

HOME SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

Table for one? Adjusting recipes for meals is easy

Eating alone? That's not unusual, many people do. Single people (young or old), men or women who work late or eat early to get to work; teenagers whose school activities keep them late at school; or young children who are too busy to eat with the rest of the family, are all reasons for eating alone.

A nice quiet meal alone may be a real pleasure for some people, but very lonely for others. Research shows that eating without the company of others may put people at risk of consuming a poor diet.

If you prepare meals for a large family, it takes planning. The same is true when cooking for one person. Plan quick, easy nutritious meals for yourself. There are many cookbooks on the market with recipes for one, two or three servings. If you do not want to adjust one of your own recipes.

Dining alone

Most recipes are planned to serve four to six people. Many recipes can be reduced to one-half to one-third to serve two people, but it is more advantageous to cut the recipe in half rather than thirds. Remember, the cooking time may need to be adjusted because of the smaller quantity.

When you divide a recipe, translate the amounts into equivalent measures. For example, one-third cup can be divided easily if you know that it equals five tablespoons plus one teaspoon or 16 teaspoons; half of this would be two tablespoons plus two teaspoons or eight teaspoons.

When you figure these equivalents, rewrite the recipe or make notes in the margins for future reference. Most cookbooks contain a page of equivalents, so the measurements are easy to figure.

Egg-sra portion

One problem in division is how you halve an egg. You can either use a very small egg or break a large egg into a cup, beat slightly, then divide in half for your recipe. Cover the remainder and store in refrigerator for another dish. Depending on the size of the egg, one egg usually yields about four tablespoons. A little more than called for in the recipe will not generally do harm to the dish.

Buy carefully to avoid waste, save storage space and make small-scale cooking and serving easy. As a quick-buying guide for meat and poultry with lots of bones, you should figure one pound equals two servings. One pound of fish fillets or meat with a little bone makes three servings. One pound of boneless meat will make four servings. Instead of a large beef roast, buy a thick steak, roll and tie for roasting.

Make it fresh

When you buy fresh cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, cut off or separate enough for one meal, cover and refrigerate the remainder to cook within a day or two. Larger size bags of frozen vegetables are excellent for one or more persons, pour out enough for one meal and return the rest to the freezer.

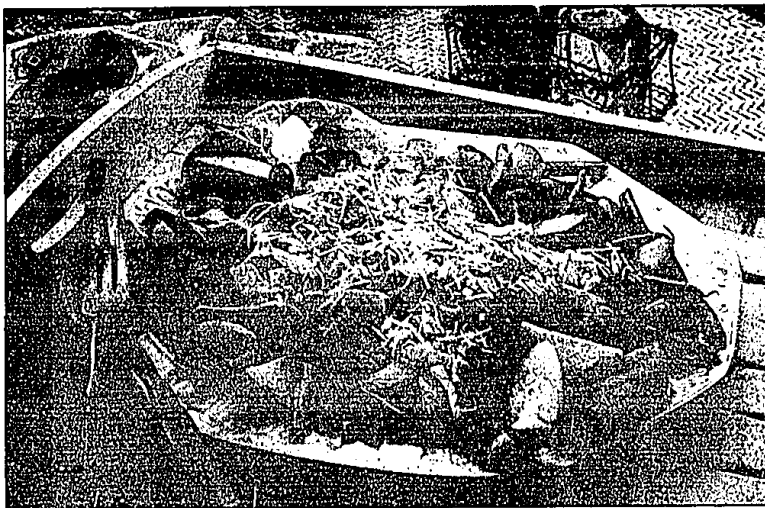
Leftovers can be a problem when cooking for one. Many recipes can be made in full amounts and leftovers reheated for several days. Freeze leftover meat and casseroles in individual containers for convenient cooking later. Stir a few tablespoons of sour cream into heated leftover gravy to give it new zest or use a dash of curry.

Please see HOME SENSE, D2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- A special Mother's Day
- Focus on Wine



IT'S SPRING ~

Let's party!

By Ken Abramczyk • Staff Writer

The sun shines. The tulips are bursting with yellow and pink. People walk with a little more kick in their steps. Of course, the sun stays out longer and taking the dog out is easier because you don't need that winter overcoat.

Spring has arrived. With it, so have spring parties.

You may have just celebrated Easter or Passover, but you soon face a barrage of spring activities — Mother's Day brunches, baby or wedding showers, weddings, graduations — or just plain old get-togethers with family and friends to snuff winter out for a few months.

Good riddance, too, because spring's arrival brings an entourage of spring produce from asparagus to radishes, artichokes to peas.

The weather has turned, people have more energy and they are ready to taste fruits and vegetables," said Gail Posner, dietitian with Healthy Ways Nutrition Counseling of West Bloomfield. "Strawberries will be arriving soon, and the tomatoes start to taste better again."

Toula Patsalis, co-owner of Kitchen Glamour stores, said spring gatherings generally are a more casual than the Christmas or Thanksgiving holidays.

"We want to entertain, but we want to do it healthfully," Patsalis said.

Spring gatherings not only bring the traditional baby and wedding showers or graduations, but people also entertain with friends and relatives who they haven't seen in several months.

"People are more apt to have people over," said Angie Bournais, spokeswoman for Farmer Jack supermarkets.

"They want to entertain for events or even to have people over to watch a championship game on TV."

