



## March 2017 Newsletter

# Staying Home for Dinner is a Good Choice

March is National Nutrition Month. One of the better ways to ensure that your family is getting nutritious foods is to prepare your foods at home. Cooking at home allows you to take more control over ingredients, portion sizes, and the overall cost of the meal. Cooking from home also presents the opportunity for you to spend more time with your family. An added bonus is that your kids are more likely to try new foods, such as various vegetables, if they've provided a helping hand in preparing the meal.

For some, the idea of cooking from home may seem overwhelming. After all, some of us are not the greatest cooks, so we may lack a bit of confidence in the kitchen. Others of us may feel we don't have the time to cook a full meal. Still others may worry about the cost that goes with preparing a meal—the assumption sometimes being that it is cheaper to buy fast foods listed on the value menu than shopping for groceries.

If you have any of those reservations, rest easy. There are many recipes that can be found on reputable websites (such as [blt.tamu.edu](http://blt.tamu.edu)) that are not only easy to prepare, but also take 30 minutes or less to prepare and cook. With respect to the last concern listed, —costs—many don't realize that it is actually cheaper (in addition to being more nutritious) to buy foods from the

grocery store than choosing from the fast-food value menu. Let's use an imaginary family of four to demonstrate this fact:

If going to a fast food restaurant for dinner, the family can spend about \$22 for four combination meals (about \$5.50 per person on average). That combo meal provides four burgers, four medium-sized fries, and four sodas.

Using that \$22 at the grocery store will yield 5 pounds of potatoes, 1 pound of dried beans, 1 bunch of broccoli, a bag of frozen vegetables, 1 pound of fresh fruit, a 16-ounce bag of rice, a gallon of milk, a dozen eggs and 1 pound of meat. These items can also be used to make more than one meal!

Staying home for dinner is a good choice!

**For about \$20, you could buy...**

**X**

- 4 Whopper Combo Meals at Burger King (\$5.44 each)  
**Total: \$21.76**

**OR**

- 1 box Morningstar Farms Grillers Original Meatless Burgers (\$2.98)  
- 1 pound 96% lean ground beef (\$2.98)  
- 16 ounces cashews (\$4.18)  
- 1 pound of strawberries (\$1.67)  
- 10 pounds of potatoes (\$2.97)  
- 1 gallon of 100% orange juice (\$3.26)  
- 1 pound of frozen mixed vegetables (96 cents)  
- 1 bunch of broccoli (\$1.58)  
- 1 pound bag of dried pinto beans (\$1.08)  
**Total: \$21.68**

SPARKPEOPLE

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### Local Events

# A FRESH START to a Healthier You!



Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service  
Liberty County  
501 Palmer Ave.  
Liberty, TX 77575  
(936)334-3230



**Every Wednesday**  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Cost: FREE**  
Participants will receive free door prizes and recipes!

**Location:**  
Cleveland Civic Center  
210 Peach Ave.  
Cleveland, Texas 77327

**Dates:**  
March 8  
March 15  
March 22  
March 29  
April 5

#### Class Schedule and Topics

March 8	Creating Safe Healthier Meals
March 15	Balance Your Day – Menu Planning
March 22	Balance Your Day – Eating Out
March 29	Saving More at the Grocery Store
April 5	Celebrate Small Bites



**Healthier You!**

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### 20-Minute Chicken Creole

**Makes:** 8 Servings    **Serving Cost:** \$0.81

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 chicken breasts (whole, skinless, boneless)
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14 1/2 oz., with juice)
- 1 cup chili sauce (low sodium)
- 1 green pepper (chopped, large)
- 2 celery stalks (chopped)
- 1 onion (chopped, small)
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon parsley (dried)
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

#### Directions

1. Heat the pan over medium-high heat (350 degrees in an electric skillet). Add the vegetable oil and chicken and cook until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (3-5 minutes)
2. Reduce heat to medium (300 degrees in electric skillet).
3. Add the tomatoes with juice, chili sauce, green pepper, celery, onion, garlic, basil, parsley, cayenne pepper, and salt.
4. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer, covered for 10-15 minutes. Serve hot over cooked rice or whole wheat pasta.

### Macaroni & Cheese with Broccoli

**Makes:** 6 servings    **Serving Cost:** \$0.67

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
- 4 tablespoons of flour
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups cheddar cheese, low-fat shredded
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups broccoli (cooked and chopped)

#### Directions

1. Cook the macaroni, following the instructions on the package.
2. Drain the cooked macaroni and return to the pan.
3. While the macaroni is still warm, sprinkle in the flour and stir thoroughly.
4. Over medium heat, slowly stir the milk into the macaroni.
5. Add the cheese and pepper.
6. Stir over medium heat until the milk and cheese thicken into a creamy sauce, approximately 7-10 minutes.
7. Stir in the broccoli; heat thoroughly.
8. Taste; add a small amount of salt, if needed.
9. Refrigerate any leftovers.

\*Cook time is 25 minutes.

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