

Consumer and Family Sciences

Department of Foods and Nutrition



Nutrition Fact Sheet

Make Mealtime Family Time

What is a family meal?

A family meal is a place for shared social interaction, a chance to learn and teach, a time to explore food, and a place to build family unity.

Why are family meals important?

- Improved nutrition
- Fewer behavioral problems
- Higher self esteem
- Improved academic performance
- Happier families



How to make regular family meals happen in your home:

- Make it a priority.
- Be flexible.
- Involve everyone.
- Plan ahead.
- Create a positive atmosphere.

Making the most of family meals:

- Make it a routine. When the whole family helps out, it is more fun.
- Tune in to your family. Turn off the TV.
- Talk, listen, and laugh. Mealtime is the time to connect.

Eating together frequently as a family is an important habit that provides benefits for the whole family. These benefits include increased communication and stronger bonds among family members and healthier lifelong eating habits.

Family meals improve nutrition by:

- Encouraging family members to try new foods.
- Increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables on the plate.
- Promoting nutrient-rich family meals.
- Supporting habits for a healthy body weight.
- Developing healthy lifelong eating habits.

Enjoy more table time by having less cooking time:

- Plan meals ahead of time. Look at next week's schedule when grocery shopping.
- Keep it simple! Use quick and easy recipes.
- Use "ready to eat" items such as precooked meats and bagged salads.
- Double your recipe, freeze and save leftovers for another meal.

This publication was written by a student in Purdue's Foods and Nutrition 530 course, Public Health Nutrition. The content was reviewed by experts at Purdue and other institutions.

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What can I fix that will be quick and healthy?

- Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean meats and beans, whole grains, and low-fat milk into your menu.
 - > Add fruit, nuts, or cooked beans (black, or garbanzo) to salads.
 - > Add tuna and vegetables to a whole wheat pita.
 - > Make a casserole from what's on hand — pasta, meat, vegetables, sauce.
- Simple meal ideas:
 - > Grilled cheese, tomato soup, mixed vegetables, grapes.
 - > Breakfast for dinner: eggs with cheese and vegetables, turkey sausage, fruit smoothies, whole wheat toast.
- Be creative with leftovers. Today's roast chicken is tomorrow's quesadilla!

References and resources

Center for Promoting Family Meals
www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals

Meals Matter. *Cooking for Your Family*.
www.mealsmatter.org/CookingForFamily/index.aspx

Meals Matter. *Recipe and Meal Ideas*.
www.mealsmatter.org/RecipesAndMeals/

Nutrition Education Network of Washington at Washington State University
<http://nutrition.wsu.edu/ebet/toolkit.html>

Making Meals Matter. Dairy Council of California.
www.dairycouncilofca.org

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
www.cnpp.usda.gov/

Turkey Stir Fry in 3 easy steps

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Yield: 4 servings, ½ cup each

Ingredients

½ cup chicken broth

2 Tablespoons soy sauce

1 Tablespoon cornstarch

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

½ teaspoon garlic powder

1 pound turkey, cubed (*chicken or pork can be substituted for turkey*)

1 cup carrots, thinly sliced (*use any combination of vegetables*)

1 cup zucchini, sliced (*you have on hand*)

½ cup chopped onions

¼ cup hot water

Step 1:

Combine chicken broth, soy sauce, and cornstarch in a small bowl and set aside. Heat vegetable oil in skillet. Add garlic powder and turkey to skillet and stir until turkey is thoroughly cooked.

Step 2:

Add carrots, zucchini, onions, and ¼ cup hot water to cooked turkey. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Uncover and bring mixture to a boil. Cook until almost all liquids have evaporated.

Step 3:

Stir in cornstarch mixture and bring to a boil. Stir constantly until thick. Serve over steamed rice.

Source: USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion