

# Food \$ense

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program

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<http://fyi.uwex.edu/foodsense/>

**UW**  
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## Make Celebrations Fun, Healthy, and Active!

Holidays are a time to enjoy friends, family, and food. If we're not careful, it also can be a time for over-eating and weight gain. Eating healthy and being physically active can help us avoid those extra pounds and be a fun part of holiday parties and events.

- **Include all five food groups in your menu.** Use ChooseMyPlate.gov for ideas on adding whole grains, vegetables, fruits, fat-free or low-fat dairy, and lean protein.
- **Shop smart to eat smart.** Save money by offering foods that fit your budget. Buy in-season produce when it costs less and tastes better. Plan in advance and buy foods on sale.
- **Try out some healthier recipes.** Find ways to cut back on sugar, salt, and fat as

you prepare your favorite recipes. See Sue Keeney's article for more information.



- **Savor the flavor.** Avoid overeating by taking the time to pay attention to the taste of each bite of food.
- **Make moving part of every event.** Dancing, moving, and playing active games add fun to any gathering. Give gifts that encourage others to be physically active.
- **Set an example for healthy habits.** Keep in mind that children follow what the adults around them do - even at parties.

Source: *Make Celebrations Fun, Healthy & Active, Choose MyPlate 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series*

### Skillet Lasagna

*A popular family favorite made easy!*



1/2 pound ground beef  
1/2 onion, chopped (about 1/2 cup)  
3 cups spaghetti or pasta sauce (24 ounces)  
2 cloves garlic, minced, or 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder  
1 cup water  
8 ounces egg noodles  
1 package (10-ounce) chopped spinach, thawed  
1 container (12 ounces) low fat cottage cheese  
1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

1. Cook ground beef and onion in a large skillet or electric fry pan. Drain grease.
2. Add spaghetti sauce, garlic, and water to skillet. Bring to a boil. Add uncooked noodles. Stir and cover with lid. Turn down the heat and cook 5 minutes.
3. Add thawed spinach to the skillet. Cover and simmer 5 minutes.
4. Spoon cottage cheese over the top. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Put the lid on and let it heat another 5 to 10 minutes until heated through and noodles are tender.

Source: *Iowa State University Extension*

## Shop Smart to Eat Smart

Serving nutritious foods at celebrations doesn't have to cost a lot. Save money by offering foods that fit your budget. Buy in-season produce when it costs less and tastes better. Plan in advance and buy foods on sale. These tips can help you save money when planning fun, healthy celebrations.

**Celebrate the season.** Use fresh vegetables and fruits that are in season. They are easy to get, have more flavor, and are usually less expensive. Your local farmer's market is a great source of seasonal produce.



**Keep it simple.** Buy vegetables and fruits in their simplest form. Pre-cut, pre-washed, ready-to-eat, and processed foods are convenient, but often cost much more than when purchased in their basic forms.

**Stick to your list.** Plan out your meals ahead of time and make a grocery list. You will save money by buying only what you need. Don't shop when you're hungry. Shopping after eating will make it easier to pass on the tempting snack foods.

Source: *Smart Shopping for Veggies and Fruits, Choose MyPlate 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series*

## Don't Let Germs Crash Your Party!

Holidays are a great time to invite friends and family over to enjoy a meal. Leaving food out too long can leave the door open for uninvited guests—bacteria that can cause food borne illness.

Bacteria can double every 20 minutes in food kept at room temperature so it's important to keep HOT foods HOT and COLD foods COLD. Here are a few suggestions to help you keep unwanted "guests" from joining your party.

- **Follow the "Two-Hour Rule".**  
Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard food that has been there for two hours or more.
- **Cool and store leftovers.**  
Divide leftovers into several clean, shallow containers, allowing them to chill faster.
- **Arrange and serve on small platters.**  
REPLACE empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it. Many people's hands may have been taking food from the dish, which has also been sitting out at room temperature.

Source: *Holiday or Party Buffets, Food Safety and Inspection Service, United States Department of Agriculture*

## Vegetable Pasta Soup

*Make it your own by adding your favorite ingredients.*

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 cups chopped or sliced vegetables (like onions, carrots, and zucchini)
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) low sodium broth
- 2 cups water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning or dried basil
- 2 cups small whole wheat pasta
- 6 cups fresh spinach leaves (about 1/2 pound), thoroughly washed

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat until hot. Add onions and carrots. Cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are softened (about 3 minutes).
2. Stir in zucchini and canned tomatoes. Cook 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the broth, water, salt, and Italian seasoning or dried basil. Bring to a boil.
3. Stir in the pasta and spinach. Return to a boil. Cook until the pasta is tender, using the time on the package for a guide.



