



DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less

March

Shape Up Your Snacks

March is National Nutrition Month! This year's theme is "Shape up Your Plate." What a great time for you and your family to focus on a few healthy eating habits! Two of the most common questions that we hear from families are: What are some tasty AND healthy snack ideas? and, How can I enjoy eating more vegetables? Read on for *Dining on a Dime's* practical answers to both of these questions!



Appeal to their eyes. Veggies will score big with your family when they are enticing and available. Chop vegetables into bite-sized pieces for easy eating. Set out two or three colors of vegetables, such as carrots, cauliflower, radishes, celery, tomatoes, cucumbers or broccoli, for a beautiful display. For a special treat, serve with a dip of guacamole or plain fat-free yogurt mixed with low-fat Ranch dressing.

Sneaky snacks. Homemade muffins can be a great way to sneak in some extra vegetables, or fruits, and also get a healthy dose of whole grains! Check out the recipe for versatile muffins on page 4 of this issue. If desired, choose to add grated vegetables, such as carrots or zucchini (or chopped fruit, such as bananas, apples or raisins) for great taste and extra nutrition. Mmmm!

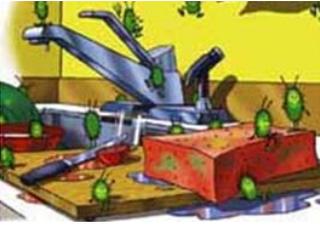
Make it fun. Create "ants on a log" with your child by spreading celery sticks with peanut butter. Top with raisins. Or make "cucumber boats" together. Halve a large cucumber lengthwise. Mix together 1/2 cup plain fat-free yogurt with a pinch of sugar. Spread the mixture into the "boats." Top with two toothpicks speared with "sails" of cucumber peeling.

Add something unexpected. Homemade kale chips and sweet potato fries are another way to bring great taste to the table. For kale chips, drizzle clean bite-sized leaves with cooking oil, then sprinkle with garlic powder and ground black pepper. Bake on a pan in a single layer at 350 degrees F. for 10 to 15 minutes. For sweet potato fries, peel and slice clean fresh sweet potatoes into strips. Toss with cooking oil, garlic powder and ground black pepper. Bake on a pan in a single layer at 450 degrees F. for 15 to 20 minutes.

Shape Up Your Kitchen Cleaning Routine

As mentioned, this year's National Nutrition Month theme is "Shape up Your Plate." But according to a 2011 report, we would do well to shape up our kitchen cleaning habits, too. Did you know that kitchens — not bathrooms — are typically the "germiest" places in our homes? Find out how you can clean it up, and protect your family!

Kitchen Sponge. Typically used to clean dishes and countertops, sponges have the most germs in the house! They are often wet and have uneven surfaces and food residue. This makes them a natural place for bacteria to grow. **What to do?** Instead of using a sponge, start out each morning with a clean dry cloth. If you strongly prefer a sponge, microwave it wet for one minute every day to kill many of the bacteria, and replace the old with a new one every two weeks.



Kitchen Sink. Food particles get trapped in drains and disposals, creating places for bacteria to grow. **What to do?** Wash kitchen sink strainers in the dishwasher weekly. Wash the sides and bottom of sink basins each week with a disinfectant cleaner. Sanitize drains monthly by pouring a mixture of one teaspoon of bleach in four cups of water down the drain.

Coffee Reservoir. A prime location for bacteria, mold and mildew to grow is in dark damp places. **What to do?** Follow your coffee maker's cleaning instructions. Many companies advise to clean it every 40 to 80 brew cycles. A common cleaning method is to add 1 cup vinegar and 2 cups water to the empty coffee reservoir and wait 30 minutes. Then turn on the coffee pot and let the mixture go through the unit. Pour the hot liquid into your sink drain. Run cycles of fresh water through your coffee maker until the vinegar odor is gone.

Faucet handles. Many kinds of germs are on handles. **What to do?** Clean your handles each day with a disinfectant cleaner or wipe.

