

The Efficient Cook



Return to the possibilities & pleasures of home cooking

Leader Guide

Lesson Objectives

- Plan meals that conserve time, money and personal energy while enhancing health
- Identify resources for planning meals
- List methods and tools that improve cooking efficiency
- Identify which foods freeze well

Materials for Participants

- Freezing Convenience Foods, PNW 296 (this is available online or at most Extension Offices; copy a few to show as reference)
- Participant handout
- Optional: What's for Dinner – Your Weekly Meal Planner (if desired, this can be laminated; add sticky magnet on back and erasable marker to have a complete meal planning tool)
- Optional: Sample Meals handout
- Optional: MyPlate handout

Before the Lesson

- Copy handouts, evaluation and consent
- Decide which activities to include based on time and interest of attendees
- If possible ask participants to bring their favorite kitchen tool

Note: Words in *italics* give directions to the leader.

Introduction

In the 60's most women knew what they'd be cooking each night of the week. Nowadays cooking is optional. If we do cook, we don't spend much time. For a woman working full time, 38-46 minutes is spent preparing food each day. With our busy lifestyles some of us may find this liberating, others are concerned that cooking will go the way of sewing, balancing a check book or other frugal household skills. Why not use modern kitchen conveniences and revive

meal planning practices of years past towards being an efficient cook? An efficient cook saves time and money while conserving personal energy. Such efficiency can bring us back to the kitchen table where delicious food is seasoned with shared conversation and laughter.

Review lesson objectives.

Discussion: *There are predictions that home cooking will be replaced by prepared foods we pick up at the grocery store or restaurant. Ask participants to consider what might be lost if this happens. Keep **the discussion short then highlight a few possible responses below** or read this list.*

- *Loss of cooking skills passed from one generation to the next.*
- *Lack of a sense of self-sufficiency and self-esteem that comes from caring for oneself or family.*
- *Loss of appreciation for where food comes from and how we are inextricably linked to the soil.*
- *Loss of family meals and the corresponding benefits including improved nutrition and better communication that is associated with regular family meals.*
- *Increased food expenses.*
- *Less control of ingredients and food preparation methods.*
- *Potential increase in risk for obesity and other chronic diseases as result of more calories and larger portions along with low nutrient content.*

How Efficient Are You?

You won't find most of us growing our own wheat, harvesting and crushing the grain before we make bread. But if we value the benefits of home cooked foods, we can use labor saving devices and well established meal planning methods to make the cooking experience more efficient. Let's look at a few ways you use to increase efficiency and other practices you might add to make you even more efficient as a cook.

Activity: Efficient Cook Skills Inventory. *Ask participants to assess their skills using the inventory in the participant handout. Encourage them to add their own ideas on how to be an efficient cook. When everyone is done, ask a few people to volunteer examples of something they already do, will try to do or don't plan to do. Discuss new ideas that were added by participants.*

Planning is the Key to Efficiency

As you can see from this activity, planning is the key to being an efficient cook. You may have heard the saying, “those that fail to plan, plan to fail” or as it applies to cooking—those that fail to plan end up in the drive-thru! The good news is there are many styles of planning. Planning can be as simple as writing a list of items needed for your main meals as you sit in the grocery store parking lot. For others, it can mean creating meal planning cards and corresponding shopping lists that rotate each week.

It doesn't matter where you start, just start somewhere. Pick a planning style that fits you. Maybe you like to cook all your meals on the weekend, freeze and use throughout the week. Or you may keep a well-stocked pantry that provides enough for 5-6 meals. Your planning style has likely changed over the years as well as your cooking style. Try new recipes but don't get carried away by the glamour of cooking shows. By preparing recipes you know well, you can streamline shopping and cooking and cut down on trips to the store. Your menu should reflect you and your lifestyle.

Refer participants to the Basic Foods for Fridge, Freezer & Cupboard in the participant handout.

The Most Efficient Cooking Appliances are the Ones You Use

An efficient cook uses planning methods along with modern kitchen appliances to save money, time, stress and personal energy. Not surprisingly, what one person can't live without, the next considers useless. For example, who can live without their food processor, or what about a pressure cooker?

