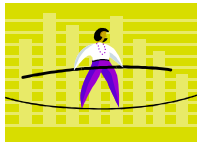




A Fact About Family Meals

Family Day—A Day to Eat Dinner With Your Children is a national initiative to remind parents what your kids really want at the dinner table is YOU! Celebrate Family Day 2010 with your family by having dinner together on September 27!



Balancing Food, Fun & Fitness



Perk Up the Packed Lunch

Lunch is an important time for students to refuel after a busy morning. For some, lunch means getting back to the routine of packing the brown bag. Here are some kid friendly tips for successful sack lunches:

- **Get kids involved.** They are more likely to eat what they have packed themselves and it can be a time saver for you.
- **Give kids choices.** Provide nutritious food choices and let them pick the ones they like and will eat.
- **Avoid foods such as chips, soda and candy.** They are high in calories and low in nutrients.
- **Be realistic about portion size.** The right amount for young children may not be as big as the portion for a high school student or an adult.

Keep in mind that kids like:

- **Bite sized foods.** Offer things like grapes, cherries, berries, & baby carrots or cut up large pieces of food in to smaller sizes.
- **Shapes.** Create fun shapes by cuttings lunch foods with cookie cutters.
- **Dunking.** Include low-fat dressings or yogurt dips.
- **Routine.** Don't worry if your child chooses the same thing everyday. Offer favorite foods along with some new ones.
- **Suprises!** Including a little note or an occasional treat helps make lunch more fun.

TO SUBSCRIBE:

It's easy to sign up for Mealttime Solutions. Send an email or call one of the MSU Extension Offices listed at the right side of this page and leave your email address. Feel free to spread the word to your family and friends.

Contact Us

Tara Andrews

Extension Agent
MSU Extension,
Custer County
Courthouse
1010 Main Street
Miles City, MT 59301
(406) 874-3370
tandrews@montana.edu

Sheila Friedrich

Extension Agent
MSU Extension,
Sheridan County
100 West Laurel Avenue
Plentywood, MT 59254
(406) 765-3406
sfriedrich@montana.edu

Judy Johnson

Extension Agent
MSU Extension,
Richland County
123 West Main Street
Sidney, MT 59270
(406) 433-1206
judyj@montana.edu

Ardis Oelkers

Extension Agent
MSU Extension,
Roosevelt County
P.O. Box 416
Culbertson, MT 59218
(406) 787-5312
aoelkers@montana.edu

SILENCE BUSTERS

Back to school is an exciting time for kids. You may find your family dinner table packed with lively conversation about everyone's day at school. If not, here are a couple of questions to help get everyone talking:

- ◆ What do you think your favorite class will be this year? Why?
- ◆ If you could go anywhere over teacher's convention week-end, where would it be?
- ◆ How many new kids are in your class this year? Do you know where they are from?



Keep it on the light side, leaving serious discussion for another time. Turn off the TV, cell phones and iPods and just listen to what each other has to say.

HALFWAY HOMEMADE

With the start of the new school year, you may find yourself with less and less time to prepare meals. Think of how handy already-browned and ready-to-eat ground beef mix would be on those nights when you need a quick meal.

Make Ahead Crumbled Beef Mix

Yield: 5 packages

Serving: 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups in each package

5 pounds ground beef
2 medium onions, chopped
1 cup chopped celery
2 cloves garlic, minced or 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon pepper

1. Brown ground beef and onions in a large skillet or pot. Drain fat.
2. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cook over medium heat for 15 minutes.

To Freeze:

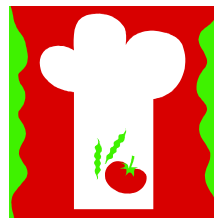
1. Divide cooked mixture into containers or freezer bags. Cover. Label and freeze.
2. If using freezer bags, remove air by squeezing, press flat and freeze. The flat bags stack nicely in the freezer.

To Safely Defrost:

1. Microwave until defrosted (stir frequently and break apart with a fork once or twice).
2. On stove top, heat on medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes, then continue with the recipe.
3. Defrost in refrigerator.

Tips for Using Make Ahead Beef Mix

- This mix can be used in any of your recipes that call for cooked hamburger.
- For quick and easy meat sauce, partner a package of beef mix with a bottle of spaghetti sauce. Complete the meal with cooked pasta, frozen or canned veggies and garlic bread.
- For a meal in minutes add a package of beef mix to a can or two of sloppy joe mix. Use purchased whole grain buns, a bag of salad and canned or fresh fruit to round out your meal.
- Heat the beef mix with packaged taco seasoning according to the package directions. Add whole grain or corn tortillas and all of your favorite taco toppings.
- To make chili, start with a package of beef mix. Add a 15-ounce can of tomato sauce, a 15.5-ounce can of kidney beans, and a 14.5-ounce can of diced tomatoes. Season to taste with chili powder, salt and other favorite spices. Mix up a package of corn bread mix and serve with cut raw veggies.



