

FRESH CONVERSATIONS

Iowa Department of Public Health

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Cooking for 1 or 2



Page 2

Learn how to cut your favorite recipe in half!



Page 3

How to properly freeze, thaw and cook your food!

Tired of eating alone? Many areas have congregate meals available for older adults! Check with your local area agency on aging for the closest meals available to you.

Do you have fond memories of mealtimes with your families? Maybe you have cooked for a large family almost your whole life. Are you now finding it tough to adjust to cooking from a family of 4, 6, or even 10 down to cooking for 1 or 2? Cooking a meal for a family or guests often brings a sense of accomplishment. But cooking only for yourself may seem like a big effort with little reward.

It could be easy to skip meals or to rely on convenience foods because of this. These bad habits can lead to malnutrition, poor digestion, weight loss, and bone problems.

Loneliness is another challenge for those living alone. Being lonely can have as much of an effect on your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day! When you eat alone, you usually don't eat as well as you would with your family, friends, or spouse. Food is not just about nutrition. Nutritious and enjoyable meals are essential to a good quality of life!

It may be unavoidable for you to eat alone at times, but it's important to keep mealtimes special. Try video calling someone while you eat. Maybe listen to a book or your favorite radio talk show.

And most importantly, try to find the enjoyment in mealtimes again.



Add a special bouquet of flowers, a pretty decoration, or holiday arrangements to your table to make mealtime more inviting!

Source: health.harvard.edu/blog/nutrition-shortcuts-when-you-live-alone-201512028718
Source: mealsonwheelsoc.org/senior-hunger-loneliness/
Source: seniorliving.org/health/eating-alone-risk/

Just the Two of Us

Cooking for one or two can be simple and enjoyable, but can also pose some unique challenges. Here are some tips for cooking for one-two people:



- Divide your favorite recipes in order to make a smaller amount, or prepare the full recipe, divide into one or two serving portions, and freeze for later use. Always label the frozen dinner with the name of the item and date.
- Use smaller pots and pans. Food will cook quicker and they are easier to handle.
- Look for cookbooks with recipes to serve one or two.
- Make commercially prepared frozen meals more nutritionally balanced by adding fruits or vegetables to make it a complete meal!
- Try sharing or swapping meals with persons in the same situation. This may break the monotony of eating the same meals and may give you someone to eat with!

How to cut a recipe in half

Don't toss those family recipes away just yet; many recipes can be adapted to fit your current household size!

Recipe Uses:	To Halve:
3/4 Cup	6 Tablespoons
2/3 Cup	1/3 Cup
1/2 Cup	1/4 Cup
1/3 Cup	2 Tablespoons + 2 Teaspoons
1/4 Cup	2 Tablespoons
1 Tablespoon	1 Teaspoons + 1/2 Teaspoon
1/2 Teaspoon	1/4 Teaspoon

For ingredients such as a can of beans or soup, use what you need and either refrigerate or freeze the remaining food. Opened canned beans or soup can be kept in your refrigerator for 3-4 days.

Be sure to check the doneness of a halved recipe, at least 5 to 10 minutes before the suggested baking time.

"Planned-Overs": Cook once, eat twice!

Using "planned-overs" can be a great way to decrease food waste and reduce time cooking. You can cook many foods such as meat, pasta, rice, or vegetables to use for a different meal later in the week!

- Baked chicken breast can be used for chicken parmesan on Monday supper, then can be used for chicken salad on Tuesday for lunch.
- Chili can be made for supper on Thursday and as a baked potato topping on Friday for lunch. You can even use the microwave to cook the baked potato!
- Pork chops can be grilled for supper on Saturday and can be cut up for a pork stir fry on Sunday.



Cut on the dotted line to save!

Sugar Snap Peas



- Sugar Snap Peas are one of the first vegetables ready for harvest each year.
- They can be eaten raw or cooked in many dishes.
- Excellent source of dietary fiber.
- Pairs well eaten as a snack with hummus.

- Sugar Snap Peas are a fairly new variety - developed in 1979.
- The fibers in the pod of the pea go the same way, unlike garden peas, which makes the pods edible.

