

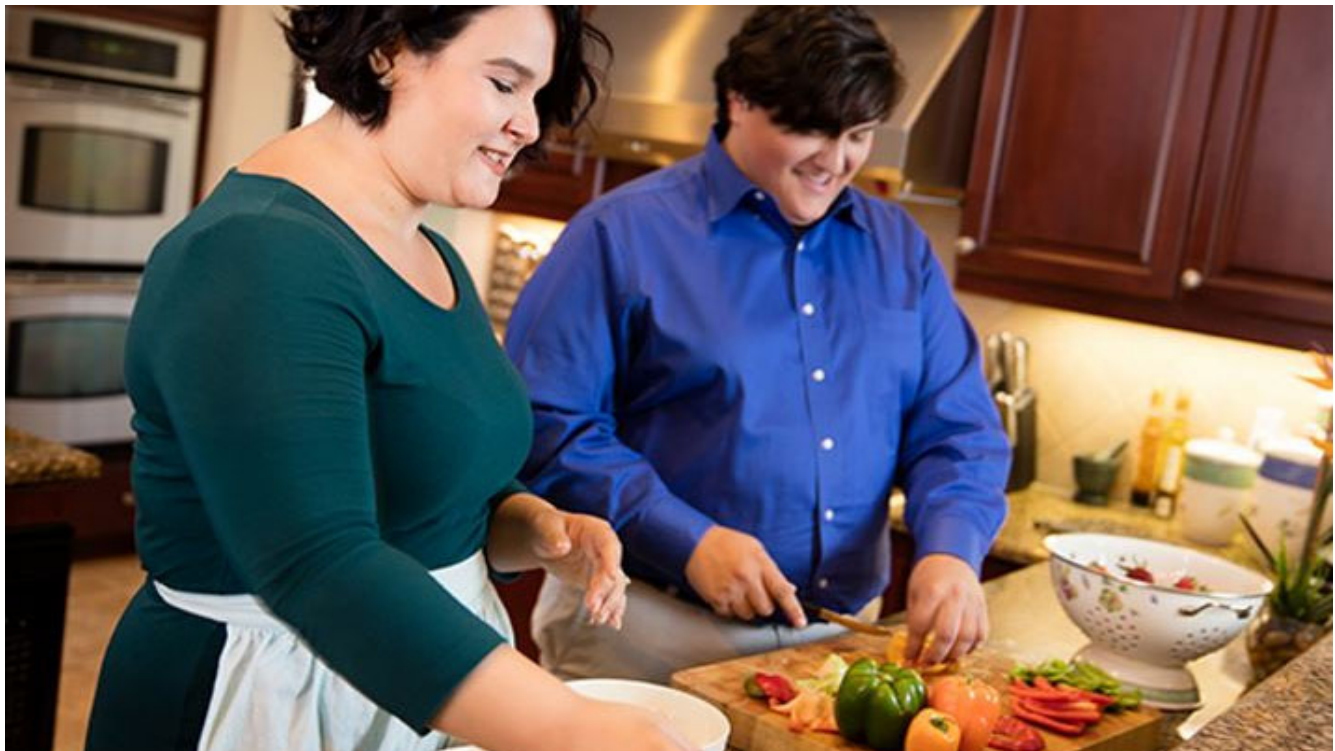
## Cooking Tips

# Cooking Tips for One or Two

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It can be tricky when cooking for one (or even two) to make the most of your ingredients and to minimize dishes — particularly when many recipes focus on making a meal for a family and serve four to six people. But just because you have a smaller household doesn't mean you should abandon the kitchen for takeout.

The first step to dinner-for-one success is by making cooking nutritious and satisfying meals a priority. Planning ahead and arming yourself with a few tips and tricks will put you on the path to triumph in the kitchen.

A helpful strategy when cooking for one is to become friends with your freezer. This way, you can cook full recipes, portion out servings and freeze them to heat up and eat later. You'll save time, money and clean up by freezing soups, chili, pasta dishes, cooked whole grains and extra vegetables.

Here are more kitchen tips when cooking for one to two:

#### Grains

- Cook a batch of whole grains such as brown rice or barley and freeze in individual portions using a muffin pan. Once frozen, the discs can be stored in a zip-top bag.
- Have a six-pack of whole-grain English muffins or a whole loaf of bread? Tuck those extras into the freezer for another day; wrap them tightly in plastic wrap to prevent freezer burn.
- Visit the bulk bins at your local grocery stores. You can buy exactly what you need with no waste and it's often less expensive per pound. In addition to grains, you can score a deal on dried herbs and spices as well as nuts, seeds and dried beans.

#### Veggies and Fruits

- Embrace frozen produce, which can be just as nutritious as fresh and it's there when you need it. Choose options without added sauces, salt and sugar. Since they're already chopped up, frozen fruits and veggies are ready to add to smoothies, soups and stir-fries. And because they're frozen, there is no rush to use them before they spoil.
- Bulk bags of fruits and veggies are only a better deal if you eat them before they spoil. Buy only what you can reasonably eat before the produce perishes: take extra grapes or cherries out of the bag and pare down that bunch of bananas to what you'll eat.
- Enjoy your most perishable fresh produce, such as berries and spinach, early in the week. Save heartier produce including cabbage, carrots and potatoes for meals later in the week.

#### Protein: Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Beans

- Unopened blocks of tofu can be frozen and then thawed in the refrigerator when you're ready to prepare it. This makes the texture spongier and better at soaking up sauces and flavor.
- Eggs can be hard-boiled ahead of time and eaten over the next few days for an easy breakfast, snack or quick addition to salad.
- Buy a whole package of meat or poultry and wrap individual portions in freezer-safe paper; label each with the date and contents.
- Cooked dried beans are super affordable, versatile and may be frozen for later use. Thaw in the refrigerator or microwave.

- A potato masher can easily transform a can of pinto beans into delicious, refried beans — a pinch of cumin, garlic and chili powder and you're ready to eat!

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