

Slow (cooker) and steady wins the race to health

by Erin McGraw
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A new year often means aspirations of a new, fresh start. Many are beginning 2019 with hopes of being better than the year before, including making healthier choices for their families and themselves. Sitting down as a family to share a meal is a great place to start. Busy schedules and overwhelming “To Do” lists may make family meals (let alone home-cooked, nutritious meals) seem impossible. This is where that crockpot or slow cooker you received as a holiday gift comes in handy.

Families who take time to plan and prepare their meals are likely eating foods that are more nutritious than fast food and restaurant foods. However, those healthy foods can only give the body nutrients when they are actually eaten. Using your slow cooker allows dinner to cook throughout the day, so everyone can walk through the door to a home-cooked meal. You can customize recipes to include multiple food groups, especially dairy. Erin McGraw, Nutrition Educator with St. Louis District Dairy Council notes, “Including a serving of dairy with meals helps growing bodies get the bone

building calcium they need, along with 8 additional nutrients to promote health during the cold and flu season.” Recipes can also include fresh, canned, or frozen produce to accommodate each family’s lifestyle.

In addition to the nutrient advantages of family meals, eating together fosters growth and development in children, both physically and emotionally. “Sitting down as a family is a great time to check in and connect, while establishing healthy eating habits,” said McGraw. If weekday evenings are too hectic, consider sharing a morning meal or a longer lunch together on the weekends. Taking the time to make shared meals a priority is a simple but powerful tool in raising a healthy, happy family in 2019.

For more information on the health benefits of dairy, visit www.stldairycouncil.org or contact Erin McGraw with St. Louis District Dairy Council: call (314)-835-9668, or e-mail emcgraw@stldairycouncil.org. For more delicious and nutritious recipes, check us out on Facebook at [STLDairyCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/STLDairyCouncil).

Try these recipes to start 2019 off on a healthy note:



Cheesy Chicken and Broccoli

This simple, cheesy recipe is sure to be a family favorite! With a short ingredient list and minimal preparation, it is an easy meal to make when time is limited.

Servings: 6

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 4 hours

Source: 365 Days of Crockpot

Ingredients:

1 cup minute brown rice

2 cups chicken broth

1 teaspoon minced garlic

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts

12 oz package broccoli florets, frozen

2 cups cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Pour rice into bottom of slow cooker. Add broth, garlic, salt and pepper.
2. Cut chicken into bite size pieces. Spread evenly in slow cooker
3. Evenly place broccoli over chicken breasts.
4. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours, until chicken and rice are cooked through.
5. Stir in 1 cup of cheese. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top and allow to melt.
6. Scoop, serve, and enjoy!

Nutrition Information: 440 Calories, 19.4 g Fat, 36 g Protein, 24% Daily Value Calcium

Slow Cooker Fresh Veggie Lasagna

Enjoy a delicious recipe that helps sneak in serving of vegetables along with a delicious dairy serving. Prepare early in the day and have a nutritious meal ready in the evening for the whole family to enjoy.

Servings: 6

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 4 hours

Source: Recipe created by 3-A-Day of Dairy

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray

2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

½ cup part-skim Ricotta cheese

1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 teaspoon dried oregano

¼ teaspoon garlic powder

1 cup marinara sauce (plus additional for serving)

1 medium zucchini, diced

4-6 no-boil lasagna noodles

1 (9 ounce) bag baby spinach

1 cup thinly sliced mushrooms

Fresh basil leaves (optional)

Directions:

1. Spray slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray. In small bowl mix together mozzarella, Ricotta, Parmesan, egg, oregano, and garlic powder.

2. Spread 2 tablespoons of pasta sauce in bottom of slow cooker. Sprinkle one-half of zucchini over sauce and top with one third of cheese mixture. Break 2 noodles into pieces to cover cheese. Spread 2 tablespoons of sauce and then layer half of spinach and mushrooms. Repeat layers ending with cheese and remaining sauce.

3. Cover and cook over low heat for 4 hours. Allow lasagna to rest 20 min before cutting into wedges. Spoon extra sauce over each serving and garnish with basil leaf.

Nutrition Information: 200 Calories, 8 g Fat, 14 g Protein, 20% Daily Value Calcium

Creamy Vegetable Barley Soup

Warm from the inside out with a nutritious and delicious soup recipe that helps check off many of the food groups in one pot!

Servings: 6

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 4 hours on high or 8 hours on low, plus 20 minutes

Source: The Dairy Good Cookbook

Ingredients:

1 (15?ounce) can chili beans, undrained

1/2 cup frozen corn kernels

1/2 cup medium pearl barley

1 (14.5?ounce) can fire?roasted diced tomatoes, undrained

1 cup sliced white mushrooms

1 cup chopped onion

1 carrot, peeled and sliced

1 stalk celery, sliced

3 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons dried Italian seasoning, crushed

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 (14-ounce) can low-sodium chicken broth

1/4 cup cornstarch

3 cups milk

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

1. Combine beans, corn, barley, tomatoes, mushrooms, onion, carrot, celery, garlic, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper in a 5-quart slow cooker. Pour in broth and stir to combine. Cover and cook on low for 8-9 hours, or on high for 4-5 hours.
2. Near the end of the cooking time, whisk the cornstarch into the milk. Stir the mixture into the slow cooker until well blended (if cooker is on low, turn to high). Continue cooking for 20-30 minutes, or until the soup has thickened.
3. To serve, ladle into bowls and garnish with fresh parsley and Parmesan cheese.

Nutrition Information: 250 Calories, 9 g Fat, 13 g Protein, 21% Daily Value Calcium

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