



Cooking for One or Two: Meal Preparation Made Easy

Planning and preparing meals for one or two can be a challenge, particularly if you are used to cooking for a large family or have never cooked at all. Cooking for one or two doesn't mean sacrificing nutrition or eating the same thing five days in a row. There are lots of options; with a little planning, you can enjoy a variety of foods every day!

Getting started

- ⚙ Plan your menu using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. For more information, refer to Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.
- ⚙ Find recipes that serve one or two, or revise your favourite recipes to make smaller portions. Cut recipes in half.
- ⚙ Borrow or buy cookbooks that feature small portions at your library or bookstore. (Suggestions listed on the other side.)
- ⚙ Collect simple recipes that use few ingredients and are fast to make.
- ⚙ Equip yourself with small pots, ovenproof dishes and mini loaf pans, to cook smaller quantities and make cleanup easier.
- ⚙ When cutting up vegetables, chop two times what you need so you have some ready to toss into a soup or salad.
- ⚙ Use a slow cooker or microwave for ease and to save time.
- ⚙ Share the cooking with a friend. It's faster—and more enjoyable.
- ⚙ Exchange frozen portions with friends.
- ⚙ If making a larger recipe on your own, divide the food into portions, eat one portion immediately and freeze the rest. Casseroles, soups, stews, vegetable pies and meat loafs freeze well. Store in containers, freezer bags or aluminium trays saved from frozen foods. Label packages, noting both contents and date. The nutritional value of frozen foods will decline in two to three months, so don't freeze more than you can eat in that time.

Time and energy saving ideas

- ⚙ Prepare meals when you have the most energy; perhaps that means eating your main meal at noon.
- ⚙ Use a blender, chopper or food processor if you have one.
- ⚙ An envelope dinner is easy to make and clean up. Put a hamburger patty, chicken piece or pork chop in aluminium foil with carrots and turnip or potato. Sprinkle with onion soup mix, wrap and bake.

- ⚙ Make one-pot meals such as creamed tuna with peas, hamburger stew, stir-fries or shepherds pie.
- ⚙ Try a no-cook meal such as a peanut butter sandwich, canned fruit and milk pudding, or a salad with tuna and cheese.
- ⚙ Plan for leftovers. For example, boil three potatoes with skins.
 - Eat one with low fat sour cream and chives.
 - Use one to make a potato-cheese casserole for the oven the next day.
 - Slice the other into a covered bowl and pour pickle juice over top, for use in a salad. The pickled potato will keep several days in the refrigerator.
- ⚙ Meals don't have to be a major undertaking. Mini meals and snacks from the four food groups can meet your nutrient needs. Try quick, nourishing foods such as cheddar cheese, cottage cheese, eggs, canned meats and fish, peanut butter, hearty soups, canned beans, yogurt, pudding and fruit or vegetable juice.
- ⚙ Take advantage of convenience items such as frozen vegetables, pre-cut fresh vegetables and prepared salad packages, as well as grocery deli fare such as cold meat, cheese, barbecue chicken, salad and pizza.
- ⚙ Muffin, biscuit and pudding mixes can often be made easily and in small amounts.
- ⚙ Keep frozen or canned entrées and soups on hand, such as meat pies, chicken fingers, breaded fish, canned chili and stew. To make a complete meal, add a whole grain roll, milk and fresh fruit or vegetables.
- ⚙ If you have difficulty handling equipment due to arthritis or other conditions, see your physician or health unit/centre, who can refer you to an occupational therapist for help.
- ⚙ For more ideas, see other pages in the Cooking for One or Two series:
 - Easy Meals to Make
 - Creative Use of Leftovers
 - Ready-Made Meals

Suggested cookbooks

You'll find these and other cookbooks on cooking for one or two at many bookstores and libraries.



- ⚙ Good Food for One – Easy Recipes for Today's Busy Singles by Margo Oliver. Self-Counsel Press, North Vancouver, 1990. About \$10.
- ⚙ Healthy Cooking for Two (or Just You) by Frances Price. Rosedale Press, 1995. About \$22.
- ⚙ Frugal Feasts. 101 Quick and Easy Single Serving Meals from Around the World by M. Spilsbury Ross. Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1996. About \$10.
- ⚙ Solo Chef by B.J. Wylie. Mac-Millan Canada, 1997. About \$23.

