

**WHAT'S
COOKING**
In Cooke County



A Food and Family Newsletter

January/February 2017

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Cooking for just one or two people is hard.. Some find it to be just too much work for themselves and instead opt for take-out foods. Others are used to preparing large meals for their families and suddenly, they don't need quite so many potatoes in their pot and can't adjust. Whatever, the situation is there are some tricks that make cooking for one or two easier to manage. Maybe one of these tricks will help you!

- Take time and enjoy your meals. Take a little extra time to set the table, light a few candles and play some soft music. Add a variety of colors, textures, shapes, and flavors to your plate and maybe even try a new recipe. And don't forget you can always invite a friend over to share.
- Plan for more convenient cooking. Make a weekly plan for your meals and plan for "planned overs" You may no longer have the need to prepare a whole roast for yourself, but with creative planning, you can eat a roast beef dinner on Sunday, a Roast Beef Sandwich on Monday, and a Vegetable Beef Stew on Tuesday.
- Reduce Your Favorite Recipes. Choose recipes you have always enjoyed and divide them in half. I have included a chart on page 2 that will help you in reducing your recipes. Choose recipes that are easy to divide. You may need to experiment with your seasonings, so add those gradually and check for doneness 4 to 10 minutes sooner than the original recipe. If your recipe reduction is successful, make notes so you remember for next time.
- Use your freezer for cooking. Sometimes it is beneficial to prepare large meals and then freeze them into single serving containers. Then pull out a serving and heat it up. Casseroles are excellent for this cooking method. You can also save significantly on your grocery bill by buying family size packages of meat and poultry cuts that you regularly consume and then freeze into smaller portions.
- Don't forget your friends and neighbors. You can always invite them over to share the excess food with you. Another great idea is to get together with other individuals or couples in your area and start a dinner co-op. Each person in the group prepares a dinner one night a week and shares with the others in the group. Home cooked meals every night of the week, but without the hassle.



Slow Cooking in the Fast Lane

Take a moment and answer these questions?

- Are you too tired to prepare a healthy meal in the evening after a hard day at work?
- Do you pick up take out several times a week?
- Do you yell “dinner” and your family hops in the car?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then slow cooking may be for you. There are many ways you can use your slow cooker, and new innovations in slow cooker technology makes using a slow cooker faster and easier than ever. Slow cookers now come in various shapes, sizes. Some are programmable and some even connect to Wi-Fi so you can operate them through your smart phone from wherever you are.

Most recipes can be adapted for use in a slow cooker but there are a few precautions you need to take. Because liquids do not boil away in a slow cooker, in most cases, you can reduce liquids by one-third to one-half. In soups, this will not matter. Add pasta at the end of the cooking process or it may become mushy. You may want to cook pasta separately and add it just before serving. Milk, cheese and cream may be added one hour before serving. Of course these are just general suggestions and some trial and error may be involved so be sure to make notes on what worked and what did not.

Another slow cooker tip to be aware of is that the flavor of ground herbs and spices

do not hold up well over extended cooking times, so you will want to add some of these closer to the end of cooking time. Taste and adjust seasoning prior to serving.

Conventional Recipe Time	Time at High (300°F)	Time at Low (200°F)
45 minutes	3 to 4 hours	6 to 8 hours
60 minutes	4 to 5 hours	8 to 10 hours

What about safety? A safe slow cooker needs to get hot enough to safely cook your food but not so hot that it cannot be left unattended. To check the accuracy of your slow cooker. Fill it half to two-thirds full of water and heat on a low setting for 8 hours with the lid on. Remove the lid and quickly check the temperature of water with a food thermometer and the water temperature should be at 185°F. Anything over 200°F would mean that your food would cook too quickly. Anything less than 185°F would mean that your food probably would not be done .

If your mornings are anything like mine, even this can be overwhelming in the morning, so a simple solution is to place the ingredients into a slow cooker/oven bag and refrigerate. Then drop the bag into the slow cooker before you leave for work and turn to the desired temperature. Plus this make clean up a breeze. A word of caution, you never want to place a cold crock into the slow cooker because the quick fluctuation in temperature can cause it to crack..

Slow Cooker Pork Carnitas

- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. ground oregano
- 1/2 tsp cayenne powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 bay leaves dried
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 medium white onion
- 3 pounds pork tenderloin
- 16 6” yellow corn tortillas.

In a small bowl combine chili powder, cumin, oregano, cayenne pepper, and black pepper. Rub thoroughly on outside of the pork roast. In the slow cooker, combine orange juice, lime juice, garlic, onion, and bay leaves. Place pork on top. Cook on low for 8 hours or high for 4-5 hours.. Remove roast from slow cooker and shred. Place on a baking sheet. Broil in the oven for 4-5 minutes to brown the edges of the pork.

Makes 16 tacos.

290 calories, 5 g. fat, 110 mg. sodium, 21 g. carbohydrates, 3 g. dietary fiber, , 38 g. protein

Source: <http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu>



Dinner on a Dime

Feeding a family can be expensive. According to a Gallup Poll survey conducted in 2012, Americans spend an average of \$151 each week (\$600 monthly) and one can assume that that number has risen since then. The good news is that there is several things we can do as consumers to help bring these costs down.

