



Strengthening Oklahoma Families

Celebrate National Nutrition Month with a world of flavors

While the need to focus on making informed food choices is something that should go on year-round, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics pays special attention to healthy eating each year in March, which has been designated National Nutrition Month.

This year's theme, Celebrate a World of Flavors, embraces global cultures, cuisines and inclusivity, while also highlighting the expertise of registered dietitian nutritionists.

"Of course, we want everyone to focus on making informed nutritional decisions every day and designating a month out of each year to really focus on healthy habits is a great way to help people meet their nutritional goals," said Diana Romano, Oklahoma State University Extension assistant specialist. "Keep in mind it's not just about food – developing sound physical activity habits also play a role in good health."

Enjoying different flavors of the world not only is a chance to learn more about your own food culture, but those that may be new

to you. Familiar ingredients can be presented in new ways and new foods may remind you of things you already know and love. As an added bonus, you may even discover new ingredients and flavors you've never experienced before.

"It's always fun to try new recipes and foods from other cultures," Romano said. "Trying new flavors and foods from around the world can also help you increase the variety of foods you eat. It's easy to get in a rut when it comes to mealtime. During National Nutrition Month, try at least one new recipe each week. One of them could become the next family favorite."

Experiment with new recipes for various meals during the day. Find new, exotic fruits that could be part of a breakfast smoothie or served alongside whole-grain pancakes. Try a new type of bread, such as pita, for those lunchtime sandwiches, and instead of lettuce, try using bean sprouts. Pair that sandwich with gazpacho, a type of cold soup made with tomatoes, peppers and onions.

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When it comes to snack time, Romano suggests choosing healthier snacks from various food groups. Some good choices may include fruit chutney eaten with bread or cheese, raw veggies with hummus or tzatziki or perhaps whole-grain tortilla chips with guacamole or salsa made with veggies or fruit.

“Healthy eating options span the globe. To make things even more fun, have the family do some research on the part of the world where the recipes come from and discuss these new places around the dinner table,” she said.

OSU Extension offers additional nutritional information online.

National Nutrition Month® was initiated in 1973 as National Nutrition Week, and it became a month-long observance in 1980 in response to growing interest in nutrition. The second Wednesday of March is Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Day, an annual celebration of the dedication of RDNs as the leading advocates for advancing the nutritional status of Americans and people around the world. This year’s observance will be March 9.

Using Homemade Cleaners can Improve Home Air Quality

What do vinegar, cornstarch and baking soda have in common? Besides sharing space in the kitchen pantry, these and other household items can be used as the basis for do-it-yourself cleaning supplies.

Homemade cleaners are often made from ingredients you may already have on hand or found at your local store. They may be just as effective as any product you can purchase and often are more environmentally friendly.

Recipes for homemade cleaners, cleansers and sanitizers are frequently simple and include only a few ingredients.

For instance, an easy recipe for an all-purpose cleanser calls for mixing 2 tablespoons of borax, ¼ cup of vinegar and 2 cups of hot water in a spray bottle to create an agent that can be applied like any other commercial all-purpose cleaner.

Or combine constarch and water to make an deffective mirror and

window cleaner. Just mix them together to make a paste, use a soft cloth to apply the paste to the mirror or window, rub gently then wipe clean.

Also, combining 1 cup of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of tea tree oil creates a garbage can deodorizer. Work out all the lumps with a fork before sprinkling the mixture in the bottom of the container after the liner is removed. Periodically rinse the garbage can with vinegar and allow it to dry in the sun.

Only use tested green cleaning recipes. For example, some universities’ Cooperative Extension Services have produced Fact Sheets that provide tested recipes.

Mixing your own cleaning supplies will more than likely require some prep time on your part. On the flip side, homemade cleansers usually cost less to make compared to commercial or over-the-counter cleaners and they can help improve the indoor air quality.

Routine safety measures should always be followed while making and using any type of cleaning product, homemade or otherwise.

Read the labels of products to see if protective or respiratory gear is recommended and carefully mix all ingredients, especially chemicals. Some chemicals such as chlorine bleach and ammonia generate a toxic gas when they are combined.

Only make enough cleaner for what is needed at the time or no more than a month’s supply. Homeowners should be in a well-ventilated area when combining ingredients.

Cleaning mixtures should be placed in unused new containers and labeled with the name of the product, the ingredients and the date it was created. All cleaners, including green cleaners, should be securely stored out of the reach of children.

25 Tips for Heart Healthy Eating (source: eatright.org)

Certain foods can lower your risk of heart disease or help to manage it, while other foods may increase your risk. Try these tips for preparing heart-healthy meals.

