



Cooking for One or Two

Member Handout

Written by Tina Bailey, 2022 KAFCE Education Program Committee

Objectives: Participants will learn to cook for one or two.
Participants will learn to shop for groceries for their needs.
Participants will learn to adjust recipes for their needs.

Community Activities: Get together with friends, have a cooking day and prepare food for the freezer. Share lesson at senior citizens' meeting to show them healthy ways to cook for one or two.

Have you been cooking for 4 or 6 people every day? Now you and your spouse have an empty nest, or you find yourself alone, cutting down can be difficult.

Having to readjust to food preparation for lower numbers can be challenging. You can learn to modify recipes, cut down on the amount you cook or learn how to freeze leftovers. If your recipes serves 4 or 6, divide them by half or third. You would buy only half the groceries you normally do. However, cooking the same amount then freezing the surplus as make-ahead meals will save you time in the future.

When choosing to reduce a recipe, here are some tips on reducing ingredients.

- When a recipe calls for 3 eggs, use 2 and subtract 2 or 4 tablespoons of liquid.
- When a recipe calls for a half of can of beans or pumpkin, freeze the remaining.
- Be sure and monitor the cooking time, as it will cook faster, (5 to 10 minutes).
- There are 16 tablespoons to a cup, 3 teaspoons in a tablespoon, 8 fluid oz. to a cup, and 2 tablespoons in a fluid ounce.

Here is a publication that you might consider as a reference: K-State: "Cooking Basics: Reducing a Recipe" <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3531.pdf>

When you are on a limited budget, you should shop smart. Make a menu for the month. Make your grocery list accordingly. You may find you need the same ingredients for several

meals. Therefore, you can buy in bulk to save money. Be aware that buying in bulk is not always the cheapest way to go. You can purchase some things in smaller portions, such as, soup, vegetables, and fruit. Frozen fruits and vegetables can be purchased and repackaged in smaller amounts and put back in the freezer. Label freezer container with name of food and date. Foods stored longer than suggested storage time should be safe but could be less acceptable quality. More information about freezing food may be referenced in Ball Blue Book or K-State 2020 Freezing Prepared Foods: <https://www.goldenprairie.k-state.edu/health-nutrition/health-nutrition/2020FreezingPreparedFoods.pdf>.

You can cook pasta for your evening meal and cook a little extra for a pasta salad the next day or so. Make mini pizzas by topping English muffins with left over pasta sauce, vegetable and cheese. Bake a potato and top with leftover chili or sloppy joe mix and sprinkle with cheese.

Meat can be bought in bulk. Divide the meat in the portions needed. Then freeze in bags or use a product that removes the air and seals the bag to keep meat fresher. Your favorite meatloaf recipe will make great meatballs that can be made and frozen. Pre-freeze the meatballs on a cookie sheet and then put in freezer bags according to your needs. You can take your leftovers and reuse them instead of throwing out. Roast and potatoes can be turned into soup. Cut up the meat and vegetables add beef broth, and more vegetables, if needed. Check your refrigerator for any leftover vegetables that could go into soup. You can either have the soup as another meal during the week or freeze for another time.

Love to make desserts but end up throwing it out due to no one there to eat it? When you make cookies only make what you need. Make dough balls and pre-freeze on cookie sheet. Once they are solid put in freezer bags. Then you can take out what you need when you have that craving. Your cookies will not get hard in a jar or container and you will not eat them all at one time. Brownies are another dessert that can be frozen. Take what you need and freeze the rest in containers for later.

You can go to your local deli and get just purchase what you want for one or two. Just remember portion size when getting items from the deli bar or salad bar.

When freezing your leftovers, you can use ice cube trays or muffin tins. Soup can be frozen in a muffin tin and then placed in a freezer bag. When ready to eat just take out what you need and place in bowl to defrost naturally or in the microwave. Herbs and tomato sauce can be frozen in ice cube trays and dropped in your pot when ready to cook.

Purchase containers that were made for freezing food. Otherwise, you could get freezer burn on your food. Remove as much air out of your freezer container as you can to keep food fresher.

Enjoy cooking for one or two!

One-Step Lasagna Makes 6 servings

| | |
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| 1 lb. ground beef | 2 c. Ricotta cheese, drained divided |
| 1 (15oz.) jar spaghetti sauce | 3 c. Shredded Mozzarella cheese |
| ½ c. water | ½ c. grated Parmesan cheese |
| 1 tsp. salt | |
| 1 (8oz.) pkg. uncooked lasagna noodles, divided | |

Place beef in 2-quart microwave proof bowl and cook on High for 5 minutes, stirring once. Drain off liquid. Add spaghetti sauce, water, and salt, mix well. Spread half of mixture in 11 x 7-inch microwave baking dish. Arrange half of uncooked lasagna noodles over sauce. Spread with 1 cup Ricotta cheese and sprinkle with 1 cup Mozzarella cheese. Repeat layers, ending with meat mixture. Top with Parmesan cheese. Double wrap with plastic wrap. Cook in microwave oven on 50% or simmer for 30 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with remaining Mozzarella. Leave uncovered and cook on simmer for 2 minutes more or until cheese is melted.

This recipe can be doubled and put in 9 x 13 inch pan. You can freeze in pan uncooked, once frozen you can cut in half and put in freezer bags, put back in freezer for another day.

Note: I use oven ready lasagna noodles for this dish. I also have made this the night before and put in refrigerator and cooked the next day. You can also substitute cottage cheese for the Ricotta cheese.

BAKED CHICKEN AND RICE

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| 6 Chicken breast | 1 cup white rice, uncooked |
| 3 C. water | 2 (10 ¾ oz.) cans cream of chicken soup |
| 2 stalks of celery | 1 Tablespoon parsley, dried |
| Salt | Black pepper |

You can use up to 6 chicken breasts, or you can use just a few chicken tenders. Put chicken in a 9 x 13 inch pan. Mix soup and water in large bowl. Add parsley, salt and pepper to taste. Pour over chicken in pan. Cover tightly and bake in 325-degree F. oven for 2 hours. Serves 6.

THREE DINNER BEEF ROAST

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| 1 boneless chuck roast (4-5 lbs.), cut in ¾ inch cubes | 2 medium onions, chopped |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced | 2 tablespoons olive oil |
| ½ cup water | 1 teaspoon salt |
| ½ teaspoon pepper (or more) | ½ teaspoon crushed rosemary |

In a large skillet, cook the beef cubes, onions and garlic in the oil. Drain if necessary. Transfer to a crockpot. Stir in water, salt, pepper or rosemary. Cover and cook for 3 or 4 hours on high. (Every crockpot is different.) You want the meat to be tender, but not falling apart! Cool. Divide beef into three freezer containers. Divide any liquid that may have been left. This will freeze for about 3 months. Use it soups, stews and chili.

Resources:

Mayo Clinic: Healthy cooking for singles and couples: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/.../in-depth/healthy-cooking/art-20046468>

Mayo Clinic: Eat Well Get Healthy Tips and Recipes:
<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/topics/eat-well>

Allrecipes.com Cooking for Two Recipes.

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/476/everyday-cooking/cooking-for-two/>

NAFCE Hearth Fire Series #1: Someone's in the Kitchen Cooking for One or Two

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