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Food for Few

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Food for Few Food for Few Food for Few



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food for Few



By JANICE K. LAIDIG, extension nutrition specialist

Food for One or Two

Cooking for two or just yourself is far less work than feeding a crowd. That's the bright side.

But, on the other hand, managing food on a small scale has its problems, particularly if you find cooking chores a burden, or maybe just aren't hungry. Eating regular meals is a habit far too important to forget even if the number eating is few. Thought and care with food do count!

Here are a few suggestions to use in small-scale shopping, cooking, and serving that may make cooking for one or two more pleasant and satisfying.

Buying for One or Two

It needn't take so long, and bundles won't be as heavy as buying for a large family. But, it can be expensive if you aren't conscientious about planning in advance, especially amounts you'll need. Don't buy more food than you can use easily. This may call for some new buying habits, if you are an old hand at thrift on a larger scale. Or if you're just getting started at the business of buying food, it may take a lit-



tle extra time to get acquainted with what is available, as well as the amount of food that can be easily used. An economy-size package or a large quantity of food specially priced is no bargain if you tire of it and it grows stale or spoils. Small purchases of most foods are usually thriftier for the family of one or two.

How Much Will One or Two need? On many of the convenience foods available in the store there is a statement about the number of servings to be expected from that package of food. Remember, these servings are usually based on an average serving of one-half cup, so if your appetite is less or more than average, take this into account when buying.

A general guide to remember when buying meat: if the meat has much gristle, fat or bone, one usual size serving may take half a pound, or even a pound. At the other extreme, if there is no bone, a pound makes four or five servings of average size.



The eight-ounce cans of fruits and vegetables hold one cup two average servings. With this size can you'll have little or no waste. The popular No. 303 can holds two cups. When you buy this size, plan how you will use four servings of the food.

Frozen fruits and vegetables are always in season and add variety to meals. One package of most frozen vegetables makes 3 to 4 servings, so cut or break the block of frozen food in half and use only what's needed for one meal. Some frozen vegetables and fruits are sold in heavy polyethylene bags of one or two pounds. The advantage of this type of packaging:



the food usually separates enough to pour from the bag and makes it possible to use part of the package at one time and return the rest to the freezer for future use. Of course, consider storage; you may not have a freezer large enough to hold this package until used.

Cooking for One or Two

***Have recipes or ideas for meals ready.** It's easier to get more variety into meals when recipes and ideas are handy. Keep your favorite recipes for one or two where they remind you quickly there is more than one way to combine, cook and season food. Remember, by all means try something new now and again, perhaps one new recipe every week.

Most recipes make 4 to 6 servings. To cut a recipe in half or thirds, be sure your arithmetic is correct. Not all recipes can be cut down sat-



isfactorily. You may find that you'll need a little more or less seasoning. Cooking time often is a little shorter, too. Jot down reduced amounts in the margin of each recipe so you won't have to refigure the amounts next time.

***Many convenience foods are especially good for the small family,** for example, mixes for quick breads, cakes, puddings, and main dishes. Also of special help in cooking for one or two are frozen prepared foods such as main dishes and desserts that need only be heated.

***Use leftovers to an advantage.** When you make more than enough for one meal, handle precious leftovers with care. This practice can help keep your food bills under control. No one wants to use too many leftovers, but they can be an asset. It's the dabs of food, left over because of misjudging quantities or appetites, that most often are wasted. Store leftovers covered and cold, and use refrigerated ones within two or three days, freezer-stored leftovers within two to four weeks. Serve the leftovers in an appetizing way, and, if possible, different from the way they first appeared.

- *Toast split muffins, biscuits, coffee cake, and cake under the broiler.* If desired, butter and sprinkle muffins or biscuits with grated cheese, celery seeds, poppy seeds, caraway seeds, or cinnamon and sugar.
- *Use leftover bread in French toast or bread pudding.* Or grate dried bread to use as bread crumbs.
- *Leftover roast meat can be ground for croquettes, meat loaf, sandwich filling, or Spanish rice.* Cut it in cubes and combine with vegetables in stew or individual meat pies. Serve heated in gravy with mushrooms and onions, or serve in a curry sauce over rice.
- *Salads may be all the better by using odds and ends.* Combine leftover meats and cooked vegetables with raw fresh vegetables.



Serving One or Two

If setting a table seems burdensome, don't fall into the habit of eating standing up at the kitchen counter. Look for interesting ways to make eating time comfortable and enjoyable with the least possible effort.

Pretty place mats add spark and color to any meal. Eating the meal on individual trays by the window or television or out on the porch or lawn may encourage you to eat more slowly and enjoy your meal.

Eating by yourself all the time may be lonely and frustrating. Some of your friends may have the same problem. Try sharing meal-time with them. Ask friends to eat with you, or invite someone to bring what they have cooked, and eat together.

It takes effort to make yourself plan and prepare meals on a fairly regular schedule, but it pays off in better health and a more cheerful outlook on life.

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