You don’t need to have a gourmet kitchen to be a good cook, but having some kitchen equipment essentials can make cooking a breeze. These are some useful pieces of equipment. Check (X) the ones you already have.

- **Large, nonstick skillet:** probably the most important pan in your kitchen.
- **Chef’s knife:** used for chopping, slicing and mincing vegetables and also for cutting meat.
- **3-quart saucepan:** used to make rice, sauces, gravies and small batches of soup and to boil vegetables.
- **8-quart pot:** used to boil spaghetti noodles and make soups and chili.
- **Colander:** great for washing fruits and vegetables and separating liquids from solids.
- **Cutting board(s):** protects your counters from sharp knives. Ideally, have separate boards for cutting meat and produce. Always wash cutting boards thoroughly between uses.
- **Dry and liquid measuring cups and measuring spoons**
- **Heat-resistant spatula**
- **Can opener**
- **Paring knife and/or vegetable peeler**
- **Mixing bowl(s)**
- **Instant-read thermometer:** essential piece of equipment to ensure food safety. It allows you to check the doneness of foods you are cooking so you do not overcook or undercook.
- **Slow cooker:** although not essential, it is handy to have.
THE SLOW COOKER: A BUSY COOK’S BEST FRIEND

Mix your ingredients into a slow cooker in the morning, turn it on and leave. You’ll come home at the end of a long day to a flavorful, fully cooked, ready-to-eat meal.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ALREADY?
(The answers are on page 6.)

1. True or false? Lifting the lid off the slow cooker to check on your food is advised.

2. What types of meat work best in the slow cooker?
   a) Tender, expensive cuts
   b) Less tender, less expensive cuts

3. True or false? For best results, fill your slow cooker all the way to the top.

Try these tips for using a slow cooker:

- Get your ingredients ready the night before. Then all you have to do in the morning is put them in the cooker and turn it to the desired setting.

- Spray the slow cooker with cooking spray or use the slow cooker liner bags before adding ingredients. This will make cleanup much easier.

- To save money, choose less expensive cuts of meat. Slow cooking these meats will result in flavorful, tender dishes at a much lower price.

- For best results, fill the slow cooker between one-half and two-thirds full.

- Do not lift the lid off the cooker unless absolutely necessary.

- Divide the leftovers from a large slow cooker of food into meal-size portions and freeze for future quick meals.
**Choose the Right Slow Cooker For Your Needs**

Compare sizes and choose the one that works for your situation. The 6-quart option is good for preparing larger quantities of food. If you plan to freeze leftovers for future meals, this size is recommended. If you do not plan to be home when the cooking time is up, consider buying a model with a timer. It automatically will switch to a “warming” option when the cooking time is up.

**Here are some cooking times for common slow cooker dishes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Type</th>
<th>Approximate Cooking Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roast</td>
<td>8 to 12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribs</td>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisket</td>
<td>8 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss steak</td>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat loaf</td>
<td>5 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken – breast</td>
<td>6 to 8 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken – dark meat</td>
<td>8 to 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked potato</td>
<td>8 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked sweet potato</td>
<td>6 to 8 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>2 to 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry beans (soaked and preboiled for 10 to 15 minutes)</td>
<td>8 to 9 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>4 to 8 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup</td>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stew</td>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casseroles</td>
<td>6 to 10 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The times above are estimates only. The cooking times will vary according to the amount of food being cooked, the size of pieces and the type of other ingredients cooked with the food. If using a slow-cooking recipe, be sure to follow the cooking times suggested in the recipe.


*For more information, check the manual for your slow cooker.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
<th>Snacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MON.</strong></td>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Deli turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread</td>
<td>Slow Cooker Chili* topped with shredded cheese</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>Baby carrots w/ dipping sauce</td>
<td>Wheat crackers</td>
<td>Almonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TUES.</strong></td>
<td>Whole-grain waffle with peanut butter</td>
<td>Tuna and lettuce in a pita pocket w/ light mayo</td>
<td>Baked potato topped with leftover Chili* and shredded cheese</td>
<td>Pear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Side salad w/ choice of dressing</td>
<td>Nonfat yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WED.</strong></td>
<td>Scrambled eggs</td>
<td>Pita pizza: top 1 pita with tomato sauce, cheese and choice of toppings. Microwave or bake until cheese melts.</td>
<td>Easy Slow Cooker Chicken*</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole-wheat toast</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>1 c. steamed broccoli</td>
<td>Almonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Brown rice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THURS.</strong></td>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Chicken salad w/ diced leftover chicken, salad greens, other veggies if desired, and choice of dressing</td>
<td>Mexican Egg Scramble*</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>Pita bread</td>
<td>Whole-wheat toast</td>
<td>with peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRI.</strong></td>
<td>Whole-wheat toast with peanut butter</td>
<td>Grilled tomato and mozzarella sandwich</td>
<td>Leftover chicken breast from Wednesday</td>
<td>Pear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>Baby carrots w/ choice of dipping sauce</td>
<td>Baked Sweet Potato Fries*</td>
<td>Almonds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Side salad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAT.</strong></td>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>Grilled turkey sandwich</td>
<td>1 c. brown rice mixed with 1 tsp. olive oil,</td>
<td>Baby carrots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>Side salad</td>
<td>1 c. steamed vegetables and ¼ c. black beans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Salt and pepper to taste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUN.</strong></td>
<td>Yogurt with blueberries</td>
<td>Canned soup</td>
<td>Waffle sandwich: toast 2 waffles, and top with turkey and cheese. Bake in oven until golden brown and crispy</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wheat toast</td>
<td>Wheat crackers</td>
<td>Side salad</td>
<td>with peanut butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Side salad</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td>Skim milk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grocery List

