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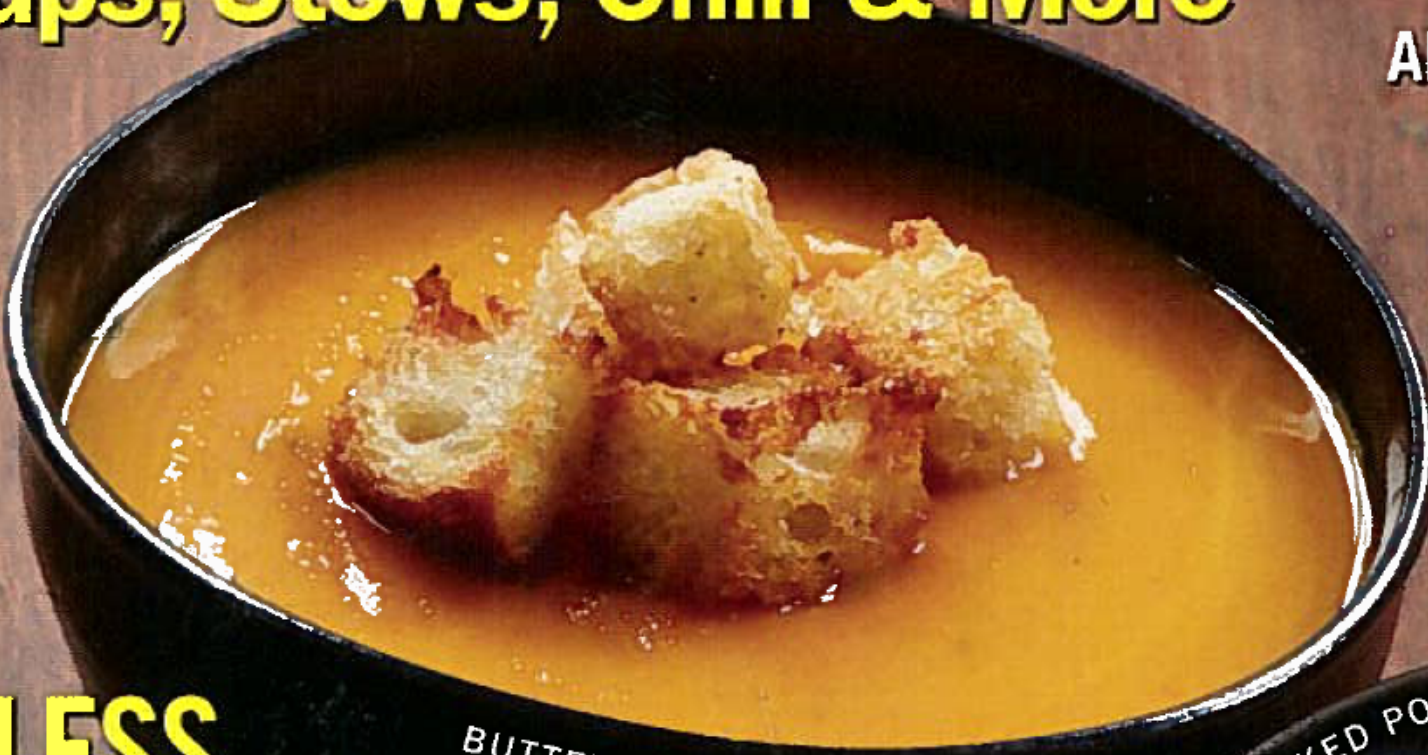
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FAMILY MEAL MAKEOVERS

WHETHER YOU'RE OUT OF WHAT'S-FOR-DINNER IDEAS OR JUST LOOKING TO UPGRADE YOUR MEALS, LET US HELP. WE FOUND THE SECRET RECIPE FOR NUTRIENT-PACKED, INEXPENSIVE AND EASY-TO-PREPARE DISHES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WILL LOVE.

BEFORE

"Healthy foods are too pricey."



AFTER

"A smarter list means I spend less."



