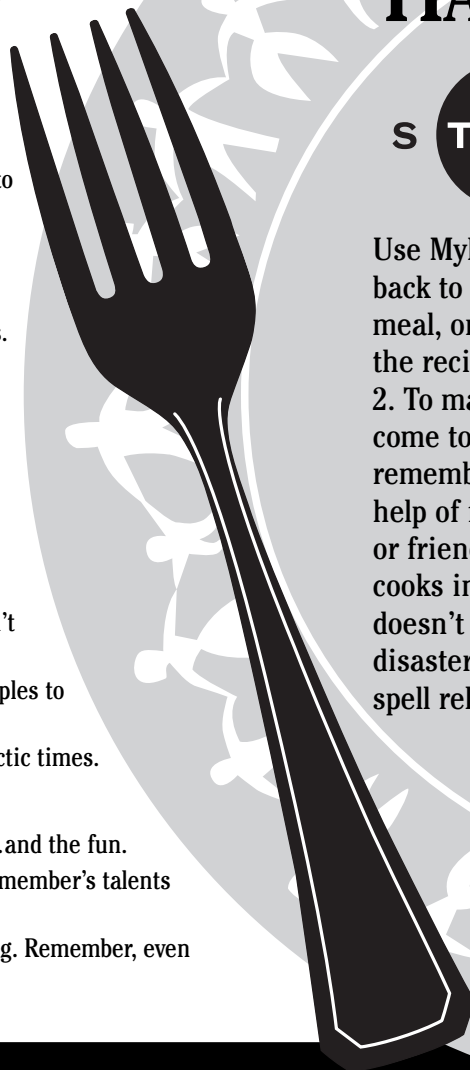
DON'T ENJOY COOKING

- ◆ **Have a potluck** with neighbors or friends to share the cooking duties...and the fun.
- ◆ **Maybe there's a budding chef in your house.** Find out where family member's talents and interests lie.
- ◆ **Try a new recipe** or buy a new cookbook to spark your interest in cooking. Remember, even *Julia Child* had to learn to cook at some time.

MAKING MEALTIME HAPPEN

STEP 3

Use MyPyramid on the back to plan a healthy meal, or choose one of the recipes from Step 2. To make your meal come together easily, remember to enlist the help of family members or friends. Too many cooks in the kitchen doesn't have to spell disaster, it can spell relief!



STEP 2 FILLING UP YOUR PLATE

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By keeping these twelve foods in your fridge, freezer, pantry and bread box, you have the staples to whip up the following four quick, nutritious and tasty meals any day of the week.

Make the rest of the meal easy; slice up some fresh fruit, put bread, bagels or rolls in a basket, pour milk and ring the dinner bell.

12 FOODS = 4 MEALS

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. mozzarella cheese | 7. chicken |
| 2. parmesan cheese | 8. lean ground beef |
| 3. plain yogurt | 9. pasta |
| 4. pesto | 10. potatoes |
| 5. spinach | 11. spaghetti sauce |
| 6. tomatoes | 12. pizza crust |

CHICKEN PESTO PASTA

- 8 ounces pasta (4 cups cooked)
- 3/4 pound chicken, cut into chunks
- 1 large tomato, cubed
- 1-2 tablespoons prepared pesto or ranch dressing mix
- 1 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese

Cook angel hair, spaghetti, or tube-type pasta according to package directions. In a large skillet, stir fry chicken; add tomato. Heat thoroughly. In a small mixing bowl, blend pesto or ranch dressing mix into yogurt to make sauce. Toss pasta, chicken and tomatoes with sauce. Add salt and pepper to taste. Top with parmesan cheese. **Makes 4 servings.**

QUICK CHICKEN MOZZARELLA

- 8 ounces pasta (4 cups cooked)
- 4 skinless chicken pieces (breast or thigh)
- optional: 1/4 cup chopped olives or 1/4 cup chopped mushrooms
- 2 cups spaghetti sauce, divided
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions. In a 9" by 9" baking pan, broil chicken until brown or until juices run clear. Remove chicken from pan. Put pasta in pan. Spoon 1 cup spaghetti sauce onto pasta. Place chicken on top of pasta. Top with remaining spaghetti sauce and optional olives or mushrooms. Spread with cheese. Bake at 350° until bubbly, about 15 minutes. **Makes 4 servings.**

ITALIAN SPUDS

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 3/4 pound lean ground beef
- 1 1/2 cups fresh or 5 ounces frozen, chopped spinach
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup spaghetti sauce

Bake potatoes. In a large skillet, brown ground beef; drain. Add spinach and spaghetti sauce. Heat thoroughly. Split potatoes and top with ground beef mixture; then cheese. Broil to melt cheese, if needed. **Makes 4 servings.**

MEDITERRANEAN PIZZA

- 3/4 pound lean ground beef or spicy chicken sausage
- 2 cups fresh or 10 ounces chopped spinach, thawed and drained well
- optional: 3/4 cup marinated artichoke hearts, rinsed, drained and chopped
- 1 large pizza crust or Boboli
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
- 1 large tomato
- 1-2 tablespoons pesto or 2 tablespoons ranch dressing

In a skillet, brown ground beef, drain. Add spinach and optional artichoke hearts. Mix together over heat. Cut tomato in half and squeeze out most of juice and seeds; chop. Spread pizza crust with pesto or dressing. Spoon beef mixture on top of crust. Top with tomatoes and sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 450° for 6-8 minutes. **Makes 4 servings.**

What should we serve?

