

Extension Education  
Laurie Bates News Column  
Food Sense SNAP ED Program  
March 6, 2019

The benefits of Cooking at home!  
By Laurie Bates

Start off with manageable goals. Cooking at home has many benefits in both the health and financial sphere. Social benefits, too? You bet! If you have a functional stovetop, you can whip up delicious, healthy meals.

**Come to the USU Extension to get a starter kit for menu planning (Free).**

### **Health Benefits**

Restaurant food is often loaded with fat, salt, and sugar. Consuming this sort of food on a regular basis can wreak havoc on your body. Eating it occasionally won't do much to harm your body, but this is truly once in a while. Eating at home will help you learn to appreciate better food for you, especially if you choose to make healthier meals. Eating at home allows you to control your portion sizes as well. Most successful diets are simply portion control diets, where you eat less and move more. Using MyPlate to make sure you are getting all the variety and servings you need is a good place to begin.

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

### **Financial Benefits**

If you're wondering why a plate of fettucine alfredo costs more than \$15 at your favorite upscale Italian restaurant, it's because it's really a markup for the convenience you take advantage of by eating out instead of cooking in your own home. Getting rid of the need to eat out for lunch and bringing your own lunch might feel "nerdy" but it saves you a few dollars, and eventually a few dollars adds up over time. Plus, leftovers are fantastic. Who doesn't think spaghetti tastes better the next day?

**Social Benefits** Cooking at home also has some advantages in your social life as well. If you have children, countless studies over the years have asserted that families who sit down and enjoy meals together at a table tend to be healthier. Children especially receive benefit from this, as they are more likely to have better grades, less likely to try drugs, less likely to smoke cigarettes, and less likely to drink alcohol. Take the opportunity to use the \$20 you would have spent on a dinner out with your friends and instead invite them over. Cooking a healthy, filling meal for \$20 or less isn't hard, especially if you have eager friends who are willing to contribute a dish of their own. This gives you more time to sit and chat with your friends, enjoy your food as slowly as you want to, and maybe even play a few games afterwards!

### **Cooking at Home**

Eating at home can feel like a daunting task, especially if you are new to cooking or feel as if you don't have enough time to prepare a healthy meal after a long day at work. Start small and slow to work up to more dinners at home as you go. Need help? Come get some ideas at the Food Sense SNAP ED Free night classes by going online sign up at <http://extension.usu.edu/juab/foodse>