QUICK FIXES

Here are some quick, easy, & nutritious ideas to liven up those brown bag lunches.

Meat, Cheese & Veggie Wrap

Yield: 1 serving

1 whole wheat tortilla
2 tablespoons low-fat Ranch dressing
1 slice of lunch meat (ham, beef, turkey)
1 piece of string cheese
Various veggies (lettuce, grated carrots, tomato slices, red/green pepper slices)

1. Spread dressing down the center of the tortilla.
2. Lay veggies evenly over dressing.
3. Place lunch meat on top of veggies. Place string cheese on top of all.
4. Roll tortilla with toppings around the piece of string cheese.
5. Wrap in plastic wrap or foil.

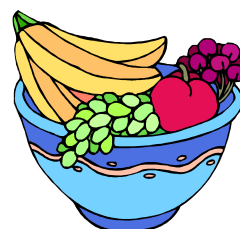
Recipe courtesy of MSU Nutrition Education Programs

Tropical Fruit Salad

Yield: 2 servings

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup pineapple chunks
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup mandarin oranges
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sliced kiwifruit, strawberries or grapes
1 tablespoon slivered almonds or coconut, toasted

Adapted from Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter, Feb. 2000



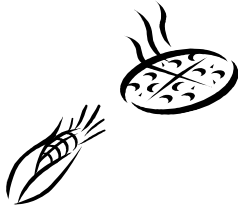
- ◆ Fill a small plastic container with vanilla yogurt and frozen blueberries or strawberries. Pop the container in the freezer the night before. The next morning put the frozen container in your child's lunchbox. By noon it's still nice and cold and a sweet treat for lunch.
- ◆ Spear fruit pieces such as pineapple chunks, peeled orange sections, grapes, kiwi slices, strawberries, etc. on a colorful plastic toothpick and top with a maraschino cherry. TIP: To prevent darkening, dip fruit that turns dark (bananas, apples, pears) in the pineapple juice or bottled lemon juice.
- ◆ Mix any of the following combinations into peanut butter and spread on bread: Finely chopped apple and shredded cheese; applesauce, raisins and a dash of cinnamon; or drained pineapple and shredded coconut.

Keep It Safe

- Use an insulated lunch bag or double bag paper sacks.
- Keep cold foods cold by using a frozen chill pack, or freeze a juice box or water bottle.
- Keep hot foods hot by using a thermos and heating foods to 140° before packing.
- Remind kids not to eat leftovers from lunch that need to be kept cold or hot. Chocolate chip cookies are okay to eat; an egg salad sandwich is not.



DOABLE DINNER



**Taco Rice Skillet
Canned Mexi-Corn
Fruit Kabobs with Yogurt Dip
Low-Fat or Fat-Free Milk**



TACO RICE SKILLET
Yield: 8 Servings

1½ pounds ground beef (or 1 package of make-ahead beef mix)
2 cups instant brown rice
1½ cups water
1 cup chopped onion (omit if using beef mix)
3 teaspoons chili powder
1 package taco seasoning mix
2 cans (15-oz.) diced tomatoes
2 cups (8 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese
Chopped lettuce, sliced olives, crushed plain or nacho cheese flavored tortilla chips, sour cream, salsa or taco sauce, etc.

Brown ground beef in a large skillet. Drain fat; return to pan. Add water, onion, chili powder, taco seasoning and tomatoes to skillet. Bring to a boil and add rice. Simmer over low heat 5 minutes. Cover skillet, turn off heat, and let rest 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Portion meat/rice mixture onto plates, sprinkle with cheese and let everyone put on their favorite taco toppings.

Recipe Courtesy of MSU Nutrition Education Program

Shopping List

Ground Beef
Instant Brown Rice
Onion
Taco Seasoning
Diced Tomatoes
Shredded Cheddar Cheese
Lettuce
Choice of Taco Toppings
Mexi-Corn
8 oz. Container Fruit Yogurt
Chunk Pineapple
Fresh Fruit
Low-fat Whipped Topping

Each serving (with cheese and lettuce) has 539 calories, 69 grams (g) carbohydrate, 32 g fat, 2 g fiber, and 29 g protein.

Fruit Kabobs with Yogurt Dip
Yield: 6 servings

2 small fruits of your choice (apple, pear, Clementine orange, banana, kiwi, grapes, etc.)
1 8-ounce can chunk pineapple
1 6- or 8-ounce container fruit yogurt
1 to 2 tablespoons low-fat whipped topping

Wash fruit with cold running water and rubbing. Drain pineapple juice into a bowl. Cut fruit in wedges or chunks. Dip fruit that turns dark (such as apples and bananas) in the pineapple juice. Thread fruit on skewers or toothpicks. Arrange on platter. Stir together the yogurt and whipped topping. Pour into a bowl for dipping. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Recipe courtesy of Iowa State University Extension 2009 Calendar.

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