

April 2012

Kindred *Spirits*

Cook Together and Eat Together

Family Meals Have Great Benefits

Skillet Pizza

- 6 to 7 inch whole wheat tortilla
- 1 tablespoon spaghetti sauce
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped vegetables (broccoli, onion, peppers, mushrooms)
- 3 tablespoons lo-fat mozzarella cheese

Preheat electric skillet to 350 degrees. Spread spaghetti sauce over tortilla. Sprinkle vegetables and cheese over tortilla.

Place the pizza in the skillet. Cover and heat for two minutes or until the cheese melts. Remove pizza and cut into 4 wedges.

Recipe can be prepared in any skillet with a lid on medium heat on the stove.

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Our busy lifestyles contribute to a trend of families unable to sit down to meals together. That is unfortunate because eating family meals together provides a variety of benefits for children and teenagers.

According to Tammy Roberts, MU Extension nutrition and health education specialist, "Children who regularly eat meals with their family eat more fruits and vegetables and more dairy products than those who don't." These children also make healthier food choices when they are away from home. In addition, younger children who eat meals with their families have a better vocabulary because of the mealtime conversations they participate in.

There are academic achievements associated with eating together too. A University of Illinois study of 7-11 year old children found that children who did well in school and on achievement tests regularly ate meals with their families.

Teenagers are less likely to participate in family meals because of busy schedules and their ability to be more transient. It is, however, in the best interest of the adults in the household to

encourage teens to be involved in family meals. Teens who participate in family meals have a reduced risk for smoking and other substance abuse.

Don't panic because you only have thirty minutes or less to get an evening meal on the table. Here are a few things you could try:

- When you do have time to cook, prepare extra and freeze for a later date.
- Pick up a pizza on the way home and add your own salad and fruit.
- Dust off your crock pot! There are a variety of entire meals that can be put in the crock pot in the morning and ready when you get home.
- Have the children help. Children who help prepare a meal are more likely to eat it.

Grandparents who regularly eat with their children can rest assured that they will help the children develop lifelong healthful eating habits.

Remember, a family meal doesn't have to be around the kitchen table. Pack sandwiches and fruit and enjoy a family picnic at the baseball or soccer field before the game or practice. Happy eating!

Your Home Could be a Threat to Your Health

Keep Your Home Environment Safe

Home is where the heart is! You want your home to be as safe for you and family. Yet some of the most serious health problems for children can start in the home. According to Marsha Alexander, MU Extension housing and environmental design specialist, "Simple changes can result in safer home environments for you and your children."

Is the indoor air quality of your home safe? Allergies and asthma are health issues that have a great deal to do with indoor air quality. The number of children with

asthma has doubled within the last ten years.

Does someone in the household smoke? Do you have pets who live inside? Are there mold and mildew problems? Each of these issues can make allergies and asthma worse. So if there is a problem, it needs to be promptly addressed.

Lead poisoning is a very serious health threat for children inside and outside the home. Lead can be found in paint that dates back to the late 1970s. It also can be found in water pipes, pottery, and other places. Children can be exposed to lead poisoning if they are exposed to dust or chips of lead-

based paint. Children can be poisoned by being exposed to lead dust when crawling on the floor or playing in soil around their home. A simple blood test can determine if your child is being exposed to lead. Ask your doctor to test your grandchild.

Evaluate your home for these and other culprits that can impact the health of you and your children.

We Need Your Input

Please provide feedback to help us improve the newsletter by filling out the on-line survey by July 30, 2012.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/kindred_spirits

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What You Need to Know

If you are a grandparent or an aunt/uncle just starting to care for a grandchild or niece/nephew, there are some basic things you need to know. Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist suggests talking with key people such as teachers, child care providers, school counselors and social workers, physicians, therapists, lawyers or child welfare professionals who have been involved with the child.

Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- ◆ What do I need to know about the child's care and support?
- ◆ Do you have any resource materials, classes or training that will help me?
- ◆ What services do you offer?
- ◆ Is there any money to help me with the expense of raising a child?
- ◆ What important information do I need immediately (medical and school records, legal deadlines, etc.)?
- ◆ Who else should I talk to?

Source: <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.1.html>