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**One or Two**

# EMPLOYED HOMEMAKER



Texas Agricultural Extension Service  
The Texas A&M University System  
Daniel C. Pfannstiel, Director · College Station, Texas

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## Cooking for One or Two

Marilyn A. Haggard\*

More and more Texas families have only one or two members. Meal planning, food buying and meal preparation pose unique problems for singles and couples. These problems prompt many small families to settle for convenience foods and snacks, leading to monotonous meals and poor nutrition. A little advance planning and new techniques can make meals for one or two more enjoyable and nutritious.

Simple meals are easier to plan, purchase and prepare. Plan meals on a weekly basis and then post the menus in the kitchen as a reminder to follow them. Consider the food on hand and make a grocery list. The amounts and types of food you buy depend upon the methods of food preparation you prefer and the storage available. Generous freezer space lends versatility to meal planning. Cook large batches of items such as spaghetti sauce, barbecue and casseroles that are easy to freeze. Boilable freezer pouches are great for one or two servings and reduce waste and cleanup time. For oven dishes, try this idea. Line serving-size oven dishes with foil, fill with food and freeze. Once frozen, remove the item from the dish, seal the foil, label and return to the freezer. Later, simply return the item to the original dish, heat and serve.

### Main Dishes

Main dishes take a large share of the food dollar, so plan their purchase and use wisely. Instead of cooking a whole roast or steak, divide each into serving-size portions and freeze individually. Prepare each section into serving-size portions and freeze individually. Then prepare each section in a different manner for variety. Here are some suggestions for preparing round steak.

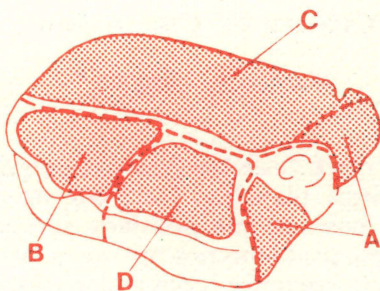
#### Round Steak Cut-up

1. Cut across bone end of steak, following natural seams. Remove bone and small pieces of meat (A and B) and cut into chunks to use for stew or soup (including bone if desired), or grind. Makes one serving.

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\*Extension foods and nutrition specialist, The Texas A&M University System.





Round Steak (1¼ to 1½ inches thick).

2. Separate top round (C) from bottom round (D) by cutting along natural seams. The larger top round is the most tender part of the steak. Score, if desired, marinate, and broil to rare or medium. Carve in thin slices across the grain. Makes two to three servings.
3. The bottom round (D) can be chilled and cut into thin strips for braising or marinating and stir-frying. Or it can be sliced into two thin steaks, pounded and braised as for Swiss steak. Makes two servings.

#### Teriyaki Steak Strips

½ cup soy sauce	¼ cup dry white wine
2 tablespoons minced onion	2 to 2½ pounds round or sirloin steak, thinly sliced (sections C of round steak)
1 clove garlic, minced	
1 tablespoon sugar	
1 tablespoon ginger	2 tablespoons salad oil

Make marinade by combining soy sauce, onion, garlic, ginger and wine. Pour marinade over meat. Let set at room temperature, covered, for 2 to 3 hours or overnight in refrigerator. Drain meat thoroughly. Pour oil in wok and preheat to 375°F., about 2 minutes. Place half of the steak in wok and stir fry for 4 minutes or until browned and tender. Push up the side. Repeat with remaining meat. Reduce heat to "warm" for serving. Serve over rice, noodles or toasted English muffins. Serves six to eight.

Poultry offers tremendous versatility. The best buy in chicken is generally whole fryers. If you do not know how to cut up a chicken, it is worth the time and money saved to learn. Package the cut pieces in serving-size portions, label and freeze.

Pieces that are not baked or fried can be saved and frozen to use for chicken and dumplings. Cook these "spare parts" in a small amount of water. Remove the pieces from the broth and cool until just slightly warm and remove the meat. Place the meat in the broth, top

with canned biscuits or fresh biscuit dough, cover and simmer for about 20 minutes. For your personal touch, add your favorite seasonings to the broth before adding biscuits.

Turkey parts available in most markets are well suited to small families. Stewed or baked, these meats make excellent salads, sandwiches and casseroles.

Canned tuna and other fish varieties are convenient because they are easy to store and come in handy for emergencies. Watch for sales and stock up when prices are at their lowest. Purchase frozen fish and ask the butcher to cut it into individual portions so that you will not have to defrost more fish than you can eat at one meal.

Try pork chops baked with half an apple and topped with a pat of butter or margarine and a touch of brown sugar.

Luncheon meats are time-savers and waste-free main dishes. Again, you can package individual servings and freeze them to add variety to your menus.

## Leftovers

Leaving leftover foods in the refrigerator until they are no longer edible is a needless waste of money and food. Prepare smaller portions if you or your family prefer not to eat reheated foods. Even with the best of planning, however, foods will be left over from time to time.

With "Create-A-Casserole," leftovers can become planned-overs.

### Create-A-Casserole

*Meat or fish:*  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup of cooked or canned meat; either  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound ground beef,  $\frac{1}{2}$  can luncheon meat or 1 small can tuna or salmon.

*Cooked or canned vegetables:*  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cooked vegetables or  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a 16-ounce can, drained; or  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce frozen package, cooked and drained. Save the remaining amount for soups or stews. Use green beans, peas, carrots, broccoli, lima beans or corn.

