

Cooking for One

The most popular pastime during the holiday season is socializing and along with that goes eating. Now that everyone is back to their usual routines, some people, especially seniors will be eating by themselves once again. Few people like eating alone but it can have its advantages. You can take as long as you like, you cook what you like and there are never any arguments at the table. Here are some ways to make meals more fun if you are eating alone.

- Select a favorite piece of music to play while you eat. Music can also make the preparation time fly.
- Schedule your meals around a favorite television show, or radio program and let the performers keep you company. Or read a good book or magazine while you eat.
- Make your main meal (whether at noon or evening) an occasion. Dress up for it now and again, put flowers on the table and use your best linen or china. After all, who deserves it more than you?
- Eat by a window with a view and let the passing scene be your company.
- To tempt your appetite at breakfast, prepare a tray the night before – refrigerate a dish of fruit and set out an individual serving of cereal and a beverage ready to be heated up.
- Whenever possible, eat with a friend or relative. It need not be complicated. Suggest the friend prepare one dish and you, the other so that you actually cut down on the work involved. A group of you could start an informal potluck supper club which meets regularly.
- A little planning can make good food habits easy. Drawing up meal plans will make shopping easier, improve the quality of your meals and eliminate food wastage and leftovers.
- Referring to Canada's Food Guide, draw up a menu of what you would like to eat each day, Eating well is as simple as choosing a wide variety of foods from each of the Four Food Groups of Canada's Food Guide. Registered dietitians divide food into these groups because each group supplies different nutrients to the body.
- You do not have to have all Four Food Groups at every meal if you do not want to. And a 'meal' does not have to be a big production – nutritious snacks count too. The most important thing is that you enjoy the results. Include as wide a variety of tastes, colors, flavours and textures as your budget and imagination permit.
- Depending on your attitude, shopping can be a chore or a welcome outing. Being prepared when you shop will do a lot toward making it the latter. Shop when the stores are least crowded so you can take your time, get help if you need it and breeze through the checkout line. Share the shopping experience and large packages with a friend. Bring a magnifying glass if you need it, to compare brands and read labels. Shop for days when you might not want to or be able to go out.
- Having your main meal in the middle of the day gives you energy for an afternoon stroll or other activity. Combine it with a light breakfast and dinner, plus a snack.
- Buying some new kitchen items can often make meal preparation easier. For example, a lightweight plastic mixing bowl is much easier to work with than a heavier glass bowl. When family members ask what they can get for your birthday, you might suggest some new kitchen equipment. A small toaster oven will save on energy costs and can be used to toast, bake or grill – right at counter top level. A small casserole dish and loaf pan makes cooking easier for one or two people. High back kitchen stools you can sit on when preparing food will save your feet, your back and your energy. A non-stick fry pan makes frying easier and will cut down on the amount of fat you use in cooking.

Good food is one of life's great pleasures. The best reason for eating right is to feel healthy and have more energy to enjoy life. Good nutrition can add a little zest to your life!