Discussion: *Ask participants to share what they consider an essential kitchen appliance/equipment and why. This is where they can “show and tell” if they brought a favorite cooking tool. You should have a few examples yourself which represent equipment that has multiple purposes such as kitchen shears that can be used to cut up fresh herbs, dice dried fruit or skin a chicken or a slow cooker that can be used to heat sauces and beverages, cook apple butter or a full meal.*

Just like menu planning, kitchen gadgets reflect our interests and preferences. One thing most of us would agree on—cooking equipment is only beneficial when we actually use it. How many times have you searched for that special gadget in your kitchen cupboards to no avail? Choose tools that serve more than one purpose and make sure they're accessible when you need them. Louis Parish is quoted as saying, “If you can organize your kitchen, you can organize your life.”

Utilize your Freezer

One of the most useful kitchen appliances is the freezer. It can help you save money if you freeze fresh items that otherwise might spoil. It can save you time and personal energy if you prepare meals in advance and freeze for use later. A well-stocked freezer can reduce stress when you run out of time to prepare a meal or when unexpected guests arrive on your doorstep.

To be successful in utilizing your freezer, it's important to start with quality ingredients. Freezing maintains quality but does not improve it. Some food items are ideal for freezing others are not.

Activity: Refer participants to “Freeze Your Assets” in the participant handout. Tell them to circle the items they think will freeze well. Review answers using the information below to guide your discussion. Refer participants to “Freezing Convenience Foods” for more information on how to cook, cool, freeze, store and thaw food items. Let them know this publication is available online. (See Resources for web address.)

- *Block of Cheese—crumbles after freezing; consider shredding before freezing*
- *Pancakes—cooked pancakes freeze well; undercook slightly, freeze individually on cookie sheet then place in labeled freezer bag. To serve, reheat frozen pancakes in toaster.*
- *Unbaked Bread—yeast dough can be frozen if using a recipe designed for this purpose*
- *Milk Sauces & Gravies—may curdle or separate*
- *Stuffed Potatoes—after stuffing potatoes freeze on cookie sheet then transfer to freezer container*
- *Unbaked Meatloaf—can be frozen baked or unbaked; avoid bacon*
- *Whole eggs, Raw—break & stir until mixed but not whipped, add salt or sugar to prevent graininess; yolks and whites can also be frozen separately*
- *Baked Beans—prepare as usual with minimum of bacon or ham*
- *Ham—ham & other cured meats lose color and become rancid quickly; freeze for short periods*
- *Macaroni Salad—mayonnaise based foods do not freeze well*
- *Raw Apples—raw apples become soft/mushy; best to cook as applesauce or pie filling, then freeze*
- *Highly Seasoned Dishes—may get stronger or bitter; season lightly if freezing, add more after thawed*
- *Plain Pasta or Rice—best in casserole; may be soft when frozen alone*
- *Unbaked Pies—pies can be frozen unbaked or baked; if unbaked, add extra flour and don't cut vents until ready to bake*

Conclusion:

With some planning you can be an efficient cook. Even simple tools such as a grocery list or written meal plan can help you save money, time and personal energy. Optimizing the use of your kitchen equipment, especially the freezer is a good investment as well. Consider returning to the kitchen and to family meals and inspire others to do the same. Just as Julia Child inspired those in the 60's to have confidence in the kitchen. "Food is very friendly. Just looking at a potato, I like to pat it. There's something so pleasant about a big baking potato or a whole bunch of peas in their shells...to me, the kitchen has never stopped being a place just full of possibilities and pleasures," Julia Child told Times magazine in 2002.

Evaluation: *Please take time to evaluate the program by reading the consent form and filling out the evaluation survey. Give participants 5 minutes or so to complete the evaluation. Collect the evaluations and return them to your local county Extension Office.*

Optional or Add-On Activities

Mealtime Scenarios: Review scenarios and discuss possible solutions in small groups.

- My family and I all arrive home about the same time after work, extracurricular activities. It's late and everyone is starved. They get cranky (so do I) if they have to wait very long to eat. Or spoil their appetites by snacking.
- My family has different schedules, everyone arrives at different times. We all fend for ourselves and mostly eat in our rooms or watching TV or doing homework. I know this isn't healthy but how can I change it?
- I used to cook for the family but now I live alone and there is no joy in cooking for just myself. I feel very alone when eating meals by myself. It's just easier to eat cereal or have a frozen dinner.

Cooking Activity: Prepare a one pan skillet meal or quick-to-fix recipe to demonstrate cooking efficiently. You might also have participants bring meal items that freeze well and share during potluck. For recipe ideas: www.foodhero.org or local library.

