



We're Cookin' Now!

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This month, we are focusing on heart-healthy meals, heart-warming family connections and personal savings that you will love as you eat, connect and savor the savings. We also encourage you to share the content and share your family table experiences on our Facebook page.

- **Please Join Us!** The Family Table Day will be held the third Thursday of every month. Check out the resources on The Family Table website (www.ag.ndsu.edu/familytable) as your family joins you in the kitchen.

Eat

Does your family enjoy avocados? These foods actually are a fruit, a “berry” to be exact. They are rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and can be used in salads, soups, guacamole or hummus, grilled or used in tacos, as shown in this month’s recipe. See www.californiaavocado.com/recipes for many tasty recipes. For this month’s recipe, your child can help rinse and/or chop vegetables, measure ingredients, assemble the tacos and clean up the kitchen.

- Looking for a special chocolate dessert your kids can help make? Check out the four-ingredient chocolate mousse with a secret ingredient. (<https://tinyurl.com/4ingredientchocolatemousse>)



Video: How to Cut Up an Avocado

Cutting an avocado can be a little tricky, especially for children. This video (<https://tinyurl.com/peelanavocado>) shows one way to cut an avocado using a knife and spoon. An adult should “whack the seed with a knife” to remove the seed. Kids can help cut the soft flesh.



Lean and Spicy Tacos

- 1 c. tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium avocado, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. cilantro flakes
- 1 pound extra-lean ground beef
- 3 Tbsp. low-sodium taco seasoning mix
- 3 Tbsp. onion, minced
- 10 whole-wheat tortillas
- 2 c. shredded lettuce
- ½ c. fat-free shredded cheese
- Optional: favorite taco sauce, refried beans or black beans

Mix tomatoes, avocado and cilantro flakes in a small to medium-sized bowl. Spray frying pan with nonstick cooking spray and turn to medium heat. Add ground beef and taco seasoning. Use a spoon or spatula to break up ground beef. Cover pan and let cook for a few minutes, then add minced onions. Continue cooking and stirring occasionally until beef is browned and fully cooked (about 10 minutes). Warm tortillas in microwave about 15 seconds. Prepare each taco by placing beef on a tortilla, then lettuce and tomato mixture. Sprinkle cheese on top and serve.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 240 calories, 8 grams (g) fat, 16 g protein, 26 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 410 milligrams sodium.

Connect

Some of our deepest connections with the past revolve around food and the people we have shared that food with in our lives. You may have had the experience of catching a whiff of a familiar food that brought you back to an earlier time.

Cinnamon rolls baking reminds you of staying overnight at grandma's house. The tangy smell of spaghetti sauce brings back memories of holiday dinners with great-grandpa. Frying bacon conjures up happy camping trips with parents and siblings.

Make your own deep connections with others by trying one of these loving ways to share food this month:

- Track down the recipe to one of those dishes that make you feel warm and loved by the memory of the people you shared it with in your growing years. Make the recipe and share the food and the memory with your own family.
- Make a meal for a family going through a difficult time. Invite the family to your home to eat it or deliver it to the family with a heartfelt note.
- Invite someone who normally eats alone to join your family for an ordinary family meal. It's nothing fancy, with no extra forks or candles, just warm conversation and healthful food.
- Organize a neighborhood or work group "hot dish brigade" for someone who has lost a loved one.
- Start a recipe box or book with each of your children. Write out their favorites, date the entries, have the child illustrate and watch how preferences change as they grow.



Savor (the Savings)

Buying snacks for your family can really cut into a grocery budget. Planning ahead and taking a little extra time to prepare so you have snacks when kids (or you) are hungry can help you save. Buy some snack bags and little plastic cups/dishes with lids to store your ready-made snacks. Here are some items you can prepackage for a quick snack:

- Peanut butter crackers are easy to make by just taking two crackers and putting a little peanut butter between them. Put four to six of these in a snack bag for an easy grab-and-go snack.
- Make your own trail mix. This way, you can put whatever you like in it. Make a large batch and then separate it into snack bags.
- Precut veggies can be expensive. Cut your own and prepackage them in snack bags. If you want a dip (or peanut butter) to go with the veggies, put a little in a plastic cup.
- Precut fruit also is expensive. Wash and prep your fruit and place in snack bags. Not all fruits will last a long time after being cut, but berries or grapes work well for this. Again, if you want a dip to go with them, put a small amount in a plastic cup.
- Pretzels or crackers are easy to prepackage into snack bags.
- Cutting and packaging your own meat and/or cheese can help you save money.

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