

News Column – Donna Krug, Family & Consumer Science Agent and District Director, Cottonwood Extension District.

“Dining In” For Healthy Families

Tuesday, December 3rd, is a special day designated as “Dining In Day.” Research has shown that the whole family benefits from family mealtime by having better nutrition, improving family communication, fostering family traditions, and teaching life skills, such as meal planning, budgeting, and food preparation. Encouraging families to prepare simple, healthy meals and eat together supports the essence of my job as a family and consumer sciences educator: “Creating Healthy and Sustainable Families” is my goal.

I know how challenging it can be for busy families to actually sit down together for a meal that is prepared at home. Work schedules and kids who need to be shuttled to sports or activities interrupt plans to prepare a healthy meal at home. When our three kids were growing up, my middle child, Adam, would call me every day when he arrived home from school and ask what was for supper. As a 6th grader, I believe he prepared as many skillet meals and spaghetti and meatballs as I did. And to his credit, he often prepares the evening meal for his busy family now.

Revisiting a popular program from a couple of years ago titled, “Freezer Ready Slow Cooker Meals” can be a great way to make “Dining In Day” a success at your house. Twelve recipes, complete with a shopping list, takes a lot of the guess work out of meal preparation. Pulling one of the prepared meals out of the freezer in the evening and thawing in the fridge, makes this an easy prep. Cooking the ingredients in a slow cooker while you are at work the next day, means supper is ready when you walk in the door! I’ll be happy to share the Freezer-Ready Slow Cooker meals recipes and handout. Just give me a call or send me an e-mail.

With my busy work schedule, I am blessed to have my husband John plan and prepare most of our evening meals. I’m not sure what is on our menu for December 3rd, but I’m betting we will be “Dining In.” I would love to hear your “Dining In” stories!

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