

# Home for the Holidays With Dairy

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The holidays may look a bit different for many this year, with traveling and large family celebrations put on the back burner. The safe haven of home has become our workplace, school environment and where many will spend holiday “staycations” this year.

It’s no surprise that cooking at home has become a growing part of everyday life. The return of home cooking will play a role in holiday celebrations as we pivot once again to

maintain the comfort of what holidays bring to families. Making a plan, keeping it simple, and embracing the benefits of family time can help make your holidays even merrier.

## **Make a Plan**

Making a plan ahead of time is key when feeding a family at home and preparing holiday meals. The dairy case offers many quick nutritious options that are easy to serve. “Pouring a glass of milk with meals or using it in hot chocolate takes just seconds. Consider serving yogurt parfaits for dessert, a yogurt-based dip with veggies as a snack, or cheese cubes with crackers for hors d’oeuvres. These simple ways to get in three servings of dairy per day are no-fuss and great-tasting. It’s easy to plan with dairy foods, because they are so versatile and pair well with all other food groups,” states nutrition educator Erin McGraw, with St. Louis District Dairy Council.

## **Keep it Simple**

If preparing a holiday spread is yet another hat you are wearing this year, take a step back and stick to the basics. Instead of attempting all new recipes, keep it simple by preparing a few dishes that your family already loves. “Milk, cheese, yogurt and butter are staple ingredients in many recipes, so be sure to stock up,” states McGraw. Remember, there is no required menu that must be served on any given holiday. Give yourself a break this year, and stick with the low-stress tried and true. Be sure to make extra though, so there are leftovers to enjoy!

## **Family Time**

The positive effects of family time are well documented, and a “staycation” provides plenty of additional time to reap the benefits. Outdoor activities like hiking, walking in the park, playing games and making crafts are easy ways to engage your family. Remember to keep family traditions alive. In times of uncertainty and change, sticking with yearly traditions can help bring a sense of normalcy to home. For those without traditions, this may be your year to start one! Gather your kids to read the story *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* and make some delicious homemade chocolate chip cookies. Of course, you will want to serve a glass of cold milk to go with them!

From our families to yours, cheers to a healthy holiday season! For more information on the health benefits of dairy, visit [stldairycouncil.org](http://stldairycouncil.org) or contact Erin McGraw with St. Louis District Dairy Council: call (314)-835-9668, or e-mail [emcgraw@stldairycouncil.org](mailto:emcgraw@stldairycouncil.org). For delicious and nutritious holiday recipes, check us out on Facebook and Instagram at STLDairyCouncil.

- Erin McGraw, MS, RDN, LD

Nutrition Educator

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# If you give a mouse a COOKIE

If you give a mouse a cookie, he's going to ask for a glass of milk to go with it, and that's a great idea because it turns his treat into a delicious dairy snack!

Ask an adult to help you make your own chocolate chip cookies using this recipe and enjoy them with an ice-cold glass of milk while you read this story together. Just be sure to check the mirror when you're done to make sure you don't have a milk mustache!

## INGREDIENTS:

2  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups all-purpose flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup uncooked oats  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 cup salted butter, softened  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup white granulated sugar  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
1 12-oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips  
Ice-cold milk

## DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Preheat the oven to 365 degrees.
- 2 In a small bowl, combine the flour, oats, and baking soda. Set aside.
- 3 In a large bowl, combine the softened butter, white sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla until blended with a hand mixer.
- 4 Add the eggs and continue to mix until well combined.
- 5 Gradually add in the flour mixture until combined.
- 6 Add the chocolate chips and stir until evenly mixed.
- 7 Roll dough into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch balls and place them on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper about 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches apart. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand about 1 minute before moving to cooling rack.
- 8 Serve with an ice-cold glass of milk!



