

Messages from Mandi

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Fast Food with Slow Cookers

It's 5:30 pm. What's for dinner? Each day, millions of people are faced with this question. Without a plan, takeout meals and fast food starts to look pretty good. Although eating out occasionally is okay, eating out too often can put a bulge in our waistline and a dent in our wallet.

So, what's the solution for a time-restricted, nutrition-conscious, budget minded individual? Look no further than the slow cooker. "Slow cookers are great because they basically do the cooking while you are away," says Dr. Jenna Anding, Associate Professor and Nutrition Specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension Service. "It's almost like having your own personal chef."

In addition to preparing great tasting meals, a slow cooker can help save money. Compared to an oven a slow cooker uses less electricity. In addition, slow cookers don't heat up your house like an oven (an added bonus during those hot summer months). Finally, slow cookers are a great way to prepare inexpensive, lean cuts of meat. The moist heat generated by the slow cooker makes these cuts of meat more tender compared to other cooking methods.

"Another great feature of slow cookers is the ease of use," notes Anding. For the most part, all one has to do is place the ingredients in the slow cooker, plug it in, and turn it on. However if important food safety recommendations are ignored, food prepared in a slow cooker could cause a foodborne illness. To reduce the risk of foodborne illness, Anding recommends the following tips:

1. Start with a clean cooker, utensils and work area; wash your hands before and during food preparation;
2. Refrigerate perishable foods until preparation time. If you chop meat and vegetables in advance, store them separately in the refrigerator in covered containers;
3. Never place frozen meat or poultry in the slow cooker;
4. In the past, it was not recommended that large pieces of meat or a whole chicken be cooked in a slow cooker. However, recent research suggests that the newer models of slow cooker are safe for cooking large pieces of meat and poultry. Follow the instructions and recipes that came with your slow cooker. If you don't know the age of your slow cooker, be on the safe side and cut

the meat and poultry into smaller pieces and place them in the cooker with the right amount of liquid.

5. Fill the slow cooker between 1/2 and 2/3 full. Root vegetables cook slower than meat or poultry so place them on the bottom. Add the meat, and then fill the slow cooker almost to the top of the food with liquid (broth or sauce).

6. Don't peek! Each time the lid is removed, it can take 20 minutes to regain the lost heat. This increases the cooking time.

7. If you are not home during the **entire** slow-cooking process and the power goes out, throw out the food, even if it looks done!

8. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat and poultry dishes have reached a safe internal temperature.

9. Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours of cooking.

Friend to Friend: Staying Well Together

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Lamb County is proud to be a local sponsor of the Friend to Friend: Staying Well Together program. This program's purpose is to encourage women to get regular mammograms and Pap tests for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer, when the disease is most curable. For every woman 40 and over, a mammogram is a must! For most women, a Pap test is a must, too!

The Friend to Friend program makes it easy for you by providing up-to-date information on breast cancer and mammograms and on cervical cancer and Pap tests from a health professional. It answers your questions and concerns about mammograms and pap tests, and it helps you get these important screening free or for a low cost, if you meet eligibility requirements.

Please join us at the Friend to Friend party on June 9, 2011. A lite dinner will be served. Vendors will be present. Door prizes will be given. Great information will

be presented. Be looking for more information as the time draws near.

Contact Mandi Seaton, Lamb CEA-FCS, 385-4222 Ext. 235, for more information about this event.

Boost Your Bones

Recently the 2010 edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans was released. These guidelines are meant to provide information about healthy eating patterns for Americans. Along with several other key recommendations, the guidelines included recommendations related to milk and milk products. As many of you know, milk and milk products are rich in nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and potassium says Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent {insert name here}. Research suggests consumption of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents. In addition, some research suggests the consumption of milk and milk products is also associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and lower blood pressure in adults.