Source: garden.org/learn/articles/view/311/

Low Impact Activity



Different types of physical activity can have different impacts on your joints. High-impact activities put a significant load on your weight-bearing joints: the hips, knees and ankles. Activities like this are running, jumping, and sports like basketball. Low-impact activities are much easier on the joints and better suited for our bodies as we age. These activities require a minimal force between your body and the ground. Low-impact activities include walking, swimming, cycling, strength training, yoga, and golf. They are a great way to use your heart muscle and there is a less risk of injury due to their more gentle nature. Often people think physical activity has to be high-impact activity, but low-impact activities are just as good for you!

Source: fda.gov/media/83744/download

Source: fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/freezing-and-food-safety

Source: blogs.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/2016/08/29/tips-for-thawing-meat-safely/

How to Keep Your Food Safe



Be sure to look at expiration dates of all food items and leftovers. "Sell by" dates tell the store how long to display the product for sale. Don't buy something after this date. "Use by" dates are the last date recommended for use of the product at peak quality. Always label the container with contents and date in your fridge or freezer!

How long can I freeze it?

Egg Whites - 12 months
Casseroles/Soups/Stews - 2-3 months
Hot Dogs/Deli meat - 1-2 months
Ground meats - 3-4 months
Steaks, Roasts, Chops - 4-12 months
Poultry - 9 - 12 months

How do I thaw it?

There are 3 safe ways to thaw a food:

1. In the refrigerator

- a. Takes at least overnight, can be much longer for larger items.
- b. Place meat on a plate or pan to prevent drippings from contaminating ready to eat foods.

2. In cold water

- a. Submerge in cold water and change water every 30 minutes. Once thawed, cook immediately.

3. In the microwave.

- a. Food thawed in the microwave must be cooked immediately.
- b. Foods should be cooked before refreezing if plans change.

Is it done yet?

Ground Meat (Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb) ----- 160 F
Ground Turkey or Chicken ----- 165 F
Steaks, Roasts, Chops (Beef, Veal, Lamb) ----- 145 F
Roasts, Breasts, Thighs, Legs, Wings (Chicken, Turkey, Duck, Goose) ----- 165 F
Pork & Ham ----- 145 F
Egg Dishes ----- 160 F
Eggs ----- Cook until yolk and white are firm
Leftovers or Casseroles ----- 165 F
Fin Fish (Cod, Snapper, Tilapia) ----- 145 F
Shrimp, Lobster, Crabs, Scallops ----- cook until flesh is pearly and opaque
Clams, Oysters, & Mussels ----- Cook until shells open during cooking

Are you having trouble sleeping at night due to worrying about your next meal?

Call 2-1-1 for resources available in your area.



Sweet Pork Stir Fry



Serves 4, 2 cups per serving, \$1.80 per serving

Ingredients:

- 6 ounces whole wheat thin spaghetti
- 1/3 cup reduced sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon oil (canola, olive, or vegetable)
- 1 pound boneless pork, thinly sliced (chop or loin)
- 1 package (8 ounces) sugar snap peas
- 2 cups bell pepper, sliced (2 medium bell peppers)

Instructions:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions.
2. Stir soy sauce, brown sugar, and garlic in a small bowl while pasta is cooking.
3. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add pork when oil is hot. Cook pork for about 5 minutes. Stir frequently.
4. Add peas and bell peppers to the skillet. Cook for 3 minutes.
5. Add the soy sauce mixture to the vegetables. Cook 3 minutes.
6. Add pasta and stir until all the ingredients are combined.

Food Safety Tip: Be sure to refrigerate your leftovers within two hours of cooking.

Nutrition Information (per serving): 410 calories, 49 g carbohydrates, 28 g protein, 12 g fat, 640 mg sodium, 7 g fiber

This recipe is provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. For more resources like this, visit the Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website at <http://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu>. Spend Smart. Eat Smart. is a registered trademark of Iowa State University.



Be Active. Eat Healthy!

This month, I will take action by...

Cryptogram

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Answer to puzzle: 1: Food Safety 2: Planned-overt 3: Menu Planning 4: Enjoy Mealtime 5: Loneliness 6: Cook Once, Eat Twice