BEFORE

"Takeout is all I have time for."



AFTER

"I learned shortcuts for getting dinner on the table faster."



BY JESSICA GIRDWAIN • ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIGY

OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE TO EATING RIGHT

Rethink your shopping list with these tips for dishing up a nourishing meal.

PROBLEM #1

"Healthy foods are too pricey."

CUT BACK ON ORGANIC Just buy it for foods on the newly extended "Dirty Dozen" list—produce with the highest levels of pesticide residue, including apples, celery, sweet bell peppers, peaches, strawberries, imported nectarines, grapes, spinach, lettuce, cucumbers, domestic blueberries, potatoes, green beans and kale. But don't stress if you can't afford organic, says Sarah Krieger, a registered dietitian in Saint Petersburg, Florida: "The fact that you're buying fruits and veggies is more important."

CHILL OUT Produce is cheapest when you buy it in season, so pick up those blueberries on sale in the summer and freeze them for up to six months. Another way to enjoy pineapples, asparagus and more in the winter: buy frozen. They're time-saving too, since no washing or chopping is needed.

BUY BULK Save almost 90% on pantry staples by shopping the bulk bins. Lentils, oats, nuts, pastas, spices and dried fruit are available in grocery stores like Whole Foods, Fresh Market, Wegmans and more. Scoop, bag and buy only what you need to cut down on waste and spend less.

PROBLEM #2

"Takeout is all I have time for."

SIMPLIFY Start building a repertoire of 20-minute throw-together meals like stir-fries and salads. Elizabeth Somer, R.D., author of *Eat Your Way to Happiness*, considers this one of her go-to dinners: Broil frozen salmon in the oven, microwave sweet potatoes and open a bag of prewashed dark leafy greens to toss with store-bought vinaigrette. Visit familycircle.com/quickmeals for more healthy 20-minute dinner ideas.

BRING KIDS INTO THE KITCHEN A mom of three, Krieger suggests asking children to wash produce and toss salad with dressing, stir omelets and sauces, or even season vegetables with salt and pepper. An added perk: less pickiness. "They want to eat what they make," she says.

BUY READY-COOKED Bust out of your white rice rut and speed things up with packaged precooked brown rice, lentils, polenta and other hearty sides.

PROBLEM #3

"I have no idea what's the right amount to be eating."

FOLLOW THE RULE OF PALM You've probably heard that a standard serving of meat is 3 ounces, or the size of a deck of cards. But this isn't exactly accurate, since everyone in your family has different appetites and calorie needs. Instead, eat a serving of meat or grain that's the size of each person's palm, suggests Erin Palinski, R.D., author of *Belly Fat Diet for Dummies*.

SET THE MOOD Pretend you're eating in your favorite fancy restaurant by dimming the lights and playing relaxing music. According to a recent Cornell University study, that strategy helped diners eat 133 fewer calories—enough to help you lose 14 pounds in a year.