Despite the benefits of milk and milk products, consumption of these foods and beverages is lower than recommended amounts for most adults, children, and adolescents. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends the following amounts of milk and milk products:

- 3 cups per day of **fat-free** or **low-fat** milk and milk products for adults, children and adolescents ages 9 and up.
- 2 1/2 cups per day for children ages 4 to 8 and
- 2 cups per day for children ages 2 to 3.

It is especially important to establish the habit of drinking milk in young children, as those who consume milk at an early age are more likely to do so as adults. For people who are lactose-intolerant, low-lactose and lactose-free milk products are available.

Try some of these tips to boost your bones through calcium-rich milk and milk products:

- If you currently drink whole milk, gradually switch to lower fat versions. This change will cut calories, but will not reduce calcium or other essential nutrients.
- When drinking beverages, such as a cappuccino or latte, request fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Use fat-free or low-fat milk on cereal and oatmeal. Top fruit salads with fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- When recipes such as a dip call for sour cream, substitute plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- When selecting cheese, choose low-fat or reduced-fat versions.
- If you are lactose intolerant, try lactose-free milk, drink smaller amounts of milk at a time, or try calcium fortified soy beverages.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt more often than cheese. Milk and yogurt are better sources of potassium and are lower in sodium than most cheeses. Most milk is fortified with vitamin D and provides important nutrients for bone health.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service Issue Identification Process

An online issue Identification Forum is being held in Lamb County, to assist the Leadership Advisory Board in identifying the most critical issue affecting the citizens in Lamb County. The Lamb County Extension program has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in the county, related to Agriculture and Natural Resources, Families and Health, Youth Development and Community Development. In order to make sure that the programs being planned for in the future are on target, we invited your participation in the Online Issue Forum.

To participate, go to <http://extensionissues.tamu.edu>. The online

survey should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete, and will provide us with valuable insight into the issues facing citizens in Lamb County.

If you do not have a computer and would like to participate or would like a paper copy, please contact the Lamb County Extension Office at 806-385-4222 Ext. 235 for assistance.

The online forum is currently open, and will remain open for input until midnight on April 14, 2011.

Your opinion is highly valued in our community, so we truly hope you will take a few minutes to participate.

Enchilada Casserole

(Slow cooker recipe – Serves 6)

- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 TBSP. vegetable oil
- 2 lbs. lean ground beef
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning
- 1 c. condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 4-oz. can diced green chilies
- 12 corn tortillas, torn into 2-inch pieces
- 1 c. shredded Jack cheese
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 c. sour cream
- 1 c. salsa
- ¼ c. thinly sliced green onions (optional)
- ¼ c. sliced black olives (optional)

In a medium skillet, sauté onion and garlic in oil. Add ground beef and brown; drain excess fat. Add taco seasoning and mix thoroughly. In a bowl, combine soup with diced chilies. Spoon 3 TBSP. of the soup mixture into the bottom of the slow cooker. Create the next layer with 3 tortillas, ¼ c. soup mixture, ⅓ c. ground beef mixture, ½ c. of the shredded cheese (both mixed together). Keep layering until all ingredients are in the cooker.

Cover; cook on LOW for 6 – 8 hours or HIGH for 3-4 hours.

Mix together sour cream, salsa, and olives. Garnish casserole with this mixture; top with onions.

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Calendar of Events

April 5 *Do Well, Be Well with
Diabetes* class, 6:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church

April 15 *Pantry Pest* display United
Supermarkets, 9:00 a.m. –
4:00p.m., Littlefield

April 24 Easter

May 8 Mother's Day

May 9 *Get Moving, Get Fit* display,
United Supermarkets, 9:00
a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Littlefield

May 10 Diabetes Support Group,
6:00 p.m., First Presbyterian
Church

May 30 Memorial Day

June 3 *Sensational Snacking* display
United Supermarkets, 9:00
a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Littlefield

June 9 Friend to Friend: Staying
Well Together, 5:00 p.m.,
Littlefield

June 14 Diabetes Support Group,
6:00 p.m., First Presbyterian
Church

June 17 Relay for Life, Littlefield



Messages from Mandi is a publication of
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