Plating Up MyPlate: Provide participants with "What's For Dinner—Weekly Meal Planner." These can be laminated and magnet tape placed on back. If possible provide participants with erasable markers. Instruct participants to plan several days of main meals. Choose several examples from participants and compare to MyPlate, www.choosemyplate.gov. Explain that MyPlate is a visual reminder of what a healthy meal consists of and in what proportions. Do you

have ½ plate of fruits and vegetables, a small portion of protein foods, whole grains and dairy in your sample meal? What could you do to improve your meal plan? Distribute USDA's 7-Day Menu as an example of a healthy meal plan that is reasonable in cost.

Sources:

Iowa State University. Spend Smart, Eat Smart. Lots of tips and recipes on meal preparation and shipping. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/>

Bowers, D (2000). Cooking trends echo changing roles of women. FoodReview. 23(1): 23-29. Available online at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/foodreview/jan2000/frjan2000d.pdf>

Ludwig, D (2011). Technology, diet and the burden of chronic disease. American Medical Association. 305(13): 1352-1353.

USDA (2007). Who has time to cook? How family resources influence food preparation. Economic Research Report No. 40. Available online at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR40/>

Resources:

Downloadable lists/grocery lists available at <http://organizedhome.com/printable/household-notebook>

Food storage for safety and quality by Kendall, P. and Dimond, N. Colorado State University Extension. Available online at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09310.html>

Freezing Convenience Foods PNW 296 reprinted 2009, available at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/pnw/pnw296.pdf>

Frozen Assets by Deborah Taylor-Hough (2009)

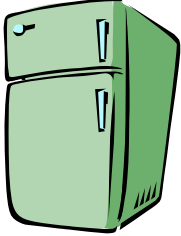






Frozen Assets Lite and Easy by Deborah Taylor-Hough (2009)

Fix It and Forget It Cookbook by Phyllis Pellman Good (2010)

Recipes ideas available at www.foodhero.org

What's For Dinner?

Your Weekly Planner

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
 Leftovers	 Pasta	 Kid's Choice	 Quick	 Take Out	 Casserole	 Slow Cook



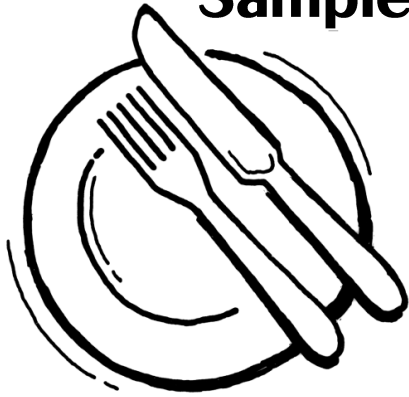
Planning meals helps your family eat healthier, saves time and money!

Oregon State University Extension Service



Blank Page

Sample Menus for a 2000 Calorie Food Pattern



Use this 7-day menu as a motivational tool to help put a healthy eating pattern into practice, and to identify creative new ideas for healthy meals. Averaged over a week, this menu provides the recommended amounts of key nutrients and foods from each food group. The menus feature a large number of different foods to inspire ideas for adding variety to food choices. They are not intended to be followed day-by-day as a specific prescription for what to eat.

Spices and herbs can be used to taste. Try spices such as chili powder, cinnamon, cumin, curry powder, ginger, nutmeg, mustard, garlic powder, onion powder, or pepper. Try fresh or dried herbs such as basil, parsley, cilantro, chives, dill, mint, oregano, rosemary, thyme, or tarragon. Also try salt-free spice or herb blends.

While this 7-day menu provides the recommended amounts of foods and key nutrients, it does so at a moderate cost. Based on national average food costs, adjusted for inflation to March 2011 prices, the cost of this menu is less than the average amount spent for food, per person, in a 4-person family.

DAY 1

BREAKFAST

Creamy oatmeal (cooked in milk):
 ½ cup uncooked oatmeal
 1 cup fat-free milk
 2 Tbsp raisins
 2 tsp brown sugar
 Beverage: 1 cup orange juice

LUNCH

Taco salad:
 2 ounces tortilla chips
 2 ounces cooked ground turkey
 2 tsp corn/canola oil (to cook turkey)
 ¼ cup kidney beans*
 ½ ounce low-fat cheddar cheese
 ½ cup chopped lettuce
 ½ cup avocado
 1 tsp lime juice (on avocado)
 2 Tbsp salsa
 Beverage:
 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**

