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Eat Together Idaho is an initiative from the Idaho Office of Drug Policy (ODP). The Idaho Family Dinner Meal Guide was developed by ODP with support from The Family Dinner Project, The Idaho Foodbank, and the Idaho Beef Council.

It's time to eat together Idaho!

Idaho Family Dinner Meal Guide



Recipes | Conversation Starters | Fun Activities

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It's time to

Eat Together Idaho!

Eating regular meals as a family is one of the best ways to build connection and maintain strong relationships. Frequent family meals not only boost the physical and mental health of adults, but they are also linked to improved academic performance, self-esteem, and resiliency for children of all ages, and lower rates of substance use and stress among teens.¹



Teens that regularly eat dinner with their family 3 to 5 nights per week are half as likely to use alcohol, 4 times less likely to smoke, and 2.5 times less likely to use marijuana than teens that have dinner with their family less than twice a week.²



The Power of Family Dinner



Dinner is more than a meal...

It's an opportunity for your family to connect, establish consistent routine, create rituals, tell stories, and build bonds.

Importantly, families want to have dinner together! 30-40% of families have dinner together on any given night, and 90% of Americans want to have family meals more often.

Also, when kids are given the choice, or when asked in a study, would you rather eat with your parents than by yourself in front of a screen or with your peers? 80% choose their families and feel that it is the time of the day they're most likely to talk with their parents.³

Kick-start your family dinner routine today!

Family dinners don't have to be fancy or perfect. This Family Dinner Meal Guide is full of simple recipes, engaging conversation starters, and fun activities. We hope this Guide will help your family connect around the table and boost your family dinner routine

You can find more resources at EatTogetherIdaho.org

1. Benefits of Family Dinners. 2021. The Family Dinner Project.
2. The Importance of Family Dinners VIII. 2012. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse.
3. The Benefit of Family Mealtime. 2020. Harvard Graduate School of Education.

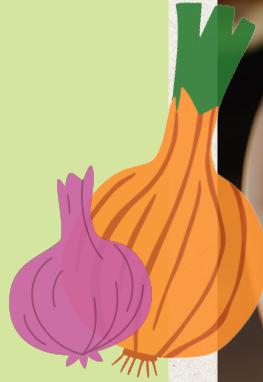


Crunchy Chicken Salad

Serves 5 | Cost per serving: \$1.50

- 1/4 onion
- 1/2 cup celery
- 1/4 cup green pepper
- 1 small apple, diced (leave the peel on)
- 1/2 cup grapes, seedless
- 1/2 cucumber
- 1/4 cup yogurt, plain
- 2 cups cooked chicken, chunked

- 1** Chop celery and green pepper into small pieces.
- 2** Peel and chop onion and cucumber.
- 3** Chop the apple into pieces - leave the peel.
- 4** Cut the grapes in half.
- 5** Put all the chopped and cut ingredients in a large bowl with the yogurt and and chicken. Stir together.



Recipe courtesy of MyPlate.gov

Table Talk

- 1** If you could take a class in anything, what would it be?
- 2** Who is the best teacher you have this year (or ever)?
- 3** What are your top 3 wishes for the school year?
- 4** What is one thing you can do now to work towards a big dream or goal for your future?

Funky Food Fact

The "chicken dance" originated in Switzerland as "Der Ententanz" (the Duck Dance) and was composed by Werner Thomas who played the song on his accordion in hotels and restaurants.

Family Fun

Trivia Time!

- 1** What mountain range runs along the border between Idaho and Montana?
A. Bitterroot Mountains
- 2** What is the longest river in Idaho and how many miles does it run?
A. The Snake River - it runs 799 miles between where it enters at the Wyoming border and exits at the Washington border.
- 3** Which fruit is known for having its seeds on the outside?
A. Strawberry.
- 4** What are Idaho's top three food & agriculture crops?
A. Potatoes, hay, and wheat are Idaho's top three crops.

Simple Stuffed Peppers

Serves 4 | Cost per serving: \$2.00

- ❑ 1 cup brown rice, uncooked
- ❑ 1 can (15 ounces) low sodium black beans
- ❑ 4 bell peppers (any color)
- ❑ 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- ❑ 1 tomato, sliced
- ❑ 1 cup salsa
- ❑ Salt (to taste, optional)

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 2 Cook brown rice according to package directions.
- 3 Wash the peppers under running water and then cut the tops off and spoon out the seeds.
- 4 Drain and rinse the black beans.
- 5 Combine the beans, rice, salsa, and salt.
- 6 Spoon about 3 Tablespoons of the mixture into the bottom of each pepper.
- 7 Place a slice of tomato on top of the mixture and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of cheddar cheese.
- 8 Repeat steps 6 and 7 until the pepper is filled, but do not top with cheese.
- 9 Bake peppers for 30 minutes, then top with cheese and bake for 15 more minutes.