Read through the recipes and check your supplies to see what and how much you need.

**Grains**
- 1 loaf whole-wheat bread
- 1 box whole-wheat toaster waffles
- 1 package pita pockets (preferably whole wheat)
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal
- Wheat crackers

**Dairy**
- 1 gallon (or more) skim milk
- 2 (6-ounce) containers nonfat yogurt
- Shredded cheese of choice

**Meat**
- 4 frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 can tuna
- 1 carton of eggs
- Deli turkey

**Vegetables**
- Salad greens (such as spinach, romaine)
- 1 bag baby carrots
- Fresh broccoli (precut makes using it easy)
- 1 tomato
- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 baking potato
- 1 onion

**Canned Goods, etc.**
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans
- 2 (15-ounce) cans kidney beans
- Tomato soup (or soup of choice)
- Peanut butter
- 1 small jar pizza sauce
- 1 large can low-sodium tomato sauce
- Olive oil or other oil (such as canola or sunflower oil)
- Garlic powder and chili powder
- Salad dressing (your choice)
- Other condiments such as mayo, mustard and ketchup if desired

**Fruit**
- 4 apples
- 2 bananas
- 4 oranges
- 2 pears
- 1 bag frozen blueberries (or fresh if in season)

To save money, compare unit prices (price per ounce) on the store shelving.
**Easy Slow Cooker Chicken**

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
1 pkg. dry Italian dressing mix  
1 c. warm water

Thaw chicken in the refrigerator overnight or in microwave (followed by immediate cooking). Place chicken in slow cooker, sprinkle with dressing mix and pour water over the chicken. Cover and cook on low heat for eight to 10 hours. Chicken should reach an internal temperature of 165°F.

**Makes four servings.** Per serving: 140 calories, 1.5 g fat, 2 g carbohydrate, 720 mg sodium, 0 g fiber

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**Baked Sweet Potato Fries**

1 large sweet potato  
1 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut off ends of potato, peel and slice lengthwise into strips. In medium bowl, toss potatoes with oil until evenly coated. Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt if desired. Bake about 30 minutes, or until edges are crisp and potatoes are cooked through. Serve immediately.

**Makes two servings.** Per serving: 140 calories, 7 g fat, 19 g carbohydrate, 1,200 mg sodium, 3 g fiber

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**Key to Abbreviations**

- tsp. = teaspoon  
- pkg. = package  
- Tbsp. = tablespoon  
- g = grams  
- c. = cup  
- mg = milligrams  
- oz. = ounce  
- lb. = pound
**Mexican Egg Scramble**

1 whole egg plus 2 egg whites*
¼ c. canned black beans, drained and rinsed
¼ c. shredded cheese
2 Tbsp. salsa

Drain and rinse black beans. Scramble the eggs with beans and cheese. Top with salsa.

**Makes one serving.** Per serving: 280 calories, 15 g fat, 13 g carbohydrate, 820 mg sodium

*Note: Using egg whites reduces the fat and calories in the dish. Egg white is an excellent source of protein.

**Slow Cooker Chili**

1 large can low-sodium (or unsalted) tomato sauce
1 lb. lean ground beef
2 cans beans (kidney beans are fine, but you can use whatever you’d like)
2 Tbsp. chili powder
¼ c. diced onion

Shredded cheese (optional)

Cook the ground beef in a separate pan until cooked all the way through. Add all ingredients, except cheese, and cook in the slow cooker for four to six hours on high. Sprinkle with shredded cheese if desired. Serve with whole-wheat crackers.

**Makes six servings.** Per serving: 270 calories, 14 g fat, 35 g carbohydrate, 14 g fiber, 75 mg sodium

_Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D._
Food and Nutrition Specialist

NDSU Nutrition Education in the Community Students:
_Katie Myrold_, Student Dietitian, Lead student writer
_Leah Gramlow_, Student Dietitian
_Joan Nagel_, Student Dietitian

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