DINNER

Spinach lasagna roll-ups:
 1 cup lasagna noodles(2 oz dry)
 ½ cup cooked spinach
 ½ cup ricotta cheese
 1 ounce part-skim mozzarella cheese
 ½ cup tomato sauce*
 1 ounce whole wheat roll
 1 tsp tub margarine
 Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk

SNACKS

2 Tbsp raisins
 1 ounce unsalted almonds

DAY 2

BREAKFAST

Breakfast burrito:
 1 flour tortilla (8" diameter)
 1 scrambled egg
 ⅓ cup black beans*
 2 Tbsp salsa
 ½ large grapefruit
 Beverage:
 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**

LUNCH

Roast beef sandwich:
 1 small whole grain hoagie bun
 2 ounces lean roast beef
 1 slice part-skim mozzarella cheese
 2 slices tomato
 ¼ cup mushrooms
 1 tsp corn/canola oil (to cook mushrooms)
 1 tsp mustard
 Baked potato wedges:
 1 cup potato wedges
 1 tsp corn/canola oil (to cook potato)
 1 Tbsp ketchup
 Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk

DINNER

Baked salmon on beet greens:
 4 ounce salmon filet
 1 tsp olive oil
 2 tsp lemon juice
 ⅓ cup cooked beet greens
 (sauteed in 2 tsp corn/canola oil)
 Quinoa with almonds:
 ½ cup quinoa
 ½ ounce slivered almonds
 Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk

SNACKS

1 cup cantaloupe balls

DAY 3

BREAKFAST

Cold cereal:
 1 cup ready-to-eat oat cereal
 1 medium banana
 ½ cup fat-free milk
 1 slice whole wheat toast
 1 tsp tub margarine
 Beverage: 1 cup prune juice

LUNCH

Tuna salad sandwich:
 2 slices rye bread
 2 ounces tuna
 1 Tbsp mayonnaise
 1 Tbsp chopped celery
 ½ cup shredded lettuce
 1 medium peach
 Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk

DINNER

Roasted chicken:
 3 ounces cooked chicken breast
 1 large sweet potato, roasted
 ½ cup succotash (limas & corn)
 1 tsp tub margarine
 1 ounce whole wheat roll
 1 tsp tub margarine
 Beverage:
 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**

SNACKS

¼ cup dried apricots
 1 cup flavored yogurt (chocolate)

Sample Menus for a 2000 Calorie Food Pattern (cont'd)

DAY 4
<p>BREAKFAST</p> <p>1 whole wheat English muffin <i>1 Tbsp all-fruit preserves</i> 1 hard-cooked egg Beverage: 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**</p> <p>LUNCH</p> <p>White bean-vegetable soup: <i>1 ¼ cup chunky vegetable soup with pasta</i> <i>½ cup white beans*</i> 6 saltine crackers* ½ cup celery sticks Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk</p> <p>DINNER</p> <p>Rigatoni with meat sauce: <i>1 cup rigatoni pasta (2 oz dry)</i> <i>2 ounces cooked ground beef (95% lean)</i> <i>2 tsp corn/canola oil (to cook beef)</i> <i>½ cup tomato sauce*</i> <i>3 Tbsp grated parmesan cheese</i> Spinach salad: <i>1 cup raw spinach leaves</i> <i>½ cup tangerine sections</i> <i>½ ounce chopped walnuts</i> <i>4 tsp oil and vinegar dressing</i> Beverage: 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**</p> <p>SNACKS</p> <p>1 cup nonfat fruit yogurt</p>

DAY 5
<p>BREAKFAST</p> <p>Cold cereal: <i>1 cup shredded wheat</i> <i>½ cup sliced banana</i> <i>½ cup fat-free milk</i> 1 slice whole wheat toast <i>2 tsp all-fruit preserves</i> Beverage: 1 cup fat-free chocolate milk</p> <p>LUNCH</p> <p>Turkey sandwich <i>1 whole wheat pita bread (2 oz)</i> <i>3 ounces roasted turkey, sliced</i> <i>2 slices tomato</i> <i>¼ cup shredded lettuce</i> <i>1 tsp mustard</i> <i>1 Tbsp mayonnaise</i> <i>½ cup grapes</i> Beverage: 1 cup tomato juice*</p> <p>DINNER</p> <p>Steak and potatoes: <i>4 ounces broiled beef steak</i> <i>¾ cup mashed potatoes made with milk and 2 tsp tub margarine</i> <i>½ cup cooked green beans</i> <i>1 tsp tub margarine</i> <i>1 tsp honey</i> 1 ounce whole wheat roll <i>1 tsp tub margarine</i> Frozen yogurt and berries: <i>½ cup frozen yogurt (chocolate)</i> <i>¼ cup sliced strawberries</i> Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk</p> <p>SNACKS</p> <p>1 cup frozen yogurt (chocolate)</p>

