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NUTRITION REBOOT: AS COVID ERA DRAGS ON, FAMILY MEALS DON'T HAVE TO GET STALE

Getting kids involved in the kitchen teaches valuable skills, takes burden off of parents and is fun!

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) Wednesday, October 14, 2020 - Months into the COVID-19 pandemic, many parents are falling into a rut when it comes to cooking healthy meals for their families. The [American Dairy Association Mideast](#) is helping families stay on track nutritionally while also having a little fun in the kitchen, offering breakfast, lunch, snack and dessert recipes that are simple enough for kids to learn, include a healthy balance of good nutrition and are bound to become new family favorites.

As we all try to find ways to safely move forward while the pandemic wears on, work and school situations are in constant flux, making it harder than ever for parents to strike a balance. Many find themselves cooking less, ordering takeout more and opting for the quickest and easiest meal they can find, which may not be the healthiest.

"A lot of parents think they have to take this all on themselves, but kids can be a big help in the kitchen and a few simple cooking skills can empower them to create healthy meals and take some stress off of busy parents," said Lisa Andrews, MEd, RD, LD, a registered dietitian from Cincinnati, Ohio. "It's a great opportunity to talk to kids about what's in their food and how to create a balanced meal, while also teaching them vital skills that will be valuable long after this pandemic is over."

Focusing on meals and snacks that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and dairy ensure families are getting the nutrition they need. Dairy provides nine essential nutrients and delivers protein to fuel the entire family through the day. Helpful recipes include [Double Blueberry Greek Yogurt Waffles](#) for breakfast, [Easy Cheese Quesadillas](#) for lunch, [Creamy Red Lentil Butternut Squash Soup](#) for dinner and [Roasted Red Pepper Greek Yogurt Hummus](#) for a snack to energize your day.

Andrews has a few simple tips for getting the kids involved in the process and making meal time as smooth as possible:

- **Keep Nutritious Staples on Hand** - Having some nutritious and versatile staples in the kitchen can take a lot of the work out of meal planning. Frozen fruits and vegetables,

shredded cheese, whole grain rice and pasta are good to keep on hand. And having handy a jar of pesto or those convenient squeeze tubes of garlic and ginger will help spice up meals and are easy for kids to use without a lot of chopping. You can also sauté some onions and peppers and keep in the fridge. What doesn't make it into tonight's quesadillas can be thrown into tomorrow's pasta. It's also a good idea to stock your fridge and pantry with healthy snacks, like string cheese, nuts, fruit and yogurt, for kids.

- **Get the Kids Involved** - Different skills are appropriate for different age groups, but getting the kids involved in making meals can be a big help, whether they are taking over dinner one night a week or are just able to make themselves lunch while learning at home. These skills will build over time and will serve them well into their future.
- **Have Fun!** - Get creative, explore recipes on Drink-Milk.com and try something new. Sharing an adventure in the kitchen with your family can be a welcome break from the stress of today's world and you never know what you'll discover until you break out of your cooking comfort zone. For Andrews, it was an apple and cheddar quesadilla that was a bit of an experiment but is now a regular on their menu.

"I have two teenagers at home, so it can be difficult to keep up with them and make sure they're eating right," said Andrews. "Communication has been key, letting them know what's in the kitchen for them to make, as well as keeping things in the house that I know they like and pack a big nutritional punch. My oldest has fallen in love with [whipped coffee](#), which is fine with me because I know she's getting a serving of milk and not too much added sugar."

Discover something new at Drink-Milk.com, where you'll find breakfast, lunch, snack and dessert recipes to create and enjoy with the whole family.

MULTIMEDIA AVAILABLE: For broadcast quality b-roll and sound bites and high resolution stills, you can access the American Dairy Association Mideast's multimedia newsroom here: <https://bit.ly/2HTUUoR>

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