



Tips for Delicious and Nutritious Soup



What's better on a cold winter day than a warm bowl of soup? Soup can be nutritious, easy to prepare, and inexpensive. It can be great hot or cold, prepared with minimal clean-up, only needs one pot, and the combination of ingredients is unlimited. Soup is a great dish for a variety of palettes and can be tailored

to be spicy, savory or sweet. January is National Soup Month, a good time to think about how soup can fit into a healthy eating plan.

Follow these helpful tips for making soup delicious and nutritious:

Soup for every season. As appetizers, side dishes, or main dishes, soups help celebrate the bounty of the four seasons. Soups can be thick and hearty, smooth and creamy, or savory. They can be served hot, such as minestrone, or cold, such as mango and cucumber soup.

Be sodium savvy. To keep soups tasty and healthy, use low-sodium broth, stock, or soup base for the foundation. Experiment with flavorful herbs and spices in place of salt. The most effective replacements are savory flavors with "bite," such as black pepper, garlic powder, curry powder, cumin, dill seeds, basil, ginger, coriander and onion. Use minced or powdered garlic and onion rather than their salt form. When substituting minced or powdered garlic and onion for the salt version, use about half as much.

Make healthier choices with Nutrition Facts Labels. When buying canned soups, use the Nutrition Facts Label to help choose ones with lower sodium levels. Foods with 140 milligrams (mg) of sodium or less per serving can be labeled as low-sodium foods. Claims such as "low in sodium" or "very low in sodium" on the front of the food label can help identify foods that contain less salt.

Choose healthier substitutions. Soup can be a healthy, inexpensive meal. Keep soups lower in fat and calories by using cheese, sour cream, or bacon sparingly as a topping or garnish. Or choose healthier substitutes like reduced-fat shredded cheese, low-fat sour cream, non-fat plain yogurt, or turkey bacon. Substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product – such as using whole-wheat noodles, barley, or brown rice in soups and stews.

Cook once, eat twice. Homemade soups can be made ahead of time and in large quantities. Eat refrigerated soup within three to four days or freeze it. Don't let soup set at room temperature for more than two hours. To speed cooling, store soups in shallow containers. When serving a second time, bring to a boil.

During National Soup Month and beyond, experiment with different recipes and ingredient substitutions for healthier soups. Find ways to vary your veggies with warm soups in the colder months and focus on fruits with chilled soups in the warmer months.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

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Potato Soup

2 cups water

6 medium potatoes, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, peeled and cubed

2 carrots, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, peeled and thinly sliced

½ cup onion, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, chopped

2 celery stalks, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, thinly sliced

5 cups fat-free milk

6 Tablespoons margarine, melted

¼ cup flour

1 teaspoon salt (optional)

¼ teaspoon pepper

¼ cup fresh parsley, gently rubbed under cold running water, chopped OR 2 Tablespoons dried parsley

2 cups Cheddar or American cheese, shredded or cubed (optional)

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water
2. In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil.
3. Add potatoes, carrots, onions and celery. Return to a boil.
4. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
5. Mash vegetables slightly so they break apart a little. Do not drain the vegetables. Stir in milk.
6. In a small bowl, stir together melted margarine, flour, salt, pepper, and parsley until smooth. Add mixture to soup while stirring. Continue cooking until thick and bubbly, stirring constantly.
7. Add cheese, if desired. Stir until melted.
8. Store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator for up to four days.

Nutrition Information:

Yield: 10 servings

Serving Size (1/10 of recipe): Calories 230, Total Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 1.5g, Sodium 170mg, Total Carbohydrates 34g, Fiber 2g, Total Sugars 8g, includes 0g Added Sugars

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension



Family Budgets: Getting the Most for Your Money

Your housing, transportation and food costs are a large part of your budget. To get the most out of your food dollars, develop a spending plan. Shopping wisely and preventing waste are two important things you can do to save money.



Establish a Food Budget

- A food budget is a written plan that is used for food eaten at and away from home. It includes snacks, coffee breaks, and school lunches. A food budget also includes costs connected with canning and freezing food at home.
- About 15% of your household income should be used for food. Consider the needs of your family when deciding on the amount of money to be spent on food. Time available for food preparation should also be considered. Lifestyles and traditions impact what is spent on food. Keep store receipts for two weeks to help you look at what you are buying and how much money you are spending on food.
- Based on your budget, you should set aside a certain amount of money to spend on food each month. A way to avoid spending too much money is to divide the monthly amount into weekly amounts. A good way to watch what money is being spent is to write down how much money you plan to spend each week and then what you actually spent during the week.

Plan Meals and Prepare to Shop

1. When planning meals, find ways to cook once and eat two or three times from the leftovers. For example, cook a roast with potatoes and carrots for one meal. Use leftover roast to make hot beef sandwiches or beef and noodles for another meal.
2. Compare ready-made and convenience foods to foods you can make yourself. Making your own may be cheaper and the food may taste better. Home prepared food can be made with less fat, sodium and sugar.
3. Prepare a shopping list, clip coupons for foods you usually buy, and compare grocery ads for best prices to avoid impulse buying and save money.

Shop Wisely

Shop when you are not tired or hungry and when you do not have to take your children. Learn how stores are trying to trick you with their advertising gimmicks. For example, stores will often place higher priced items at eye level or at the end of the aisle. To avoid spending extra money, go down an aisle and look for items that are on sale.

Prevent Waste

Handle and store food properly. When running errands, buy groceries last. Shop for frozen and cold foods last and put these foods in the same bag(s) or an insulated cooler, but **do not** place meats in the same bag as other foods. Put groceries away as soon as you get home. Separate foods into meal size portions and freeze in a plastic container with a lid. Use or freeze refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension



Odor Problems in Your Refrigerator or Freezer

If food has been allowed to spoil in a refrigerator or freezer, the strong odors associated with food spoilage may be extremely difficult to remove.

The first step is to remove shelves, crispers, and ice trays. Wash them thoroughly with hot water and detergent. Then rinse with a sanitizing solution (1 tablespoon unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water). Wash the interior of the refrigerator and freezer, including the door and gasket, with hot water and baking soda. Rinse with sanitizing solution as above. Leave the door open for about 15 minutes to allow free air circulation. If the odor remains, try one of the following methods:

- Place trays of activated charcoal, clean kitty litter or baking soda on the shelves of the refrigerator or freezer. Run the appliance empty for 2 or 3 days. Activated charcoal can be purchased from stores that sell aquarium and terrarium supplies.
- Place freshly ground coffee on cookie sheets in the refrigerator or freezer and close the door. Again, run the appliance empty for 2 or 3 days. A slight coffee odor may remain but will disappear after washing and rinsing.
- Pack each refrigerator or freezer shelf with crumpled newspaper. Set a cup of water on the top shelf or sprinkle the newspaper with water. Allow the refrigerator or freezer to run for approximately 5 or 6 days. This method is time consuming, but effectively removes strong odors.
- Several commercial products are available for removal of refrigerator and freezer odors. These products may be purchased at hardware, grocery, discount and variety stores.

If the unit has been off several days, it is possible the odor has gone into the insulation. If the odor has penetrated the insulation, much work is needed to get it out. An air compressor might be needed to blow air into this section of the unit. If the above methods do not satisfactorily take care of odor problems, it may be that drippings from meat or fish leaked into the insulation. This problem would require servicing by a refrigerator technician, who may have to remove the liner and replace the insulation.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)