DAY 6
<p>BREAKFAST</p> <p>French toast: <i>2 slices whole wheat bread</i> <i>3 Tbsp fat-free milk and ⅔ egg (in French toast)</i> <i>2 tsp tub margarine</i> <i>1 Tbsp pancake syrup</i> ½ large grapefruit Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk</p> <p>LUNCH</p> <p>3-bean vegetarian chili on baked potato: <i>¼ cup each cooked kidney beans,* navy beans,* and black beans*</i> <i>½ cup tomato sauce*</i> <i>¼ cup chopped onion</i> <i>2 Tbsp chopped jalapeno peppers</i> <i>1 tsp corn/canola oil (to cook onion and peppers)</i> <i>¼ cup cheese sauce</i> <i>1 large baked potato</i> ½ cup cantaloupe Beverage: 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**</p> <p>DINNER</p> <p>Hawaiian pizza <i>2 slices cheese pizza, thin crust</i> <i>1 ounce lean ham</i> <i>¼ cup pineapple</i> <i>¼ cup mushrooms</i> <i>1 tsp safflower oil (to cook mushrooms)</i> Green salad: <i>1 cup mixed salad greens</i> <i>4 tsp oil and vinegar dressing</i> Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk</p> <p>SNACKS</p> <p>3 Tbsp hummus 5 whole wheat crackers*</p>

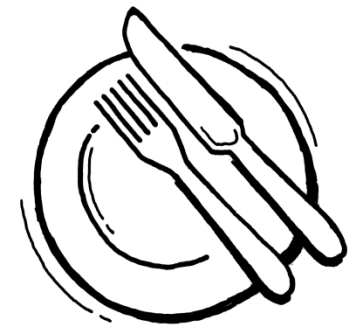
DAY 7
<p>BREAKFAST</p> <p>Buckwheat pancakes with berries: <i>2 large (7") pancakes</i> <i>1 Tbsp pancake syrup</i> <i>¼ cup sliced strawberries</i> Beverage: 1 cup orange juice</p> <p>LUNCH</p> <p>New England clam chowder: <i>3 ounces canned clams</i> <i>½ small potato</i> <i>2 Tbsp chopped onion</i> <i>2 Tbsp chopped celery</i> <i>6 Tbsp evaporated milk</i> <i>¼ cup fat-free milk</i> <i>1 slice bacon</i> <i>1 Tbsp white flour</i> 10 whole wheat crackers* 1 medium orange Beverage: 1 cup fat-free milk</p> <p>DINNER</p> <p>Tofu-vegetable stir-fry: <i>4 ounces firm tofu</i> <i>½ cup chopped Chinese cabbage</i> <i>¼ cup sliced bamboo shoots</i> <i>2 Tbsp chopped sweet red peppers</i> <i>2 Tbsp chopped green peppers</i> <i>1 Tbsp corn/canola oil (to cook stir-fry)</i> 1 cup cooked brown rice (2 ounces raw) Honeydew yogurt cup: <i>¾ cup honeydew melon</i> <i>½ cup plain fat-free yogurt</i> Beverage: 1 cup water, coffee, or tea**</p> <p>SNACKS</p> <p>1 large banana spread with <i>2 Tbsp peanut butter*</i> 1 cup nonfat fruit yogurt</p>

Notes:

*Foods that are reduced sodium, low sodium, or no-salt added products. These foods can also be prepared from scratch with no added salt. All other foods are regular commercial products, which contain variable levels of sodium. Average sodium level of the 7-day menu assumes that no salt is added in cooking or at the table.

**Unless indicated, all beverages are unsweetened and without added cream or whitener.

Italicized foods are part of the dish or food that precedes it.



