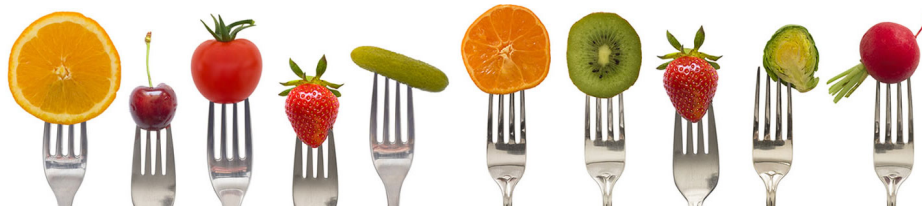# The Case for Cooking

COOKING TO SAVE TIME, MONEY AND IMPROVE HEALTH
By Chandler Norris, RDN, LDN

The TRUTH About Eating In

Our food environment leads us to believe that eating out is faster and cheaper. However, the reality is that eating at home can result in huge savings of both time and money. Cooking and eating at home may take some time to adjust to, but once you learn the tricks, you can be well on your way to a healthier and less costly lifestyle. Learning to cook can be an enjoyable and fruitful experience that people never regret. Cooking healthy meals does not have to be difficult or time-consuming. Cooking at home can be a great opportunity to spend quality time with family and teach children life skills to improve their overall health.

Cooking Tips to Save Time

Cooking can be a time saver! Even though fast food may seem convenient, it still requires additional driving, waiting in long lines at the restaurant and even more time in traffic.

- Cook in large batches. On one or two days a week prepare a large batch of food, place individual portions in containers, and eat them throughout the week.
- If you are a beginner at cooking, keep it simple at first. Try recipes with short preparation and cooking times.
- Follow the link to try an ***easy turkey chili recipe.*** This recipe is a great starting place and perfect for preparing in batches to enjoy throughout the week.
- Don't give up! The more that you cook at home the easier it gets and the more time you will save.
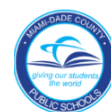
Cooking to Save Money

Cooking and eating at home is one of the best ways to save money. Eating out, even from the value menu, can be more expensive. You not only pay for the food, but you also pay for the packaging, service items and staff who prepare the food. Convenience costs money. Ultimately, grocery shopping and cooking your meals, if done correctly, is most cost effective. Some helpful tips when grocery shopping include:

- ❑ Compare prices between similar products.
- ❑ Buy in bulk when non-perishable items are on sale.
- ❑ Get a loyalty card and look for discounts/coupons.
- ❑ If the fresh produce is too expensive, frozen and canned items are also a good choice.
- ❑ To save money, add these nutritious, low-cost foods to your shopping list:
    - ❑ whole grain pasta & bread, brown rice, dried beans & lentils, eggs, canned salmon & tuna, low-fat milk, cheese & yogurt, grapes, apples, bananas, kale, sweet & regular potatoes.
    - ❑ Follow the link for an ***easy-to-make tuna salad sandwich recipe!***
- ❑ Do not let food spoil! Make shopping lists so that you know what you need and what you do not.

Cooking to Improve Your Health

Yet another benefit of cooking and eating at home is improved health. By cooking at home, you are able to control what you put in your food and therefore control its nutritional value. Restaurants, especially fast food restaurants, are rarely concerned with their customer's health. Many of their foods are loaded with fat, sugar, and salt, and are often low in overall nutritional value. Below are some tips for improving your health by cooking at home.

- ❑ Increase your meal's nutritional value by including fruits and vegetable in your dish.
- ❑ Choose whole grain products such as brown rice, whole wheat bread and pasta.
- ❑ Avoid flavoring your recipes with too much fat, sugar and salt. Instead, try using herbs and spices. These seasoning add flavor without all the added calories.
- ❑ Lastly, limit your consumption of sugary drinks such as sports drinks, soda, fruit-flavored beverages, sweet tea, lemonade etc. These drinks contain many hidden calories and have low nutritional value. Water is always your best option!

Department of Food and Nutrition
Eating Healthy Every Day!