

Get Family Involved In Making Dinner

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It seems the prices of essential items are rising all around us, including the prices of our basic foods. As a result many families are eating more meals at home. Families are also searching for low-cost entertainment. Instead of looking at cooking as a chore that must be done, maybe we can begin to see it as a way to better connect with family. That way, cooking can serve double duty as “entertainment” as well as a necessary act to feed the family.

Almost every age can do something to take part in preparing a meal. Generally, the more “from-scratch” cooking you do, the more money you save and the less sodium, fat and sugar you consume.

Make a family plan for using leftovers in meals. For example, bake a chicken for one meal, have a chicken salad, chicken sandwiches or chicken tacos for the next. This is an opportunity to try something new. Ask the kids to pick a recipe from a cooking website or an old cookbook or ask friends what they do with their leftover chicken.

There are many different ways to cook chicken. It can be roasted, baked, grilled, poached, or microwaved. To bake a whole chicken calculate the approximate cooking as follows. Allow 20 minutes per pound plus 10 minutes for chickens weighing between one pound and six pounds. Place the whole, unfrozen, unstuffed chicken in an oven preheated to 350°F. Or, try cooking chicken breasts in the microwave. Chicken breasts are versatile and very low in fat, only containing 1 to 2 grams of fat per serving.

Place the meatiest parts of the chicken breasts in a single layer near the outside edge of a covered microwave safe container. Cook on high or medium-high for about 6 to 7 minutes per pound. Times will vary depending on the amount of chicken to be cooked and the power of the oven, so check for doneness frequently.

Regardless of how the chicken is cooked, USDA recommends the poultry reach a temperature of 165°F to ensure food safety. Check for the correct temperature with a meat thermometer.

One pound of raw chicken with bones yields about one cup cooked, boned meat. A one pound chicken breast (bone in) equals 1 1/2 cups cooked chicken; one pound chicken breast (without bone) yields about 2 1/2 cups cooked chicken.

Get the entire family involved in trying one of these family friendly recipes using cooked chicken.

Fruited Chicken Salad

2 cups chopped, cold chicken
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup halved, seedless grapes
1 cup unsweetened, drained, chopped canned pineapple
1/3 cup almond slivers (optional)
1/3 cup light mayonnaise (or 1/4 cup plain yogurt and 1/4 cup mayonnaise)

Toss all ingredients together. Serve on bed of dark salad greens. Yield: about 6 servings.

BBQ Chicken Sandwich

1/2 cup shredded cooked chicken
1/4 cup shredded carrots
2 tablespoons barbeque sauce
2 teaspoons light ranch dressing
1 small whole-wheat sandwich bun
1 leaf romaine lettuce (or your choice)

Combine chicken, carrots and barbecue sauce in a bowl. Spread ranch dressing on the bun. Top with the chicken mixture and lettuce. From: ***EatingWell; September/October 2007***

Sources: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/extensionnews/2008/makecookingfun.html>
<http://www.eatchicken.com/>

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