Counter tops. Many unwashed or raw foods, pet's items and toys are put onto counters, which makes them a common place for germs. **What to do?** Before and after food preparation, wash counter tops with hot soapy water, rinse with clean water, then clean with a disinfectant cleaner or wipe.

Stove Knobs. Stove knobs often have layers of oil and grease, which make them difficult to clean. **What to do?** Once a week, remove knobs, wash them in hot soapy water, rinse, and let them air dry.

Cutting boards. Cutting boards, both plastic and wood, are in contact with many foods. **What to do?** Use different boards for different types of food. Wash them after each use in the dishwasher.

Source (Accessed 2/20/12): NSF International's [Top 10 Germiest Places in the Home](http://www.nsf.org/consumer/newsroom/pdf/fact_germs_top10_germiest_places.pdf), at www.nsf.org/consumer/newsroom/pdf/fact_germs_top10_germiest_places.pdf

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Shape Up Your Food Spending

Since this issue is all about shaping up, let's put a little extra bulge where you want it — in your wallet! Check out *Dining on a Dime's* thrifty tips for food savings below.

Costs of caffeine. You've probably heard it before, but it bears repeating. Even if you're not buying a \$4 daily mocha, there's money to be found in changing your pick-me-up ritual. Figure out how much you're spending on packaged energy drinks, coffees and sodas. Saving \$5 over the course of a week amounts to \$260 saved per year. By cutting out one daily can of regular soda, you would also save yourself from drinking 51,100 calories in one year — which is the equivalent of a little more than 14 pounds of body weight!



Carry out ... leftovers, that is. Are you in a habit of picking up breakfast, lunch, supper or snacks at restaurants, food shops or vending machines? You will substantially lower your food costs every week by brown bagging instead. The key is to plan for doing it. Cook at home, and make enough for the meals and snacks that you'll eat away from home the next day. Then gobble up the savings!

An envelope system. Another great way to save money on groceries is to use an envelope system. Set aside the cash that you plan to spend on food each week in an envelope. This system will help keep your money for food separate from your other household finances.

The food assistance program. People of all ages with low income and limited financial resources who qualify can get money to help buy food. To learn more, go to www.srs.ks.gov/agency/ees/Pages/ESServices.aspx or call 1-888-369-4777.

The costs of convenience. Sometimes the extra expense of convenience is justified for the amount of time it saves. But some items require a second look. Does it really save you much time to buy lettuce in a bag, rather than washing and tearing it yourself? Couldn't you make your own frozen meals for not much extra time at all, but for far less money — and more healthful, too — by making twice as much the next time you cook? These are just two examples of how convenience foods add up to increased food costs.

Beware of food coupons. Almost all food product coupons are for convenience items. If you wouldn't buy — or don't need — those products that you have a coupon for, then you're not actually saving money. Remember that the key to great food budgeting and savings is measuring what you spend, not what you save. Compare costs of foods with a coupon to generic or house brands.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local Extension office. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.



Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner

Versatile Muffins (Makes 6 servings)

Stir in grated veggies or chopped fruit (such as carrots, squash, bananas, apples or raisins) for great taste variety!

Ingredients

1/2 cup all-purpose flour	3 tablespoons sugar
1/2 cup whole wheat flour	3 tablespoons applesauce
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder	1/3 cup fat-free milk
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 raw egg

Directions

1. Wash your hands and work area. **2.** In a mixing bowl, mix flours, baking powder, cinnamon and sugar. Set aside. **3.** Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Spray a muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray. **4.** In a bowl, beat together applesauce, milk and egg. **5.** Pour wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Stir until just moistened. **6.** Stirring as little as possible, stir in 1/4 cup grated vegetables or chopped fruit, if desired. **7.** Fill each muffin cup 3/4 full. **8.** Bake for 15 to 18 minutes. **9.** Extra servings freeze well.

Nutrition Facts for 1 plain muffin: 120 calories, 1 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 24 g carbohydrate, 4 g protein, 30 mg cholesterol, 140 mg sodium and 2 g dietary fiber. Daily Values: 2% vitamin A, 0% vitamin C, 10% calcium, 6% iron



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