

## **Cooking for 1 or 2: Lesson Outline**

Objective: Participants will learn that it is possible to cook delicious and healthy meals for only one or two people.

### **Introduction:**

Start by saying: *“Preparing a meal for a family or guests often brings a sense of accomplishment, but making a dinner you’ll be eating alone can seem like a big effort with small reward. It’s not always easy to come up with great tasting, healthy meals that don’t require a lot of work or make a week’s worth of leftovers. Many people end up saying ‘Why bother?’ Today we’re going to explore ways to make cooking for 1 or 2 more rewarding”.*

Begin by asking your audience: *“Who are some people that often eat alone?”* This question will get them thinking that there are many people, not just senior citizens, that eat alone each day. Help them see that there’s nothing unusual about eating alone. Teenagers do it after sports practice, parent’s do it when they are kept late for work, single persons of all ages may eat solo almost everyday. According to the Bureau of Census, the number of single-person households in the US have increased at almost twice the rate of all households during the past 25 years. Someone now lives alone in more than one in five of all U.S. households.

Ask participants: **“Why is shopping for 1 or 2 difficult?”**

Have the group brainstorm on this topic. — They will probably list many reasons why shopping for 1 or 2 is difficult (many package foods contain too much to eat at one meal, all the foods they like come in large size packages that are cheaper than the small size ones, recipes are usually for 4 or more servings, etc.)

### **Helpful Shopping Hints**

Here are some helpful hints on shopping:

1. Keep a running list of things you need to buy and staples you are out of.
2. Keep dry milk on hand. You can use it in cooking and for drinking; it is inexpensive and requires little storage space. If getting groceries home from the store is a problem, a package of dry milk is easier to carry than cartons of fresh milk. Nonfat dry milk contains the same protein, calcium and riboflavin as fresh milk and is low in calories and has no fat.
3. Shop during the week or during the day (10:00 am - 4:00 pm) when stores are less crowded. Try not to shop when you feel hungry.
4. Take your list and coupons with you.
5. Comparison shop. Try different stores until you find one that has the items you like at the best prices.

6. Compare brands -- often store and generic brands are just as comparable as name brands.
7. Compare container sizes -- Large size, get-more-for-your-money packages, aren't a good deal if you end up throwing away food. Smaller size packages allow for greater variety.

**Stimulate Discussions:** Here are some questions you can use to get your audience to think about this topic:

**1. What convenience foods are available to simplify food preparation?**

(A few examples to get you started)

- Shredded cheese
- Pre-chopped vegetables
- Salad bar foods
- Quick cooking rice
- Bulk foods that you can buy as little or as much as you need
- Frozen vegetables in bags -- it's easy to remove just the amount you'll eat, then back into the freeze with the rest.
- Small size canned fruits and vegetables
- Single-serving cans of soup and tuna
- Single sticks of string cheese
- Single pieces of fresh fruit at various stages of ripeness. For example, buy a ripe banana to eat right away and a green one that will ripen in a few days.

**2. Do you tend to eat more or less when you are alone than when you are with others? Why? What are the potential nutritional concerns?**

**3. What vegetables and grains are easiest to prepare in small quantities?**

**4. How much do you need to eat in a day?** You can discuss the food guide pyramid and serving sizes. Have your audience figure out how much they need to eat from the 5 food groups each day.

**Storing Food Properly**

Say: **“Proper storage of food makes the difference in whether you will be able to use it or lose it. Many grocery items just are not available in single-serving sizes, so if you can not use the whole thing at once, you will be forced to repackage and store it. Do not buy more than you can store and use in a reasonable length of time. Twenty-five pounds of rice is no bargain if you throw out twenty pounds of it!”**

Discuss with participants **“Repackaging”** and **“Preparing Food For Another Meal”** and discuss ideas presented.

Ask participants: **“Are there alternatives to eating alone?”**

Eating alone is one of the biggest obstacles to cooking and eating well. Planning some social eating into your schedule may be the best motivation to plan and eat well. Ask your audience for ideas on how to make eating alone more interesting and fun. Remind that getting into the rut of eating the same food because it is easy, compromises their nutritional standing -- variety is the spice of life!

### **General Cooking for 1 or 2 Information**

Enclosed are several handouts that can be used with this topic. Please use them as you see fit with the needs of your audience. Review the information on the handouts with your audience. Teach the information in an interactive, facilitative manner using visuals, asking questions, sharing answers and experiences. You may choose to use some of the handouts prepared for the Food Safety lesson “Food Safety Shopping Tips I & II, “Keep Your Foods Safe to Eat I & II,” and “Food Safety Reminders” for the food safety part of this lesson.

Activities:     Reading Labels Activity  
                  Meal Planning Activity

Handouts:     Cooking for 1 or 2 (recipes)  
                  How to Cut a Recipe Down  
                  Prevent Boring Meals

**FOR INSTRUCTOR USE ONLY — NOT TO BE DUPLICATED**



**University of Illinois \* United States Department of Agriculture \* Local Extension Councils Cooperating**

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

The Family Nutrition Program is funded with Food Stamp Administrative funds by the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.