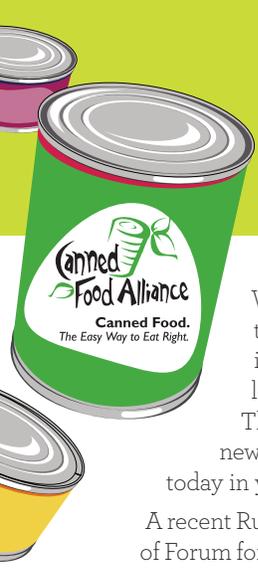


Essential Kitchen Toolkit

Back to basics guidelines for preparing convenient, nutritious meals. Brought to you by the Canned Food Alliance.

@Home Economics

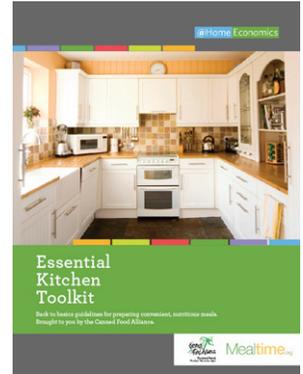


With the current economic downturn leading us to get reacquainted with our kitchens, the time is right to revive what we may (or may not!) have learned in high school Home Economics class. The Canned Food Alliance (CFA) is calling for a new focus on kitchen basics you can start applying today in your own kitchens: At-Home Economics.

A recent Rutgers University study published in the May issue of Forum for Family and Consumer Issues and commissioned by the CFA found that moms want and need a better grasp of kitchen basics. When given an action plan for healthy meal prep, grocery shopping, kitchen organization and food storage practices, the study showed that **moms made positive changes toward providing nourishing, great-tasting family meals.**

To help make these proven action plans and basic, At-Home Economics skills available to everyone, the CFA has partnered with Roberta L. Duyff, MS, RD, FADA, to develop the **Essential Kitchen Toolkit**, modeled after the successful action plans used in the Rutgers research. By implementing these At-Home Economics fundamentals, you will find it easier to deliver healthful and affordable meals for your family.

Following is a snapshot of some fundamentals found in the Essential Kitchen Toolkit. To download the complete reference guide, visit www.mealtime.org.



Choose Canned

When it comes to kitchen basics, canned foods are unsung heroes in providing nutrients many Americans are lacking and can help with the preparation of safe, nourishing and affordable meals. Here's how:

- Canned fruits and vegetables, as well as fresh and frozen, all contain important nutrients that contribute to a healthful diet, and fresh isn't always more nutritious. (University of California-Davis research)
- Canned foods are picked and packed at their peak nutrition and flavor quality.
- Canned foods are safe. The metal food can remains one of the most safe and energy-efficient forms of food distribution and packaging because it enables food sterilization and long-term preservation.
- Canned foods bring nutrition, cost-savings, time-savings, convenience and flavor to the family table.



Stock Up on Nutrient-Rich Choices

Food fast doesn't have to mean "fast food." Keeping a well-stocked pantry with nutrient-rich choices on hand allows moms to always have healthy choices available all year long. Plus, canned foods are shelf-stable, cost effective and easy to prepare, so moms can quickly add a dose of flavor, boost a meal's nutrition or swap ingredients to stretch a meal and your grocery dollar.

Best Bets:

- Bread
- Grains
- Cereal
- Canned, fresh or frozen fruit
- 100% Fruit Juice Drinks
- Oils
- Canned, fresh or frozen vegetables



- Low-fat Milk and Yogurt
- Low-fat Cheese
- Canned/Dried Legumes
- Canned Poultry (chicken or turkey)
- Lean Cuts of Fresh or Frozen Meat
- Canned, fresh or frozen fish

- Ground Meat and Turkey Sausage
- Whole Deli Meats
- Low Sodium Sauces and Condiments
- Herbs and Spices
- Healthful Desserts



- Nutrient-rich Beverages
- Healthful Snacks
- Healthful Lunch Box Picks



Essential Kitchen Toolkit

Safe Food Storage

Keeping a variety of fresh, frozen and canned foods on hand can help you make smart choices fast. But food is not nutrition until it's eaten; so making sure the choices you have on hand are safe to eat is just as important.

- “Freshness Date” or “Best if Used By Date”: This tells you how long the product will be fresh and at top quality if it is stored properly. After that date, the product may still be safe to eat, but may not taste as good.
- “Sell-By Date”: This is the last day a product should be sold at the grocery store. Most foods will still be fresh and safe to eat for a week or so after the sell by date.
- “Expiration Date”: This is the last day a product should be eaten and may not be safe to eat after the date has passed.
- Foods that don't have dates: Use a marker or label to indicate when you purchased them.



Smart Meal Planning, Preparation and Shopping

Preparing quick, healthful meals at home doesn't mean spending hours in the kitchen. It just requires planning ahead, smart shopping and taking advantage of nutritious and time-saving options found in your supermarket.

Step 1: Plan Ahead

1. Plan meals around the foods you have in your pantry, refrigerator and freezer.
2. Use a meal planning grid, complete with a weekly menu and the ingredients needed for each recipe.

Step 2: Shop Smart

1. Check your menu and your kitchen inventory, and make a shopping list of items you need.
2. For efficiency, group your shopping list based on the layout of the store.

Step 3: Get Ready to Cook

1. Make sure you have all of the necessary ingredients and equipment needed for making your recipe.
2. Take advantage of time and effort-saving options, such as washed and pre-cut salad ingredients and veggies, canned mixed vegetables and pureed canned beans for making broths thick and creamy.

Step 4: Get Cooking

1. Check the recipe for pre-prep tasks, such as chopping ingredients and do them first.
2. On days when you have more time, double a recipe and freeze half so you can thaw and enjoy the rest on super busy nights.

Step 5: Serve a Delicious, Nutritious Meal

1. Make mealtime an event. Clear away clutter, turn off the television and turn on soothing music.
2. Serve food that looks good on the plate. Add color with fruit and vegetable varieties.

Step 6: Clean Up and Store Leftovers Safely



Kitchen Glossary

Recipes use certain terms that each have their own specific meaning and using the correct technique, such as mince, knead, sauté, braise and simmer, helps ensure you get the results you expect from the recipe you are preparing. For a full list of recipe and food processing terms, visit Mealtime.org's "Kitchen Glossary."

For recipes, tips, timesavers or to download a copy of the full Essential Kitchen Toolkit, visit Mealtime.org.