*Starchy food:*  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup of noodles, macaroni, rice, potatoes, spaghetti, corn or sweet potatoes.

*Sauce:*  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup medium white sauce or  $\frac{1}{2}$  can condensed soup (tomato, mushroom, celery or cream of chicken).

*Crunchy topping:* cracker crumbs, dry cereal, potato sticks, fried onion rings (may be canned), bread crumbs or crushed stuffing mix. Sprinkle on top.





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For all casseroles, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt and pepper or enough to suit your taste. For extra seasoning, add one or more of these:  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup chopped onion, celery or green pepper cooked in oil or margarine for a few minutes.

To mix your creation, add seasoning and salt to meat. Grease baking dish. Make layers. Start with the starchy food, then add the vegetables and finally the meat. Top with crunchy topping. Bake uncovered at 350°F. until bubbly (about 20 minutes). Double the recipe and freeze individual servings for later use.

## Vegetables

Vegetable dishes provide excellent nutrition and unbeatable flavor for meals. Buy bags of vegetables and use only the amount needed for individual servings.

Steaming is a great way to cook frozen and fresh vegetables. Inexpensive steaming baskets are available at most grocery and department stores. You can cook two vegetables at once in one pan with a steamer and conserve nutrients and calories in the process. Fish can also be prepared quickly in this manner.

Marinate leftover vegetables such as carrots, all types of beans, beets, corn, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower in your favorite oil and vinegar salad dressing.

Proper storage of salad greens extends their life and convenience. Wash greens thoroughly before refrigerating. Remove as much excess moisture as possible and store in an airtight container. Tear the greens just before serving to prevent the edges from turning brown.

Congeaed salads add variety and keep well in the refrigerator for several days. Keep them tightly sealed to prevent moisture loss.

## Breads and Cereals

Rice, noodles, spaghetti, oatmeal, barley and other cereal products can be bought in large quantities to save money. Be sure to store them in airtight containers to keep them fresh. Fresh breads often go stale or become moldy before they are used up in small households. Although breads retain quality best at room temperature, they can be stored in the refrigerator as well as in the freezer. However, if breads do stale, all is not lost. Cut the bread in cubes, butter and season the cubes lightly and then toast them in the

oven until dry. Use them as croutons in soups, salads or even snacks. Or toast the bread until it is dry and crush it with a rolling pin or run it over a grater for inexpensive bread crumbs.

## Dairy Products

Keep powdered milk available for baking. Cottage cheese and yogurt are great for light lunches or supper served with fresh fruit or a favorite bread. Quiche is a fancy name for a simple main dish pie made with cheese, milk and eggs. Once prepared, quiche can be sliced and frozen in individual servings or kept in the refrigerator for three to five days. Reheat quiche at a low temperature (250°F.) to prevent overcooking of the cheese and eggs. Add crumbled bacon, ham, turkey, chicken, fish or sausage for variety.

### Quiche

1 tablespoon butter or margarine	¼ teaspoon pepper
1 9-inch pastry shell, unbaked	⅛ teaspoon dry mustard
1½ cups (7 ounces) natural cheese, coarsely shredded (cheddar, Swiss or any combi- nation of favorite cheeses)	4 eggs
	1½ cups half-and-half or evaporated milk

Sprinkle shredded cheese in pastry shell. Mix seasonings and sprinkle with cheese. Beat eggs and half-and-half or evaporated milk together; pour over cheese. Bake at 375°F. for 40 minutes or until lightly browned and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean.

## Breakfast in a Hurry

Breakfast helps you perform and feel better in the morning. The first meal of the day does not have to be elaborate or time consuming but it should be nutritious and give you energy to start the day. Toast and juice with tea or coffee can be prepared in a matter of minutes and are a good start for those who usually do not eat breakfast. Later, try adding a small amount of protein to your morning meal with milk, peanut butter, cheese, eggs or meat. Protein for breakfast helps prevent mid-morning hunger and fatigue. Take time to sit down and enjoy the first meal of the day. Serve it on an attractive place setting.



Do you have trouble getting started in the morning? Lots of people do, but a little preparation the night before can make it easier. Set nonperishable breakfast foods out the night before. Also set the table before you retire. With an appliance timer you can put water and coffee grounds or tea into the pot at night and have freshly brewed coffee or tea ready the minute you awake!

For a more substantial breakfast, try:

**Omelettes:** Prepare the ingredients the night before and refrigerate. Add cheese, leftover meats such as chicken, turkey, sausage or ham for a hearty dish.

**Cheese toast:** Split leftover rolls, biscuits, muffins or cornbread and spread lightly with butter. Top with your favorite cheese and toast until cheese is melted. Serve hot.

**Peanut butter toast:** Spread bread with a small amount of butter and top with peanut butter. Toast until the peanut butter bubbles on the edges. Serve hot.

**Fruit shake:** Fill glass two-thirds full with milk. Add a mashed banana, strawberries or your favorite fruit and a tablespoon of honey or sugar. Mix well and drink your breakfast.

Breakfast does not have to consist of traditional fare. Try cottage cheese or yogurt and fruit, your favorite soup, sandwiches or hamburgers. When time allows, on weekends perhaps, try new recipes and menus to expand your breakfast-making skills. Regardless of what you choose, choose breakfast.

## References

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