Recipe courtesy of The Idaho Foodbank

Table Talk

- 1 What happened today to make you laugh?
- 2 What was the hardest thing you did today?

Just the Facts

Studies have found that on days when teens share a family meal they feel greater happiness and fulfillment and are less likely to feel burnout, distress, and experience peer and family conflict.

*(American Psychological Association, Journal of Developmental Psychology, 2020)

Family Fun

Fruit & Vegetable Game

One family member thinks of a person known by everyone at the table. Then, others ask the leader questions to try to guess the person.

For example: "If the person were a vegetable, what vegetable would they be?" or "If they were a fruit/animal/color, which one would they be?"

The idea is to stick to figurative rather than literal thinking. Whoever guesses the person first gets to be the leader of the next round!

(Courtesy of The Family Dinner Project)



Sloppy Joes Five Ways

Serves 4 | Cost per serving: \$2.75

- ❑ 1 pound Ground Beef (93% or leaner)
- ❑ 1 cup finely chopped yellow onion
- ❑ 1 cup finely chopped bell pepper (any color)
- ❑ 1 can (15 ounces) no salt added tomato sauce
- ❑ 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ❑ 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- ❑ 4 hamburger buns

- 1 Heat large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add Ground Beef, onion and bell pepper; cook 8 to 10 minutes, breaking beef into small crumbles and stirring occasionally. Pour off drippings, as needed.

Chef Tip: cook times are for fresh or thoroughly thawed ground beef. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F. Color is not a reliable indicator of ground beef doneness.

- 2 Stir in tomato sauce, brown sugar and Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a boil and cook 5 to 7 minutes or until sauce is thickened, stirring occasionally. Season with salt, as desired.

Chef Tip: two 8oz cans of tomato sauce may be substituted for one 15oz can of no salt added tomato sauce.

- 3 Divide beef mixture evenly onto rolls. Garnish with toppings, if desired.



Recipe courtesy of The Idaho Beef Council

Family Fun ~ Do a Theme Night!

Southwest Variation: Prepare recipe as directed but substitute 2 cups salsa for tomato sauce and omit Worcestershire and brown sugar. Add 1/2 cup drained canned black beans and 1/2 cup frozen corn with ingredients in step 2. Serve in warmed taco shells. Garnish with shredded lettuce, chopped tomato, shredded pepper-Jack cheese, chopped avocado, pickled or fresh jalapeño slices and chopped cilantro, if desired.

Hawaiian Variation: Prepare recipe as directed but substitute 1/2 cup sweet barbecue sauce for tomato sauce and omit Worcestershire. Add 1 undrained can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple in juice with ingredients in step 2. Serve in small sweet Hawaiian honey wheat dinners rolls. Garnish with pickles or pickled jalapeño slices, if desired.

Moroccan Variation: Prepare recipe as directed but omit Worcestershire. Add 1/2 cup raisins, 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice and 1 teaspoon ground cumin with ingredients in step 2. Remove from heat and stir in 1 tablespoon nonfat Greek yogurt. Serve in naan or pita pocket breads. Garnish with cucumber slices, nonfat Greek yogurt and chopped pistachios, if desired.

Asian Variation: Prepare recipe as directed but add 1 tablespoon ground ginger with ingredients in step 1. Substitute 2 tablespoons hoisin for Worcestershire. Serve in warm crusty rolls. Garnish with cucumber slices, shredded carrot and chopped cilantro or chopped green onion, if desired.

IDAHO BEEF COUNCIL
Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers

Table Talk

- 1 What foods do you think of when you think about the Southwest, Hawaii, Morocco, and Asia?
- 2 If you could take a vacation to the Southwest, Hawaii, Morocco, or Asia, where would you visit and why?

Fun Food Fact

In 2023, there were an estimated 2.50 million cows in Idaho and more than 7,300 beef cattle farms. That means Idaho has more cows than people!

