one of the most important things you can do to stay well as you age is to choose a diet that is nutritious and appealing. Many older adults are either living alone or with one other person. This provides unique challenges when shopping for and cooking nutritious meals. Cooking for one or two people can be simple and enjoyable by following the suggestions outlined in this brochure.

PLANNING A MENU

- Plan ahead to help save time, energy, and money when shopping for and preparing meals.
- ② Include foods from each of the food groups by following the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Provide variety in taste, color, texture, and temperature to make meals more enjoyable.
- Balance higher cost meals with lower cost meals to help you stay within your budget.
- Plan ahead for days when other commitments make it necessary for you to eat a very quick meal with little preparation or cleanup. Use leftovers, eat a frozen dinner, or take a break and eat out.

SHOPPING FOR FOOD

- ✓ Use your menu plan to make a grocery list and keep the store layout in mind when making your list. If someone else does your shopping for you, include the brand name(s).
- ✓ Buy larger packages only if you will use it. It's not a good deal if it's wasted! Non-perishable items such as pasta and rice can be bought in bulk, but remember you need to have enough storage space.
- ✓ Purchase perishable items in packages and quantities that you will use before they spoil. Individual serving packages are options to consider.
- ✓ Buy fresh produce in varying stages of ripeness to avoid spoilage.
- ✓ Purchase generic brands of items that you find are acceptable.
- ✓ Freeze items that you don't plan to use in a day or two. For example, keep a two to three day supply of deli meat in the refrigerator, and freeze the remainder in packages for additional one to two day supplies.
- ✓ Use coupons only for the items you typically buy.

- ✓ Consider the pros and cons of convenience foods. Some are more expensive, but will cut down on labor and time. Consider your schedule, preferences, and budget.
- ✓ Ask store personnel for assistance if you don't see what you need.

COOKING FOR ONE OR A FEW

- ◆ Divide your favorite recipes in order to make a smaller amount, or prepare the full recipe, divide into one or two serving portions, and freeze for later use. Always label the frozen dinner with the name of the item and date.
- ◆ Cook once, eat twice. Cook extra meat, pasta, rice, or vegetables. Set aside a portion for a meal later in the week and immediately chill. Then continue preparing the rest of that night's meal.
- ◆ Invite others over. Take turns cooking at each other's house or have several friends get together and each bring part of the meal.
- ◆ Use smaller pots and pans. Food will cook faster, and they are easier to handle.
- ◆ Be creative! Make up new recipes using ideas from old ones. Combine ingredients to make new salads and casseroles.
- ◆ Play music, decorate the table, or use the "good dishes" to make mealtime more enjoyable and to stimulate your appetite.

Resources

• There are several cookbooks written especially for those cooking for one or two people and/or

for older adults. Check out your local bookstore or <www.amazon.com>. Here are a few suggestions:

Cooking for 1 or 2. Greenberg, Katherine and Kyte, Barbara. San Leandro, CA: Bristol Publishing Enterprises, Inc., 1993.

The Essential Arthritis Cookbook. The Arthritis Center and Dept. of Nutrition Sciences, University of Alabama, Birmingham. Mankato, MN: Appletree Press, Inc., 1995. 1-800-322-5679

- Cook It Quick website: www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/family/ciq/htm
- The American Dietetic Association website: <www.eatright.org> and Nutrition Information Hotline: 1-800-366-1655. Or write to them at 216 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago IL 60606-6995

For more information, call your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office.

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