Source: *Iowa State University Extension*

## Get the Skinny on Fats

Fats can contribute flavor and tenderness to your favorite dishes, but too much may not be good for your health.

Butter, lard, margarine, and shortening are 'solid fats', that are solid at room temperature and contain a higher percentage of saturated or *trans* fats. Coconut oil is also solid at room temperature and considered to be the highest in saturated fat. These types of solid fats can contribute to "bad" LDL cholesterol levels.

Oils containing unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature and promote "good" HDL cholesterol levels. Olive, canola, and vegetable oils are good choices when cooking.

**Shrinking!** Always check the Nutrition Facts label for grams of saturated fat and *trans* fat. Choose a product with the lowest combined amount. Use solid fat cooking ingredients sparingly.

**Substituting!** If you do not like the taste of margarine, or do not wish to give up butter completely, consider using a light butter instead.

**Sneaking-In!** Select a product with a blend of butter and olive or canola oil. Typically, per serving, these products have less fat and calories than regular butter.

**Swap!** Replace the solid fat used in cooking with oil. This will provide the "good fat" you need.

Source: *Reduce Added Solid Fats - Butter, Margarine, and Shortening*, eXtension Foundation



### *Dear Sue Keeney...*

Meet Sue Keeney--your source of research-based information about nutrition and health! Readers of all ages like Sue's practical tips on eating for good health, stretching the food dollar & more!

Submit your question to Sue Keeney at [fyi.uwex.edu/foodsense/ask-sue-keeney/](http://fyi.uwex.edu/foodsense/ask-sue-keeney/)

Dear Sue,

My mother makes the best food for holidays. When I ask her for the recipe she tells me the food measurements by pinches, handfuls and "what looks like enough!" I don't understand how to cook like this but want my meals to taste like hers. How do you cook without a recipe?

Connie Fused

Dear Connie,

One thing that most great cooks have in common is PRACTICE! The more you cook the more comfortable you will get in making substitutions and adjustments to recipes.

Don't be afraid to make a mistake! You can adjust the flavor or texture of your dish along the way by adding more water or seasoning.

Many dishes can be made without a recipe. For example, soup can be made by mixing and cooking a protein food, vegetables, liquid, seasonings, and other desired ingredients.

When baking, recipes or measurements are more important. Small changes in a cake recipe (such as baking soda) could mean a flat cake.

I recommend looking at the SNAP-Ed Connection cooking section at <https://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/handouts-and-web-sites/cooking>. This site reviews many food preparation skills and tips which will help you feel more confident in your "experimenting."

Sue

Source: *Iowa State University Extension*

### MyPlate Tip

Liven up your meals  
with vegetables  
and fruits.



## Be Active this Holiday Season

Enjoy the holiday season to the fullest by adding an activity into your celebrations! Physical activity relieves stress and can create a fun and relaxing time for friends and family. Try including these activities into your traditions.

**Holiday Walks** — Encourage your family and friends to bring their sneakers with their dish to pass. After the meal enjoy a holiday walk together.



**Scavenger Hunt** —

Set up a holiday scavenger hunt that all ages can participate in. This can be done indoors or outdoors depending on the weather.

**Winter Activity** — Plan a group activity such as sleigh riding, ice-skating or snow-shoeing.

Source: *Finding Time For Activity During The Holidays*,  
North Carolina Cooperative Extension

## Kids in the Kitchen...

Holiday time also means sugar time for many kids. It is important to limit the amount of foods and beverages with added sugars kids eat and drink. Sweet treats and sugary drinks have a lot of calories but few nutrients.



While limiting sweets also encourage kids to:

- Drink Water
- Eat Vegetables and Fruits
- Try New Foods

Find more ideas at [www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips)

Source: *Cut Back on Your Kid's Sweet Treats*,  
*Choose MyPlate 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series*

WNEP education is supported by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), UW-Extension, FoodShare Wisconsin, and local partners. In Wisconsin, FoodShare can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about FoodShare, call or go to <http://access.wisconsin.gov>. To learn more about the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program in your county, please contact:

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Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

For any other information dealing with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues, persons should either contact the USDA SNAP Hotline Number at (800) 221-5689, which is also in Spanish or call the **State Information/Hotline Numbers** (click the link for a listing of hotline numbers by State); found online at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact\\_info/hotlines.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm).

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