

MyPlate on the Dinner Table

The USDA **MyPlate** healthy eating icon is the perfect tool for starting a healthy makeover of your family's evening meals. Eating the **MyPlate** way is delicious, convenient, and easy on your food budget. ChooseMyPlate.gov has pages of helpful tips, details about the food groups, and ways to plan personalized menus.

PLAN

Want to save money on your food bills and make sure your family is getting the nutrition they need to feel great and stay healthy? The keys to dinnertime success are planning, planning, and planning. Seriously, planning ahead makes all the difference.

Write down a week of menus: Set aside a little weekend time to plan for the week ahead. You don't need a fancy menu - plain paper or a computer calendar will do just fine. Consider each day's schedule and how much time you will have to focus on dinner. Get family input - let everyone have a night or two for their favorite foods.

Keep the kitchen stocked with staples: Having plenty of healthy staples on hand makes it easy to follow your planned menus and to be creative when things don't work out like you thought they should. Staples include canned beans and dry pasta in the cupboard, milk and cheese in the fridge, and frozen veggies in the freezer.

EAT

Put produce on half your plate: MyPlate's key message is that we all need to eat more fruits and veggies. Fresh produce is fabulous, when it's in season and the price is right. Remember, frozen vegetables are often less expensive and just as nutrient-rich! Canned produce works too, just rinse under cold water to reduce sodium or syrup.

Divide half into whole grains and lean proteins: MyPlate suggests filling the other half of your plate with lean proteins and grains (whole when possible). Make a tasty combo with black beans in a whole-wheat tortilla; grilled fish and brown rice; baked chicken and pasta; or a bowl of beef chili with homemade cornbread.

Serve ice-cold milk with meals: Most of us are not getting calcium, vitamin D, and potassium. That's why MyPlate recommends low-fat dairy with every meal. A refreshing 8 oz. glass of fat-free or 1% milk with every meal will help you fill those nutrient gaps - so that you can build and maintain strong bones for life.

ENJOY

The best part of a healthy dinner is enjoying it with family or friends. MyPlate also suggests we learn to savor our meals - eating more mindfully and slowly.