Choose Healthier Types of Fat and Cooking Methods

- Use small amounts of oils such as canola and olive in recipes and for sautéing.
- Make salad dressings with olive or flaxseed oil.
- Blend mashed avocado into dips or use small amounts to add flavor to dishes.
- Try different ways of cooking foods, such as baking, broiling, grilling, steaming and poaching to add variety.

Eat Foods Containing Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- Add walnuts to cereal, salads or muffins. Try walnut oil in salad dressings, too.
- Eat two 4-ounce portions of fatty fish each week, such as salmon, lake trout, canned light tuna (in water), mackerel and sardines.
- Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will contain more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label.

Include Dietary Fiber

- Include plant-based foods as sources of protein, including tempeh, beans, lentils, seeds and nuts.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables at each meal.

- Opt for whole fruits and vegetables instead of 100% fruit juices more often and don't discard edible peels. Removing the peels on produce, like apples and potatoes, lowers their fiber content — just be sure to wash them before preparing or eating.
- Choose whole grains instead of refined grains whenever possible.

Limit Saturated Fat

- If you eat meat, select lean cuts of beef and pork, especially cuts with “loin” or “round” in their name and drain the fat off of cooked, ground meat.
- Cut back on processed meats high in saturated fat, such as hot dogs, salami and bacon.
- When you make a stew or soup, refrigerate leftovers and skim off the fat with a spoon before reheating and serving.
- Replace higher-fat cheeses with lower-fat options such as reduced-fat feta and part-skim mozzarella.
- Thicken sauces with evaporated fat-free milk instead of whole milk.
- Move toward using lower-fat milk and yogurt. Start with 2% products, then move to 1% and finally to fat-free to adjust to the new taste. Choose skinless poultry or remove the skin before eating chicken or turkey.
- Check the Nutrition Facts Label on food packaging for saturated fat content and to see if trans fat or partially hydrogenated oils are listed.

Food manufacturers have removed trans fats from their products, but some foods with longer shelf-life dates such as cakes, cookies, crackers, pastries, pies, muffins, and doughnuts may still contain them. These foods are also sources of added sugars and should be limited for that reason, as well.

Reduce Salt (Sodium)

- Prepare foods at home more often so you can control the amount of salt in your meals.
- Use as little salt in cooking as possible. You can cut at least half the salt from most recipes.
- Skip the table salt and be mindful when adding other higher-sodium condiments to your food at the table, like soy sauce, ketchup, pickles and olives.
- When choosing canned foods, select “reduced-sodium” or “no-salt-added” soups and vegetables.
- Check the Nutrition Facts Label for sodium and choose products with lower sodium content.
- Season foods with herbs, spices, garlic, onions, peppers and lemon or lime juice to add flavor.

Mini Mediterranean Frittatas, serves 5

- [5 grams] 1 teaspoon (5 milliliters) olive oil
- [120 grams] 1 cup zucchini, quartered lengthwise and then sliced into ¼-inch thick wedges
- [70 grams] 1 cup baby bella mushrooms, roughly chopped
- [45 grams] ⅓ cup red onion, finely diced
- [60 grams] 2 cups spinach
- [45 grams] ¼ cup Kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
- [2 grams] ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- [300 grams] 6 large eggs
- [120 grams] ½ cup (120 milliliters) fat-free milk
- Black pepper to taste
- [35 grams] ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F (177°C) and lightly oil each well of a muffin pan with olive oil.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat, then add zucchini, mushrooms and onions. Sauté for 2 minutes, stirring to ensure even cooking.

Reduce heat to medium-low and add spinach, olives and oregano. Stir to combine and cook for 2 minutes or until spinach is wilted.

Remove skillet from heat and allow vegetables to cool slightly.

In a large bowl, whisk eggs, milk and black pepper. Add cooked vegetables and cheese to egg mixture, and whisk until combined.

Scoop ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons egg mixture into each muffin pan well. Place pan on the middle oven rack and bake for 20 minutes. Eggs should reach an internal temperature of 160°F (71°C) and be set with no runny liquid remaining on top.

Allow to cool for 5 minutes before carefully removing mini frittatas, using a table knife to loosen the edges.

Enjoy immediately or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. When ready to eat, reheat in the microwave for 30 seconds. Serves 5.

Nutrition Info:

Serving size, 2 mini frittatas

CALORIES 128; TOTAL FAT 8g; SAT. FAT 3g; CHOL. 202mg; SODIUM 211mg; CARB. 4g; FIBER 1g; SUGARS 2g; PROTEIN 9g; POTASSIUM 300mg; PHOSPHORUS 184mg



How to Save for the Unexpected

source: Illinois State Treasurer

We've all felt that dreaded feeling before—when the car unexpectedly dies or you discover that there is a leak in the house that needs to be fixed immediately. Any expense that you aren't prepared for is always a challenge. It's money you didn't intend to spend and perhaps don't even have to spend!

