

## **Healthy Meals: Cooking for One or Two**

Fed up with limited healthy meal options? Tired of eating leftovers all the time? Annoyed that you must throw food away because the package contained more than you could eat? Limited energy to deal with time-consuming recipes requiring many ingredients? If you usually cook for one or two people – you probably face these frustrations. Small-quantity cooking can be made easier. Here's how:

**Shop with convenience in mind.** Purchase foods that are individually frozen, such as fruits, vegetables, chicken breasts or fish fillets. These foods allow you to thaw out only the amount you need. Walmart, for instance, sells a 3 lb. bag of pre-cooked chicken breasts for an average of \$2.29 per pound. Keep handy frozen meals and pre-packaged single-serving foods, such as ready-to-eat, low-fat, reduced sodium canned soups. Try to limit sodium to 500 mg per meal.

**Take advantage of your freezer.** This will help prevent waste and keep foods fresher longer. Most foods freeze well, including breads, meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Be aware that cooked potatoes generally do not freeze well. For best quality, freeze food while it's fresh. Don't wait until it's been refrigerated or left on your counter for several days.

**Cook meals in advance and freeze single-size portions.** For example, make a casserole, stew, or hearty chicken soup and freeze individual-size servings in glass or microwave safe plastic containers. Then take out only the amount of food you need. Be sure to write the date and contents on packages and move older containers forward as you add food to your freezer.

**Prepare one-dish meals.** For quick and simple cooking, choose a dish that serves as the meal. A good choice is one that includes foods from several food groups, such as meats, whole grains, legumes and vegetables. Examples include beef, barley and vegetable stew; chicken, vegetable and rice casserole; turkey and bean casserole, and vegetarian chili with diced vegetables.

**Use extras wisely.** Plan meals so that you can use extra food in new dishes later. Try cooking rice as a side dish for one meal, then use the rest in a casserole or rice pudding. Bake chicken breasts for a meal and use the rest in sandwiches, soup or a stir-fry. Or make a meatloaf mixture and bake some as a meatloaf and freeze uncooked portion for use in meatballs or stuffed peppers.

**Redefine a 'meal'.** If you're short on time or energy, make a nutritious snack rather than a full meal. For example, spread a brown rice cake with ricotta cheese and fresh strawberries or low-sugar spreadable fruit. Another snack-turned-meal: corn muffins served with apple & cheese slices, or low-fat refried beans with salsa, a little low-fat sour cream and baked tortilla chips.

Source: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-cooking](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-cooking)

