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For more information about healthy eating, visit <http://food.unl.edu>

Planning Healthy Meals for One or Two — a Checklist

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Sometimes, it can be hard to get motivated when cooking a meal for just one or two people. Here is a checklist to help you get the most value for your time and money if you are cooking for two, or just you!

General Tips

- Maximize your nutrition!
 - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
 - Make at least half your grains whole grains
 - Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- Cook once, eat twice
 - Plan two meals from the same entrée
 - Separate out extra food BEFORE serving
 - Eat extras in 3–4 days or freeze



Shopping Tips

- Should you buy in bulk?
 - May be half the cost but just as expensive if you toss half!
 - Smaller portions help avoid eating the same food over and over
 - Repackage meat in freezer bags for smaller servings and freeze



Tracie Masek, www.flickr.com/emotionaltoothpaste

- Consider individually packaged servings of items if you frequently have leftovers
 - String cheese, wrapped cheese slices
 - Single containers of tuna, soup, or fruit
 - Individual cartons of yogurt
- Buy a smaller number of servings from meat counter
 - Enjoy one pork chop
 - Purchase a single salmon filet
 - Explore a different cut of beef
- Buy fruit at varying stages of ripeness
 - Buy some fruit to eat immediately and some to ripen for later
 - Apricots, bananas, cantaloupe, kiwi, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums continue to ripen after purchase
 - Refrigerate fruit after it has ripened for longer storage
- Buy frozen vegetables in bags
 - Pour what you need
 - ♦ Use in 8 months or per package guidelines
 - Toss into soups, casseroles, salads
- ♦ Thaw corn or peas in strainer under cool running water for salads
- Taste and nutrition
 - ♦ Comparable to fresh
 - ♦ Often lower in salt than canned veggies
- Can-do canned foods
 - Nutrition is comparable to fresh/frozen
 - No refrigerator space needed
 - Helpful in emergency; have manual can opener handy
 - Remove from can when storing unused portions
 - Check the “use by date” on cans for best safety/quality; after can is opened, use within 3–4 days
 - Low sodium versions available
 - Canned Food Alliance offers recipes at www.mealtime.org
- Shop at supermarket salad bars
 - Purchase small amounts of fruits/vegetables
 - Buy individual salads
 - Use foods within 1–2 days of purchase for best quality

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Restaurant Tips

- ✔ Benefit from large restaurant portions
 - Two meals for price of one
 - Divide meal in half BEFORE eating!
 - Refrigerate perishables in shallow containers within 2 hours of service



Storage Tips

- ✔ Refrigerator storage tips
 - Refrigerate in a shallow pan — food should be no more than 2 inches deep
 - Eat perishable foods in 3–4 days; heat until steaming hot (165°F)
 - Thaw packages on a plate in refrigerator near bottom so they don't drip on other foods



Reducing Recipe Size

- ✔ Recipes can frequently be successfully reduced by 1/2 to 1/3. Some helpful equivalents include:
 - 1 cup = 16 tablespoons
 - 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons
 - 1 cup = 8 **fluid** ounces (*Note: measuring cups measure volume, not weight*)
 - 1 fluid ounce = 2 tablespoons
 - 1 pound = 16 ounces (*weight*)
 - 1 pint = 2 cups
 - 1 quart = 2 pints
- ✔ To change pan sizes:
 - 9 x 2 x 13-inch pan holds 14 to 15 cups; for half, use:
 - ♦ Square 8 x 2-inch
 - ♦ Round 9 x 2-inch
 - Reduce oven temperature by 25°F if substituting glass for metal pan



- ✔ Freezer Storage Tips
 - Store it, don't ignore it — food is “safe” indefinitely at 0°F but “quality” lowers over time
 - Use freezer quality containers for freezer storage
 - Safest to thaw in fridge; it takes about 24 hours to thaw 5 pounds of food
 - Foods that don't freeze well include: watery foods such as cabbage, celery, lettuce, etc.;

cream or custard fillings; milk sauces; sour cream; cheese or crumb toppings, mayonnaise; gelatin; and fried foods

- Store bread in freezer; remove a slice at a time and toast as needed.

Turkey or Chicken Soup

Yield: 2 servings

Note: Prepare an extra chicken breast one night and use it in the soup the next night.

1 cup chopped, cooked turkey or chicken
dash of pepper
1/4 chopped onion
1/4 cup chopped celery
2 thinly chopped carrots
1/4 teaspoon thyme
2 cups low sodium chicken broth
1 cup cooked pasta (such as bowtie, shells, macaroni, etc.)
OR 1 cup cooked rice



Add all ingredients, except pasta or rice to pan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer and cook covered until vegetables are tender crisp, about 10 to 15 minutes.

Add cooked pasta or cooked rice and cook a few more minutes until pasta or rice is heated.