What do we shop for?

Who's doing the shopping?

Who's setting the table?

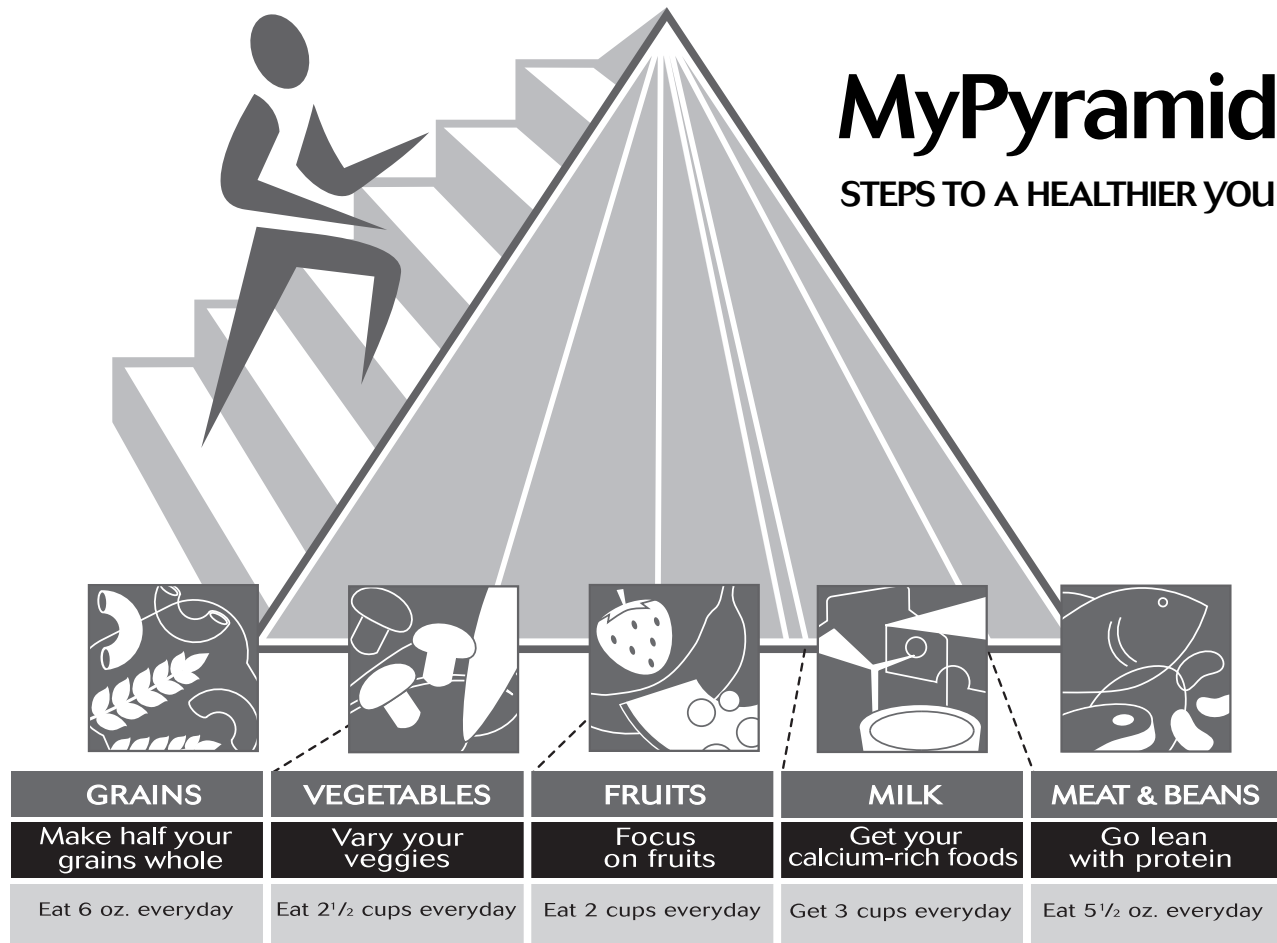
Who's the head cook?

Who's the clean-up committee?

MAKING HEALTHY MEALS

MyPyramid

STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU



For a 2,000-calorie diet, you need the amounts above from each food group.* To find the amounts that are right for you, go to MyPyramid.gov.

* Fats and Oils: make most of your choices from fish, nuts, and vegetable oils.

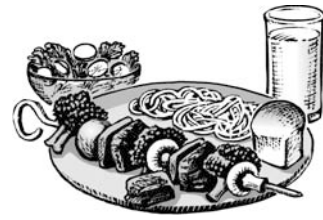
SOURCE: USDA, 2005



Grains = 2 oz
Vegetables = 0 Cups
Fruits = 1 1/2 Cups
Milk = 1/2 Cup
Meat & Beans = 0 oz



Grains = 2 oz
Vegetables = 1/2 Cup
Fruits = 1/2 Cup
Milk = 2 Cups
Meat & Beans = 2.5 oz



Grains = 2 oz
Vegetables = 2 Cups
Fruits = 0 Cup
Milk = 1 Cup
Meat & Beans = 3 oz

Variety is the spice of life...and the key to good nutrition. Try to eat different foods each day and at every meal.

Find your personalized pyramid recommendations at www.MyPyramid.gov

Try to eat foods from at least 3 different food groups at each meal.

Most importantly, enjoy eating healthy foods with friends and family.