(Idaho Beef Council)

Zucchini & Corn Fritters

Serves 8 | Cost per serving: \$1.25

- 1 cup grated zucchini
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 cup corn, fresh, canned or defrosted & drained if frozen
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp onion or garlic powder
- Olive or vegetable oil for cooking
- Optional: 1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese

- 1** Grate zucchini and use paper towels to remove as much of the moisture as you can. You will want 1 cup of drained zucchini.
- 2** Place drained zucchini and all other ingredients into a bowl. Mix to combine everything into a batter.
- 3** Preheat a skillet with a couple tablespoons of cooking oil.
- 4** Once skillet is hot, add a small scoop of batter into the pan. Fry until golden brown, then flip and cook the other side.
- 5** Serve immediately with a dipping sauce of choice - such as sour cream or ranch.



Recipe adapted from Idaho Preferred

Table Talk

- 1** If you made the rules at school, what would your top 3 rules be?
- 2** What makes you feel good about yourself when you're at school?

Just the Facts

Engaging in open discussions about peer pressure and the consequences of substance use reduces the likelihood of youth experimenting with drugs & alcohol. Parents that encourage honest dialogue are more effective at preventing teen substance misuse than those that do not.

(National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021)

Family Fun

Cat and Cow

One person at the table is the leader. The leader says either "Cat" or "Cow." When the leader says "Cat" the others meow. When the leader says "Cow" the others moo. Keep saying "Cat" and "Cow," faster and faster, switching back and forth and making the pattern more and more random until somebody "moos" when they should have "meowed" or "meows" when they should have "moosed!"

(Courtesy of The Family Dinner Project)



Honey of a Pumpkin Bar

Serves 30 | Cost per serving: \$2.25

- 1/3 cup dry milk, non-fat
- 2 cups flour (all purpose)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2/3 cup honey*
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons orange peel (grated)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup pumpkin (mashed)

- 1** Preheat oven to 350 °F. Lightly grease or spray with non-stick spray a 12x15 inch baking pan with sides.
- 2** In a small bowl, combine dry milk, flour, baking soda, and spices. Set aside.
- 3** In a large bowl, thoroughly mix oil, honey, juice, peel, eggs, and pumpkin
- 4** Gradually add flour mixture to pumpkin mixture, stirring until smooth.
- 5** Spread batter onto prepared baking pan. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched with your finger. Cool. Cut into squares.



Recipe courtesy of MyPlate.gov

Table Talk

- 1** What was your favorite thing you did today?
- 2** What are you most looking forward to at school this year?
- 3** Who are you most excited to see at school each day?
- 4** If you could travel to the future and see what happens in your life, would you? Why or why not?
- 5** What is one world problem you hope to see solved in the next 20 years?

Funky Food Fact

The heaviest pumpkin ever grown weighed 2,749 pounds and weighed as much as a hippopotamus!

Family Fun

Trivia Time!

- 1** What is the only mammal capable of true flight?
A. Bat
- 2** What is the highest peak in Idaho?
A. Borah Peak
- 3** Which vegetable is known to help improve night vision?
A. Carrot
- 4** Which state in the U.S. produces the most apples every year?
A. Washington

Family Dinner Tasks by Age



Get everyone pitching in with one or more of these age-appropriate tasks!

AGES 2-5

- Fold and carry napkins and other lightweight items
- Set out unbreakable dishware & utensils
- Wash fruits and vegetables
- Scoop and stir ingredients
- Learn to pour liquids safely and wipe spills
- Help find items at the grocery store

AGES 6-12

- Set and clear the table
- Rinse dishes, load and unload the dishwasher
- Learn proper use of sharp or hot kitchen tools
- Wash, dry, and put away sturdy dishes
- Add items to grocery list and follow a short grocery list
- Begin to cook scrambled eggs, rice and pancakes

AGES 13-18

- Learn to cook more difficult items like soups, casseroles and pasta
- Help plan family meals and manage the grocery list
- Wash pots, pans and fragile dishes
- Get dinner started on their own
- Learn food safety such as how to manage raw meats
- Plan, budget and execute a short grocery shopping trip

Guidelines for Respectful Dinner Conversation



- 1 Practice the Positive.** Keep name-calling and sly digs off the menu! Try to talk about things that open people up, not shut them down.
- 2 Listen to understand, not to respond.** Show active listening, and ask yourself, "Am I hearing the feelings behind the words?"
- 3 Reframe Respectfully.** Ask "I think I just heard you say..." and check for clarity. Try questions like "Can you explain what you meant?"
- 4 Welcome people, not arguments.** If they insist on conflict, invite them to discuss the topic another time, but not at your table.
- 5 Get everyone involved.** Ask each person to suggest a game or ask a question. Make sure everyone who wants to be heard, can be.
- 6 Remember why you're all there.** If things get tense, try focusing on what you value about each person. Offer a compliment, or share a special memory.