



"Your Local
Health Department"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Celebrate Family Dinner Month

Coldwater, MI – The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to help you celebrate Family Dinner Month with a few recipes that you can make with WIC foods and fresh fruits and vegetables purchased with Project FRESH coupons. According to the Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health, “frequent family meals (more than three per week) increase self-esteem, a sense of well-being, positive social behaviors, and stronger family relationships.” In addition, studies in the Journal of Adolescent Health provide significant, measurable scientific proof about the positive, lifelong benefits of family meals. “With this one simple act of dining together, parents are presenting an opportunity to promote the healthy development of children,” says Yvonne Atwood, Director of Personal Health and Disease Prevention at the local Health Department, “as a result, children will have a greater sense of belonging and closeness.” Family meals nourish the spirit, brain, and health of all family members and regular family meals are linked to higher grades and self-esteem and delayed sexual activity. Children who grow up sharing family meals are more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior as adults, such as sharing, fairness, and respect. With each additional family meal shared each week, adolescents are less likely to show symptoms of violence, depression, and suicide, less likely to use or abuse drugs or run away, and less likely to engage in risky behaviors or delinquent acts.

Here are a few recipes that are family and budget friendly that will keep your family sitting and chatting at the dinner table night after night:

Creamy Chicken and Brown Rice Casserole (Serves 8)

Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups cooked brown rice
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen broccoli cuts
- 3 cups shredded cooked chicken breast
- 1 cup plain low fat yogurt
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) 98% fat-free cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 12 butter crackers, crushed into crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Directions

Preheat oven 350°F. Spread rice in bottom of medium casserole. Arrange frozen broccoli on top of rice. Layer chicken evenly over broccoli. Combine yogurt, soup and broth in medium bowl and mix until smooth. Spoon yogurt mixture evenly over chicken. Sprinkle cracker crumbs on top, and drizzle with melted butter. Bake, uncovered, 35 minutes or until heated through and crumbs are golden.

Fiesta Stuffed Peppers (Serves 6)

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 small onion, dices
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. ground turkey
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ cup salsa
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 ½ cups cooked brown rice
- 2 red peppers
- 6 Tbsp. shredded cheddar cheese

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a medium skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and cook about 2 minutes. Add ground turkey, salt, and cumin. Cook for 4-5 minutes or until the turkey is completely cooked through. Add salsa and ½ cup of the chicken broth to the turkey mixture and simmer on low for 5 minutes. Add the cooked rice and remove from heat. Prepare the peppers by cutting each in half lengthwise and removing the seeds. Spoon turkey and rice mixture into each pepper half and place in a rimmed baking dish. Top each with 1 tablespoon cheese. Pour the remaining chicken broth in the bottom of the pan. Cover with foil and bake for 45 minutes.

Sweet Potato and Black Bean Quesadillas (Serves 8)

Ingredients

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 Tbsp. low-sodium taco seasoning
- 8 whole wheat tortillas
- 1 cup pepper jack cheese, shredded

Directions

Pierce the skin of the sweet potato with a fork and microwave for 5 minutes on high and allow to cool slightly. Cut the sweet potato in half lengthwise and scoop the flesh into a medium bowl. Mash the sweet potato until smooth. Add beans, cilantro, and taco seasoning mix to the mashed sweet potato and mix well.

To cook the quesadillas, heat a skillet over medium heat. Spread 1/8 of the sweet potato mixture evenly on half of a tortilla. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of cheese and fold tortilla in half. Place the quesadilla in the skillet and cook 3-4 minutes, or until cheese starts to melt. Flip and cook for an additional 1-2 minutes or until the tortilla is golden brown.

Don't forget that Project FRESH coupons expire on October 31st. If you have questions about WIC, please visit our website at www.bhsj.org, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC or stop into one of our four locations.

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