Sample Menus for a 2000 Calorie Food Pattern (cont'd)

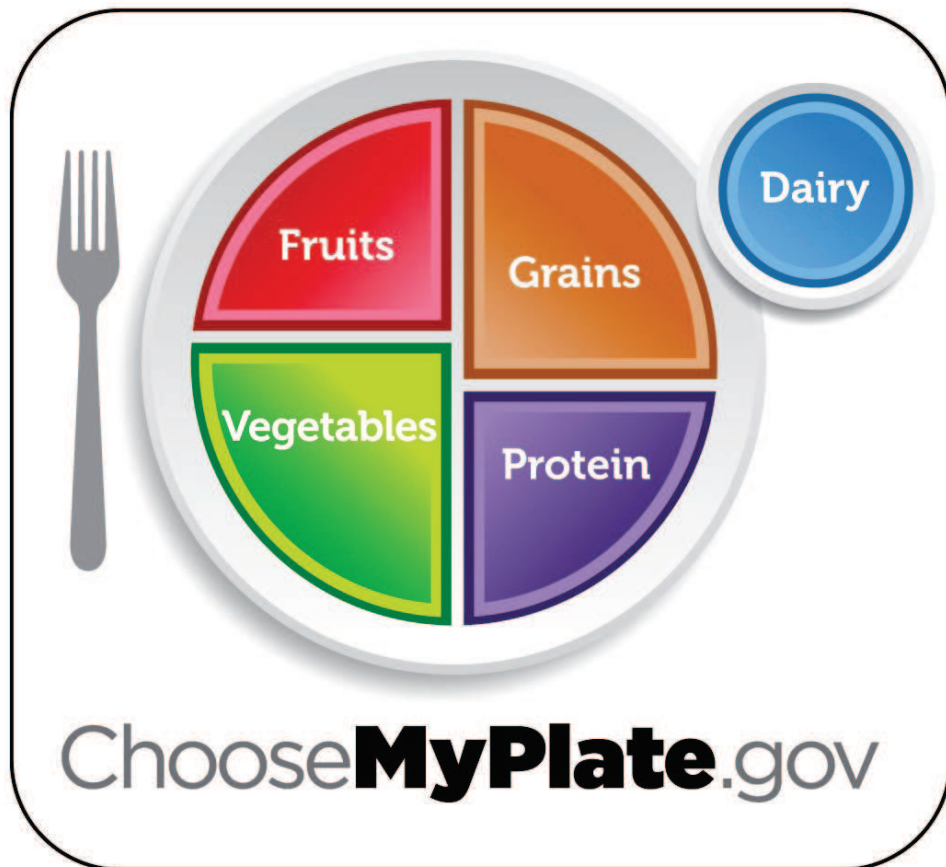
Average amounts for weekly menu:

Food group	Daily average over 1 week
GRAINS	6.2 oz eq
Whole grains	3.8
Refined grains	2.4
VEGETABLES	2.6 cups
Vegetable subgroups (amount per week)	
Dark green	1.6 cups per week
Red/Orange	5.6
Starchy	5.1
Beans and Peas	1.6
Other Vegetables	4.1
FRUITS	2.1 cups
DAIRY	3.1 cups
PROTEIN FOODS	5.7 oz eq
Seafood	8.8 oz per week
OILS	29 grams
CALORIES FROM ADDED FATS AND SUGARS	245 calories

Nutrient	Daily average over 1 week
Calories	1975
Protein	96 g
Protein	19% kcal
Carbohydrate	275 g
Carbohydrate	56% kcal
Total fat	59 g
Total fat	27% kcal
Saturated fat	13.2 g
Saturated fat	6.0% kcal
Monounsaturated fat	25 g
Polyunsaturated fat	16 g
Linoleic Acid	13 g
Alpha-linolenic Acid	1.8 g
Cholesterol	201 mg
Total dietary fiber	30 g
Potassium	4701 mg
Sodium	1810 mg
Calcium	1436 mg
Magnesium	468 mg
Copper	2.0 mg
Iron	18 mg
Phosphorus	1885 mg
Zinc	14 mg
Thiamin	1.6 mg
Riboflavin	2.5 mg
Niacin Equivalents	24 mg
Vitamin B6	2.4 mg
Vitamin B12	12.3 mcg
Vitamin C	146 mg
Vitamin E	11.8 mg (AT)
Vitamin D	9.1 mcg
Vitamin A	1090 mcg (RAE)
Dietary Folate Equivalents	530 mcg
Choline	386 mg

Blank Page

NEW! **MyPlate**
healthy eating
educational tools



Dietary Guidelines 2010
Selected Messages for Consumers

Take action on the Dietary Guidelines by making changes in these 3 areas. Choose steps that work for you and start today!

Balancing Calories

- Enjoy your food, but eat less
- Avoid oversized portions

Foods to increase

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
- Make at least half your grains whole grains
- Switch to fat-free or 1% milk

Foods to Reduce

- Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals and choose the foods with lower numbers
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