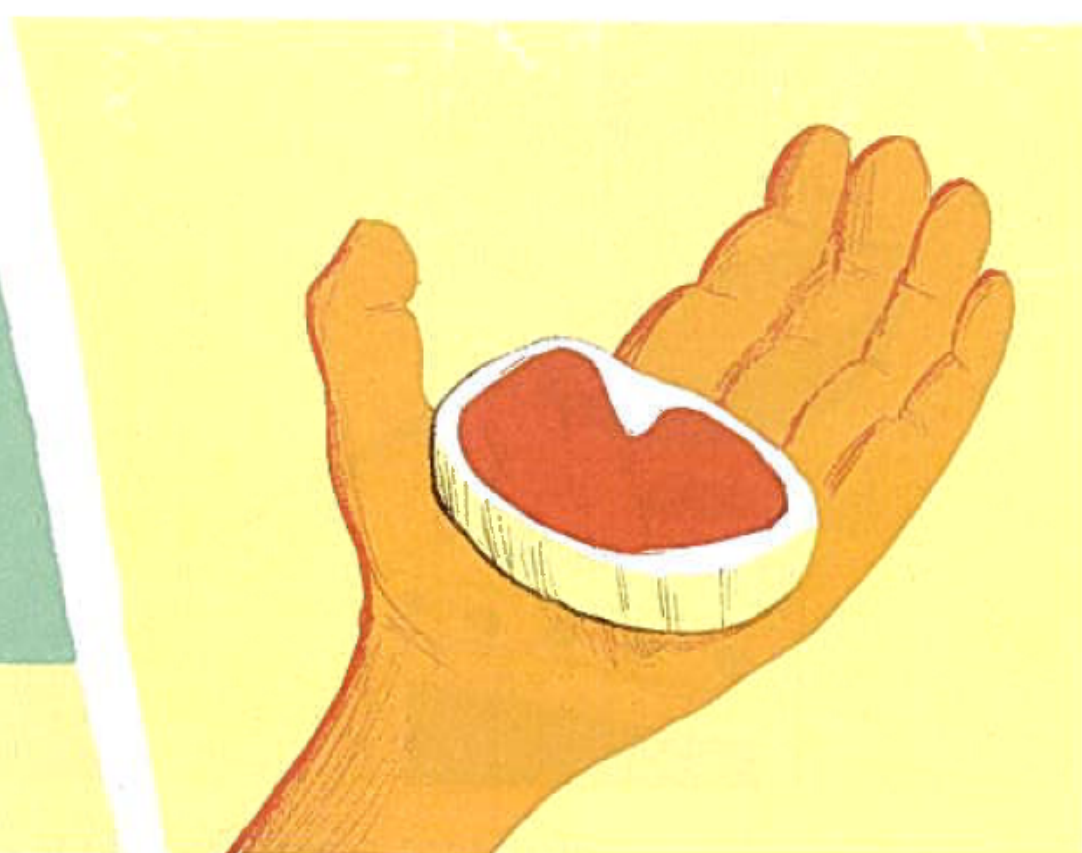
BEFORE

"I have no idea what's the right amount to eat."



AFTER

"The rule of palm helps me control our portion sizes."



BEFORE

“Water is my family’s last-choice beverage.”



AFTER

“I made water more exciting, and now it’s our go-to drink.”



SIZE THINGS UP You might be surprised to learn what a cup of cereal, a tablespoon of oil or an ounce of nuts actually looks like. “It’s a common mistake to think you’re pouring a tablespoon of olive oil into the pan when really it’s a quarter cup—that’s a difference of 360 calories!” says Somer. Measure every time you cook for a week and you’ll be able to eyeball it much better.

PROBLEM #4

“Water is my family’s last-choice beverage.”

MAKE H2O MORE INTERESTING Try this trick from Rachel Beller, R.D., nutritionist on *The Biggest Loser*: Add mint leaves, frozen blueberries, pomegranate seeds, lemon wedges or cucumber slices to plain water. Or create a mocktail with sparkling water, a splash of juice (cranberry, grape or pomegranate) and a lime wedge.

PUT IT IN PLAIN SIGHT Fill a pitcher with water and store it front and center in the fridge. Easy access makes it more likely that kids will drink up. Staying hydrated with cold water boosts metabolism. Plus, research shows children gain less weight if they replace just one soda a day with a calorie-free beverage.

TOTE IT Moms should aim for 72 ounces of water daily to help maintain energy, since dehydration can lead to fatigue. That may seem like a tall order, but if you sip throughout the day, you’ll easily reach your quota. Encourage the habit

HOW HEALTHY ARE YOUR FAMILY DINNERS?

1. Which best describes the color of the food on your family’s plate?

- a) Varying shades of beige (chicken and rice)
- b) Beige (chicken and rice), and a bit of green (a few broccoli florets)
- c) Red, green and yellow (vegetable medley) with some beige (chicken)

Best answer: C. A rainbow of color means everyone is getting lots of produce. Plus, introducing variety can boost veggie intake by more than half a serving, according to new Penn State research.