Eat your veggies

When you are preparing to entertain this spring, have a game plan. Posner recommends including healthy foods for your parties.

"Be sure to serve some fresh vegetables for people to fill up on," Posner said. "You can dress up rice and pasta by adding chopped broccoli, mushrooms or tomatoes to it."

Posner starts distributing her gazpacho recipe at this time of year because it is fat-free and made without oil.

Patsalis said party hosts who want to spend more time with guests should prepare favorite recipes that only need to be re-warmed.

"You should never do anything new," Patsalis said. "Test it first. You want to make sure if you reheat it, that the flavors still are appealing and it isn't a dried-up piece of meat."

If you are serving in chafing dishes and a buffet, it is important to keep the foods the right temperatures — canned soups such as Storno should remain lit under the chafing dishes, while cold salads should remain iced, Patsalis said.

Patsalis likes to prepare casserole dishes and salads for parties. For example, she prepared baklava weeks ago that she pulled out of the freezer for a recent gathering.

Hosts should not forget fruits on their menus. Soon new items will fill store shelves, including apricots, plums and nectarines — a break from the usual apples we've seen the past several months.

"Now that we've had a global economy, we have produce year-round, and

now we're just starting to see American produce instead of the imported," Posner said.

An important aspect of the parties is that consumers can buy food that is ready to serve, Bournais said. "It's something consumers love. They can buy a platter of vegetables and dips, platters of cheese and lunch meat, shrimp or chicken and ribs. It's wonderful."

Those trays can be bought at local supermarkets.

Don't go hungry

Whether you attend or throw a spring party (or, for that matter, at any other time of year), you should not attend the party hungry. "Eat a lunch," Posner advises as a pre-party instruction. "Often appetizers have a lot of fat in them," Posner said. "You should have a low-fat option. Shrimp is good, because it is so low in calories. You should look out for high fat. Beware of the candy dishes and the nut dishes."

Also alternate between non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks, starting with the non-alcoholic beverage such as Perrier or soda before imbibing.

"Alcohol for some people acts as a trigger for people who eat," Posner said.

For Luciano DelSignore, owner of Fonte d'Amore restaurant and Laurel Manor Banquet and Conference Center in Livonia, springtime represents a great time of year for parties, whether it is a baby or wedding shower or graduation.

"It's just the weather at this time of year," he said. "The flowers are blooming, it's getting warmer and people want to get out."

"People are happy."

See recipes inside Taste.



AN OCCASION TO CELEBRATE

Following is a list of days you may wish to celebrate with suggested dishes:

National Teachers Day

May 2

Invite your children's favorite teachers to the house for a simple, but memorable, family meal. Keep things easy with an entree, dessert and side dishes that can be prepared in advance.

Cinco de Mayo

May 5

Roll out a do-it-yourself buffet featuring a taco bar, fajitas or "invent your own" wraps. Set out dishes with "all the fixin's" — namely shredded cheeses, shredded lettuce, chopped green and red peppers, fresh jalapenos, guacamole and refried beans.

Mother's Day

May 14

Pull out all the stops for Mom. An early-afternoon brunch covers you for lunch and dinner; and a lavish early evening dessert buffet makes a stunning grand finale.

Armed Forces Day

May 20

Do you know a veteran or any armed services personnel? Invite them over for a home-cooked meal to express your appreciation for their dedication.

Baby shower

Host a dessert buffet, a break from the traditional brunch or luncheon. It will leave you with time to enjoy the guests and everyone will enjoy the sweet treats.

Wedding shower

Couples showers are gaining in popularity. A few make-ahead salads and/or side dishes are the perfect accompaniment to a hearty casserole.

Graduation

Nothing feeds a crowd like a roast, whether it's a ham or popular beef roast. Serve as a centerpiece to a buffet with fresh bread, cheeses and condiments.

First Communion/Baptism

Pasta is a perfect party food. Celebrate with lasagna or pasta casserole and a savory Caesar or choppa.

Source: Bergamo Foods Inc.



Warming up: (Top photo)

Spring traditionally features many family gatherings that you can serve signature salads, such as Salad Nicoise, Monterey Jack and cheddar cheeses are combined with red potatoes, green beans, hard-cooked eggs, Boston or leaf lettuce, canned white albacore tuna and nicoise olives. (Photo above) If you have a brunch scheduled for Mother's Day, you can create a Cheddar Breakfast Strata for your family or guests.

Grapes are glorious in this cookbook

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK
STAFF WRITER
k.abramczyk@oe.homedomain.net

You probably know the United States exported the most fruit in the world. During the winter months, many American markets import from Chile. As a result, fruit fills the shelves constantly at local supermarkets.

But the country that was the center of a product boycott by the United

States in the late 1980s and early 1990s for its apartheid government — South Africa — has now expanded its fruit products into American supermarkets.

Since South Africans ended apartheid, South African fruit burst onto the American marketplace just like its grapes ripening on a vine.

The nation's location in the southern hemisphere lends South African produce well to the change in seasons here. While

we wait for the last frost in May before planting vegetables in our gardens and hope for rain so crops will be plentiful for local farmers, South African farmers and growers are reaping crops there.

That timing assists CAPE, the largest fruit grower in South Africa, with selling grapes, pears and apples to American supermarkets like Farmer Jack and Mel-

Please see GRAPES, D2