



Family & Consumer Sciences

Cent&ible Nutrition Program

Helping Families Eat Better for Less



Cook Once, Eat for 2 Weeks: What, Why, & How

What is *Cook Once: Eat for 2 Weeks*?

This program is a plan for preparing and freezing ahead main dishes for two weeks. The process takes about one day. It combines tasks and requires pre-planning but can really save time and money while improving nutrition and family time!

Why cook once for two weeks?

- Saves money by reducing food waste, eat out less, prepare inexpensive meals.
- Saves time by combining shopping and preparation tasks.
- Improves nutrition by eating meals prepared at home.
- Improves food safety by multi-tasking and concentrating on proper food handling.
- Enhances family meal time by spending time together at enjoyable family meals.
- Saves decision making by already knowing what is for dinner tonight.
- Shares work load by having the family join in the fun and prepare the dishes together.

How is it done?

1. Select recipes and create a shopping list. Organize your list by store sections.
2. Purchase all your food items. When possible, take advantage of store sales and coupons. Think about side dishes too!
3. The night before: cook ahead any large food items (example: chicken, Master Meat Mix, Master Mix, and Magic Mix), organize your work space. Place recipes in plastic bags and tape to cupboard doors. Create combined work areas for dishes using similar ingredients. Gather cooking dishes, storage items, marking pens, etc.
4. Combine similar tasks then divide the food. For example: chop onion for all the dishes, cook all the ground beef (except any needed for raw meat dishes like meatloaf). Remember to follow good food safety practices!
5. Create assembly lines. Prepare dishes together that use similar food items.
6. Label all food items. Use masking tape with the name of the food and preparation instructions. Tape the recipe in the plastic bag to the food, if needed. For freezer bags, use a marker and write on the bag. Add the date prepared.

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Cook Once, Eat for 2 Weeks, continued

7. Freeze food items. Some items need to quick-freeze on a pan before placing into bags, such as the Runzas. For other dishes, combine foods needed for the same recipe and tape together. For example if a dish call for $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated cheese added during the last 10 minutes of cooking time, place the cheese in a plastic bag, tape to the top of the pan and freeze together.
8. Mark your calendar so everyone knows that plan. Take food items out of the freezer the night before and thaw in the refrigerator.
9. Concentrate on great side dishes adding fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads and ice-cold milk to the meals.



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