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How to Plan a Good Meal

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HOW
TO
PLAN
A
GOOD
MEAL

**Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U. S. Department of Agriculture**

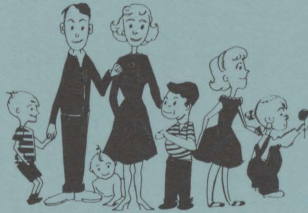
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How to Plan a Good Meal

Do you realize that **everything** you **EAT** turns **into YOU**? Well, this is what happens. You really can't blame your body for being rather choicy about what you feed it! A little more consideration for your body's needs and likes when you eat food might give you a happier, healthier body.



Think about this, too . . . if you plan and cook meals for other people, you influence the kind of bodies they have. Take a close look at your family. You

will see results of your meal planning ability. Do you see signs of a good nutritional background?

Alert, happy facial expression; straight strong body framework; strong, well-developed muscles; moderate fat padding over bones and muscles (no excess); healthy skin color; bright, clear eyes; well-formed teeth and gums; glossy hair.

What you place on the table is usually eaten by your family and has a lot to do with their physical well-being and happiness. You want the best for them. Would you like to become a better meal planner? Here is some help.

ADVANTAGES OF PLANNING AHEAD

What makes a meal taste and look delicious yet be low in cost and easy to prepare? You'll find the secret is **PLANNING AHEAD!** Well-planned meals win family's compliments, save time and money, and provide nutrients for good health at the same time.

Plans do not always have to be written on paper. However, a **file of good recipes, successful menus you have used and grocery shopping lists** are written plans which are valuable time and money savers. You may prefer just "thinking" your plans instead of writing them. The important thing is to keep a variety of foods on hand from which to choose well-balanced and attractive meals. Your freezer, kitchen cabinet shelves, refrigerator and garden can be miniature supermarkets at planning time.

Other planning advantages are:

More nutritious and interesting meals

- Apply nutrition knowledge—shop for nutrient-rich foods important to family health
 - Visualize appearance of food in meals
 - Teach family members better food habits.
- Serve wide variety of foods, new ones often

Better time use in shopping and cooking

- Make fewer trips to supermarket
- Dovetail jobs—cook two meals at once
- Use equipment more efficiently and economically (oven, broiler, freezer, mixer)

Better money use; more food per dollar

- Buy fewer costly "last minute" items
- Make use of low-cost home produced foods
- Make left-overs become "planned-overs"

CONSIDER THESE POINTS WHEN YOU PLAN MEALS

CONTRAST in colors, textures, flavors, temperatures, shapes, sizes and preparation methods all add appetite appeal. Your sense of taste, smell, sight, feeling and even hearing are involved in fullest enjoyment of food. Plan food combinations carefully to satisfy each sense. Colorful, crunchy, tasty foods with rich aroma are "mouth-watering"! Soft, bland, pale foods have less appeal. Best meals blend both kinds.

NUTRITIONAL NEEDS must be considered. Plan to include foods from each of the Basic Four Food Groups in every meal. This is necessary for life and health of family members.

FOOD COSTS vary. Plan to buy and use low-cost foods if your budget calls for this. Low-cost foods can be just as nutritious, good tasting and attractive as high-cost foods.

Your **COOKING ABILITY** should be considered when you plan meals. Choose recipes which fit your abilities . . . you need not be an accomplished gourmet cook to serve well-prepared, delicious meals. The recipe or menu you pick makes the difference. A simple dish or meal correctly prepared can be as nutritious, look and taste as good as a more complicated one.

How much **AVAILABLE TIME** do you have to prepare the meal? You may wish to use some convenience foods (ready-prepared). Or, if you are hurried, plan quick-cooking meals. Use simple recipes which take little time to prepare.

FOODS WE MUST EAT DAILY FOR GOOD HEALTH

Fruits and Vegetables

Everyone: 4 or more servings . . . 1 serving should be a citrus fruit or tomatoes, 1 a green or yellow vegetable, 2 other fruits and vegetables

Breads and Cereals

Everyone: 4 or more servings of whole grain, enriched or restored products

Milk and Other Dairy Foods

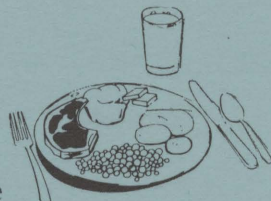
Child: 3 to 4 cups

Teen: 4 or more cups

Adult: 2 or more cups

Mother-to-be: 4 or more cups

Nursing Mother: 6 or more cups



Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts

Everyone: 2 or more servings

PATTERNS FOR PLANNING

You may use these patterns to plan meals. Size of meals may be varied to suit family wishes if nutrients and appetite appeal are included.

Breakfast . . . Fruit (citrus), Protein Dish or Cereal with Milk, Bread, Milk or Other Beverage.

Lunch . . . Main Dish (protein-rich), 1 Vegetable, Salad or Simple Dessert, Bread, Milk.

Dinner . . . Main Dish, 2 Vegetables (1 green or yellow), Salad (optional), Bread, Milk or Other Beverage, Simple Dessert.

HANDY MEAL PLANNING HINTS

● **Choose** your main dish first, then plan rest of meal around it. Pick flavors which enhance each other. Avoid repeating same flavors in a meal.

● **Replace** 1 vegetable with a vegetable salad sometimes; a fruit salad may replace a dessert.

● **Limit** number of mixed dishes in a meal . . . one per meal is a good rule. Avoid combinations as stew, mixed casserole and mixed salad in same meal.

● **Select** dessert in relation to meal . . . a light one with a rich meal, rich one with lighter meal.

● **Choose** foods for meals which efficiently

use equipment . . . as oven meals, skillet meals . . . where most of food is cooked at one time.

● **Organize** helpful meal suggestions or pictures from magazines or food packages into a notebook.

● **Hang** an attractively framed Basic 4 Food Groups picture on kitchen wall as a quick meal reference.

CHECK YOUR MENU

Every meal you eat or cook should have a check by each point on this score. After you check with a pencil a few times, you will remember the points and can check mentally as you plan meals.

A. Does the meal contain foods rich in nutrients?

(Should include foods rich in vitamins A and C and at least one food from each food group)

- Milk and Other Dairy Foods
- Meats, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Wholegrain and Enriched Breads and Cereals

B. Does the meal have variety for appetite-appeal?

- Colors** . . . green, red, yellow, brown, white
- Flavors** . . . sweet, sour, bland, spicy
- Textures** . . . crisp, soft, liquid, chewy
- Temperatures** . . . hot, cold, warm, cool
- Shapes, Sizes** . . . small, big, round, square
- Preparation Method** . . . boil, fry, roast, raw