This is why it's important to have money saved for those surprise expenses in an emergency fund. In fact, most experts suggest having about three to six months' worth of expenses saved. But how many of us actually have that money put away? Maybe this is the year you want to save for the unexpected so that when something unforeseen happens, you'll be ready!

Why Should I Save For the Unexpected?

Saving for the unexpected is essential because you'll be ready for all the things life throws at you. It ultimately means you won't have to worry about how you'll pay the bills and put food on the table while paying for a costly, unanticipated expense. With your emergency fund, you can make your life a little less stressful when unannounced changes occur.

If you have an emergency fund, you likely won't have to go into debt when trouble hits. Instead, you can use the money that you have saved up specifically for that reason. An emergency fund means that you'll be able to continue on as normal if something unexpected comes up, and you won't have to worry about money. That's good news, as change is always hard without having to deal with money problems as well.

Emergency funds are particularly important if you're a one-income household or if you are self-employed. Having a little bit of financial margin can help you in the case of an unexpected job change or if you have a slow month.

Plus, if you're saving for a goal with a separate account, it might be tempting to use that saved money for an emergency if you don't have an emergency fund in place.

If you've seen the movie *Up*, that's exactly what Carl and Ellie Fredricksen do. They have a coin bank to save up to visit Paradise Falls in South America, but every time something goes wrong, they dip into the account. As a result, they find themselves at the end of their lives, having never saved up enough money to make the trip.

You don't want to find yourself in the position of Carl and Ellie Fredricksen—using the money you're saving for something fun toward an emergency instead. Rather, if you have an emergency fund, you'll be able to take care of the expense and still work toward meeting your savings goal.

All Right, I'm Game, So How Do I Do It?

There are so many different ways to save for an emergency fund, but a great way is to write the contribution into your monthly budget as if it were another bill or expense. That means that if you want three months' worth of expenses saved, you can reach that in one year by saving one-fourth of your monthly expense amount per month.

For example, if you spend about \$2,000 per month on bills and other major expenses, you'll need to put away \$6,000 to have three months' worth of expenses saved. Thus, you should save \$500 (or one-fourth of your monthly expense amount) per month to reach your goal of \$6,000 in a year.

Realistically, though, it might take longer than a year. If you can only afford to save \$125 per month instead of \$500, then that's okay! You just need to figure out what monthly contribution amount is going to be best for you and include that in your monthly budget. Don't forget to divide your goal amount by your monthly contribution and adjust your timeline. In this case, you'd now reach your emergency fund goal in 48 months ($6,000 \div 125$) instead of 12 months.

The great part is that when you finally reach your savings goal of three to six months of expenses saved, you'll be in the groove of saving that money. That means that you can put that monthly contribution to another savings goal like a trip to Spain or a cruise to the Bahamas.

By being diligent about setting aside money in an emergency fund, you're setting yourself up for financial success. When the unexpected comes, your life can continue on as usual because you will be prepared.

Emergency savings funds can seem a little unnecessary when you could be putting that money toward paying down debt or a down-payment on a house. However, when you find yourself in a financial bind because of an unforeseen expense, you'll realize just how valuable that emergency savings fund is. By making it a part of your monthly budget, you're acknowledging how important it is to have money saved for the unpredictable.

OHCE NEWS

This section of the Strengthening Oklahoma Families Newsletter is for local branches of the Lincoln County Home and Community Education group to showcase their activities and projects. The purpose for sharing this information is to spark interest in club membership and also give ideas for new projects that other groups may want to start doing. I need your help to collect this information. Please send in your spring projects for the May-June newsletter by the last week of April.



State OHCE Project 2022: Oklahoma Hunger

Oklahoma food insecurities continues a second year as the OHCE State Project. Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as a household level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. Our goal is to raise awareness, support local efforts, and collaborate to connect people to resources to reduce the youth food insecurity crisis within our own communities.

Plan to discuss how we can be involved with this state project at our Spring County meeting on April 7.

Upcoming Dates:

March 17, 2022

Executive Board meeting, 9:30 am
Lincoln County Courthouse

Leader Lesson, 10:30 am
Lincoln County Courthouse

April 7, 2022

Spring County Meeting, 10:30 am
Chandler Methodist Church

April 21, 2022

Leader Lesson, 10:30 am
Lincoln County Courthouse

Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.



Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and state wide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best. www.OHCE.okstate.edu

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