

Small-scale dining can be economical if you plan ahead

Cooking for one or two usually means leftovers for the next few nights, or single-serving frozen dinners that could break a bank. But not all creative. Small-scale dining can be creative, satisfying and above all economical.

Most foods are packaged for four or more. While it is becoming easier to find smaller cans and boxes, the price per serving generally is higher. Thus, the small-quantity cook on a budget will come out ahead by buying the larger size and using the product in several different ways.

For maximum savings, nutrition and variety, plan a week's worth of menus around two or three supermarket specials. Two frequent specials — chicken and ground beef — are particularly good choices. They can be frozen in individual portions. They thaw quickly and can be paired with staple ingredients for quick, easy main dishes.

Take ground beef for example. It can be shaped into meatballs, patties or individual meat loaves or crumbled and used in casseroles, skillet dishes, even main-dish salads. When this versatile meat is on special, buy in quantity. At home, divide large packages into two-serving, half-pound portions. When wrapped in moisture-vaporproof wrap, ground beef can be frozen up to four months. And a half-pound package will thaw overnight in the refrigerator.

Treat the ground beef with staple ingredients. Versatile rolled oats, for example, aren't just for breakfast and cookie-making. When added to ground meat, oats contribute important vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber as well as moistness and tenderness. For individual meat loaves with a south-of-the-border flavor, use three other

- kitchen staples — catsup, instant minced onion and canned chilies — to flavor the meat mixture and create a spicy topping.
- MEXICALI MEAT LOAVES**
- 1 lb ground beef
 - 1/4 cup quick or old-fashioned uncooked oats
 - 1 egg
 - 1/4 cup catsup or tomato sauce
 - 2 tsp canned, chopped green chilies, drained
 - 2 tsp instant minced onion
 - 1/4 tsp chili powder
 - Dash of garlic powder
 - 1/4 cup (1 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese

Heat oven to 375°. Combine meat, oats, egg, 2 tsp catsup, 1 tsp green chilies, 1 tsp onion and chili powder; mix well. Shape to form two 4-x-2-inch loaves; place in 8-inch-square baking dish or 9-inch glass pie plate. Bake 20 to 25 minutes.

In small saucepan combine remaining catsup, green chilies, onion and garlic powder; cook over low heat 3 to 5 minutes or until hot. Spoon sauce over meat loaves, sprinkle with cheese and return to oven for 2 minutes, or until cheese is melted. 2 loaves.

Microwave directions: Microwave meat loaves at HIGH 5 to 6 minutes or until desired doneness, rotating 1/4 turn after each 2 minutes of cooking. In glass measuring cup combine remaining catsup, green chilies, onion and garlic powder; microwave at HIGH 1 minute. Spoon sauce over meat loaves; sprinkle with cheese. Microwave at HIGH 15 seconds, or until cheese is melted.

Serve Mexicali Meat Loaves with a favorite fresh or frozen vegetable and

warm corn bread. Corn bread uses ingredients you're apt to have on hand, takes minutes to prepare, and can be frozen in individual portions for quick reheating. Frozen vegetables packaged in resealable bags make it easy to remove one or two servings. And, if you ask, many supermarkets will split large packages of fresh produce.

Other kitchen staples which can be both time- and money-savers for the small-quantity cook include bouillon granules, bottled lemon juice, catsup and chili sauce, spice mixes and herb blends, quick barley, instant rice, grated parmesan cheese and small packages of pudding mix and fruit-flavored gelatin. (The latter can be divided in half easily to create dessert for two.) Keep bread in the freezer for quick croissants and crumbs. And shred firm cheeses such as Cheddar and Swiss for freezing in recipe-size portions.

While most main dishes and salads can be easily scaled down for two, cookies, cakes and other sweet treats can be tricky. For best results when dividing a recipe in half:

- Select a recipe with easily divisible quantities.
- When adding flavorings such as vanilla and cinnamon, do so gradually.
- Divide an egg in half by first breaking it into a custard cup. Beat egg lightly, with a fork before measuring.

One large egg yields about 3 table-spoons.

- Loaf pans, 8-inch layer-cake pans and 6-cup muffin pans work well for small recipes.
- To freeze baked products, cool completely, then wrap lightly in moisture-vaporproof wrap. Use within one month.

Favorite cookie recipes usually are a good choice for the small-quantity cook. Chocolate Raisin Chippers, a small-scale variation of the popular oatmeal cookie, yields just two-dozen cookies. Wholegrain oats give these treats a crunchy texture while raisins and semisweet chocolate pieces satisfy the sweetest sweet tooth. Best of all, you probably have the ingredients you'll need on hand.

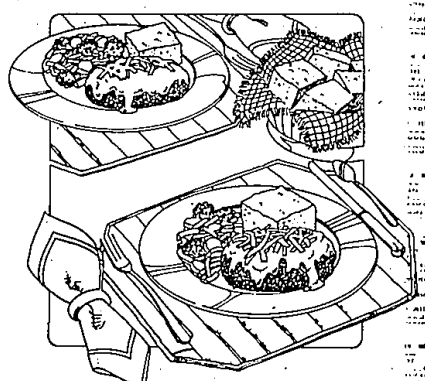
CHOCOLATE RAISIN CHIPPERS

- 1/4 cup margarine, softened
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp water
- 1/4 tsp vanilla
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt (optional)
- 1 1/4 cups quick or old-fashioned oats, uncooked
- 1/4 cup semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1/4 cup raisins

Heat oven to 350°. Beat together

margarine and sugars until light and fluffy. Blend in egg, water and vanilla. Add combined flour, soda and salt; mix well. Stir in oats, chocolate pieces and raisins. Drop dough by rounded table-

spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until lightly golden brown. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheet; remove to wire cooling rack. Store tightly covered. 2 dozen cookies.



Students use of salt alarming, study says

College students may be munching on too many pretzels with their beer, according to a new study that says collegians are consuming "alarmingly" high amounts of sodium.

The research, published in a recent issue of the Journal of The American Dietetic Association, shows that students, without even picking up the salt shaker, are either exceeding the amount of sodium they should consume, or hovering around the maximum recommended daily intake.

A scientific sample of 139 students at the University of Illinois,ampaign, shows that college students indulge in more than four times the daily recommendation, taking in 13,956 milligrams a day. Coeds in the sample consume up to 9,374 milligrams daily. More than 3,000 milligrams of sodium consumed daily is considered unsafe.

AVERAGES FOR the students were: 5,901 milligrams for men and 2,628 for

women. Those tallies, however, were computed solely on the amount of sodium found in the foods the students say they eat and do not include salt from a shaker, a factor that probably escalates the average sodium intake beyond excessively high amounts, says the study author Mahmood Kahn, a professor at the university.

Students participating in the study completed a 15-page questionnaire detailing the food they eat in an average 24-hour period. Snacks, such as pretzels, popcorn and potato chips contribute to much of the sodium intake, as did the highly salted foods consumed at lunch and dinner.

Because excessive sodium is associated with high blood pressure, students should work on preventive measures to avoid the risk of hypertension, Kahn warns, especially if there is a history of high blood pressure in a student's family.

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