2. What do your kids snack on before dinner?

- a) Sliced red peppers and cucumbers with hummus
- b) Crackers and chips
- c) Nothing—it’ll ruin their appetite

Best answer: A. You eat 47% more of the food that you serve yourself first at a meal, finds Cornell University. Give

kids the chance to munch on crudité’s before dinner to sneak in an extra serving of veggies.

3. How many times a week do you serve fish?

- a) Never—my kids won’t eat it
- b) Twice a week
- c) A few times per month

Best answer: B. Skipping fish may mean your kids are deficient in an omega-3 fatty acid called DHA, a nutrient that can improve reading scores, says a recent study. If they absolutely won’t eat fish, try foods fortified with DHA, like soy milk, cow’s milk or eggs.

4. How often do you cook with spices?

- a) Not much because my kids prefer plain foods
- b) Only if a recipe calls for a specific spice
- c) I try to sprinkle them on everything

Best answer: C. Spices can

easily add nutrition, so use them frequently. Add turmeric, an anti-inflammatory, to rice or jarred marinara sauce. Red pepper flakes (for the adults) have been shown to boost metabolism; sprinkle in soups, stews and chili. Blood-sugar-regulating cinnamon is great on popcorn, on oatmeal or in smoothies.

5. What’s a good source of protein besides meat?

- a) Tofu
- b) Some vegetables
- c) Beans and legumes

Best answer: All the above. Children ages 9 to 18 need between 34 and 52 grams of protein daily. Look beyond chicken nuggets and burgers with a serving of tofu (9 grams of protein), a cup of asparagus (3 grams), a cup of cubed butternut squash (2 grams) or a half cup of lentils (9 grams).



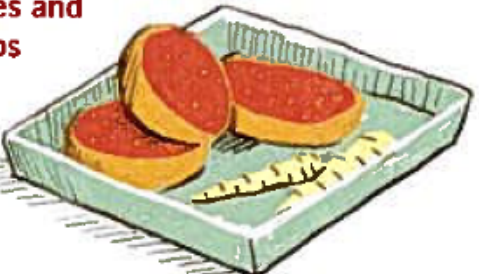



by keeping one water bottle on your desk, another on the counter at home and a third in your car. “It’s a constant visual reminder,” says Palinski.

familycircle.com

From purple carrots to almond milk, we share six health foods your crew will crave at familycircle.com/6totry.

SMART SWAPS

Simple switches to go from guilty to good-for-you pleasure in no time

Replace this...	With...	Because...
Low-fat sour cream	Low-fat Greek yogurt 	Greek yogurt cuts 40% of the calories and 2 grams of fat per 2-tablespoon serving. Try it in dips and dressings.
Bread crumbs in your homemade meatballs or sprinkled on a casserole	Wheat germ 	Wheat germ is a superior source of brain-sharpening B vitamins and vitamin E. Substitute in a one-to-one ratio or use a half-and-half mixture, suggests Elizabeth Somer, R.D.
Frozen french fries	Roasted sweet potatoes and parsnips 	Oven-roasted fries let you control the fat, calories and sodium. Sweet taters and parsnips offer more calcium and fiber than white potato fries.
Heavy cream in your favorite sauce	Nonfat evaporated milk 	"You won't miss the calories," says Candice Kumai, author of <i>Cook Yourself Sexy</i> , and it looks and tastes similar. Add in a one-to-one ratio.
Ground beef in tacos	Tofu crumbles, soy crumbles, ground turkey or ground chicken 	Tofu, for example, has one-third the calories of ground beef and almost no saturated fat. Buy firm tofu, crumble with a fork and cook with taco seasoning, says natural foods chef Peter Berley, author of <i>The Flexitarian Table</i> .
Boiling rice in water	Boiling rice in V8 juice 	This substitution sneaks in lycopene, a cancer-protective antioxidant found in tomatoes. Cook 1 cup rice in 2 cups low-sodium V8.



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