1. Make a Plan. Smart shopping starts at home so plan ahead for your weekly meals and make a list including all the items you need, then check your pantry and cross off those items you already have.
2. Use a list. Lists are a great tool to for saving money. By using and sticking to your list, you will be able to buy the foods that you need for the week, and avoid those multiple trips to the store. When people make multiple trips, they tend to spend more than they planned.
3. Shop alone. When we take other people with us, extra items make their way into the basket.
4. Don't shop when your hungry. It all looks and sounds good, and we buy things we don't need.
5. Use ads, food labels, and unit pricing to make sure you are getting the best deal. You can find more information on how to use unit pricing at <http://articles.extension.org/pages/19896/using-unit-pricing>
6. Sign up for the store's free rewards program and also use store apps on your smartphones for extra savings.
7. Only use coupons when it is an item you need.
8. Don't be afraid to try store brands. Usually these foods are just as good as name brand foods and in some cases they even taste better.
9. Pay attention when you check out. Sometimes prices ring up for the wrong amount and you can end up paying more. Kindly point it out to the cashier, and in most cases it is easily corrected.

Sources: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/156416/Americans-Spend-151-Week-Food-High-Income-180.aspx>
<http://duval.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/savingmoneyatgrocery.pdf>

Winter Black Bean Soup

3 cups black beans, cooked
2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup onion, chopped (about 1/2 medium onion)
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
1 can (14.5 ounces) Mexican style diced tomatoes
1 cup water
1 tablespoon lime or lemon juice (optional)
Nonfat yogurt or low fat sour cream and cilantro for garnish (optional)

Prepare beans as directed.

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook. Stir until onion begins to soften (about 2 to 3 minutes). Add chili powder. Add cumin, if desired. Cook and stir for 1 minute.
Add tomatoes, beans, and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes (covered). Remove from heat and stir in lime or lemon juice, if desired. Garnish before serving.

Serves 4: Cost per serving is \$0.90

240 calories, 3 g. fat, 530 mg sodium, 42 g carbohydrates, 13 g. dietary fiber, 13 g. protein

Tips

You can use 2 cans (15 ounces) reduced sodium black beans (rinsed) in place of the cooked black beans.

Soup can be cooked in a slow cooker on low for 3-4 hours.

Thin the soup by adding water. Thicken soup by cooking longer without the cover.

Source: <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/winter-black-bean-soup/>



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For more information about programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office visit our website at <http://cooke.agrilife.org>

Angel Neu
County Extension Agent
Family and Consumer Sciences
Cooke County
301 South Chestnut
Gainesville, TX 76240
(940)668-5412
adneu@tamu.edu

Fruit Clafoutis

A Clafoutis is a French dessert that features fruit (traditionally cherries) in a dish surrounded by a flan like filling. This can make use of many different types of seasonal fruits.

- 1 pie crust pre-made
- 2 cup fruit blueberries, blackberries, cherries, pears, apples, raspberries, apricots, and plums work best
- 1 cup 2% milk
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour

In a 9x9 round baking pan, place the pre-made pie crust and press down to mold it to the pan.

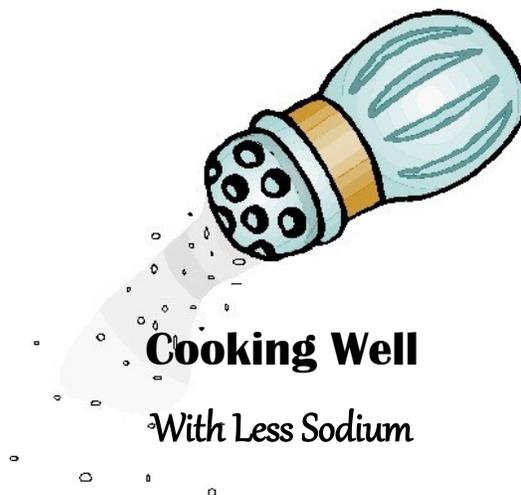
Place your fruit of choice evenly around the bottom of the pan. For fruit like blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and cherries just rinse and dry the fruit. For fruit like pears, apples, and plums, you will want to wash, core, and slice the fruit, and peel if you prefer.

In a large bowl mix the milk, eggs, vanilla, sugar, and flour together. Then pour evenly over fruit and crust.

Serves 12

170 calories, 6 g. fat, 180 mg sodium, 26 g. carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 11 g sugar, 4 g. protein

Source: <http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu>



Heart Healthy Cooking School where you can learn to prepare flavorful dishes with less sodium, and how to successfully use herbs and spices to flavor your food.

All recipes will be heart healthy and diabetic friendly and all participants will receive a copy of the recipes and other helpful tools you can use.

Thursday, February 2, 2017

10 am

Cooke County Extension Office

301 South Chestnut St. Gainesville, TX
(South of the Cooke County Library)

Cost: \$12.50

(includes recipes, handouts, and food supplies)

Space is limited. Please register by Monday, January 30.

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