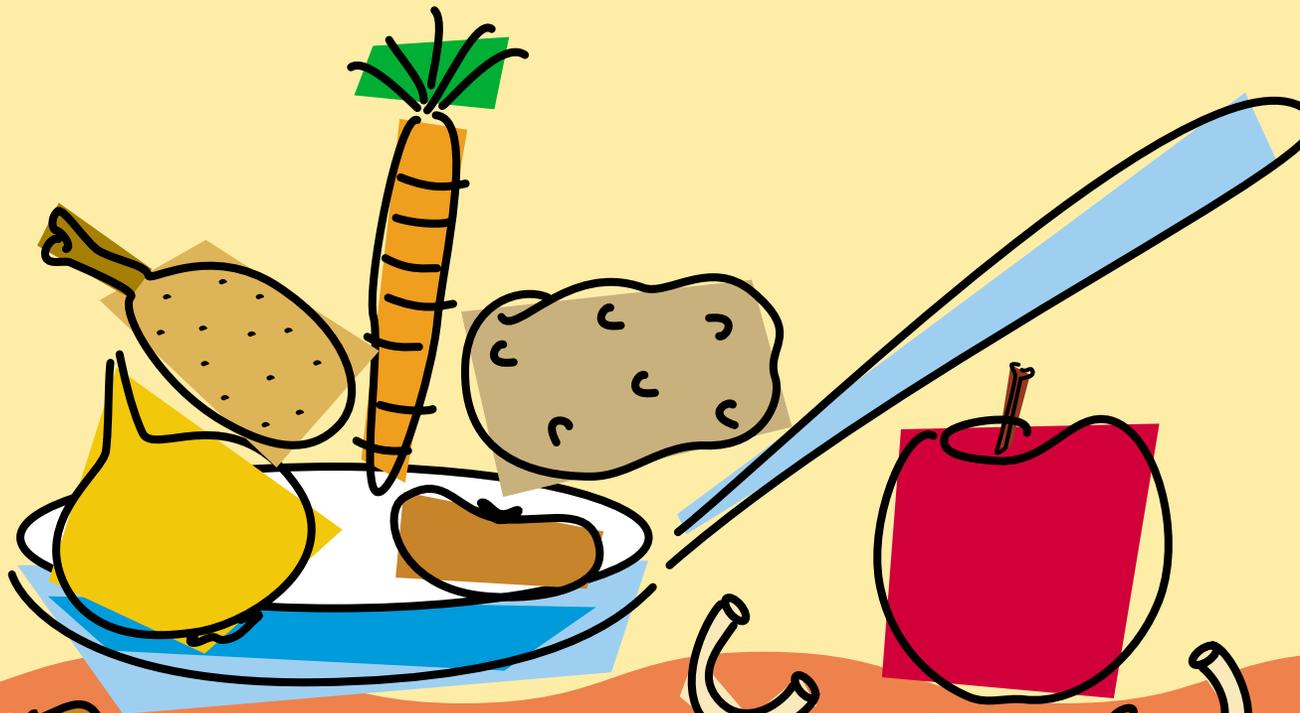
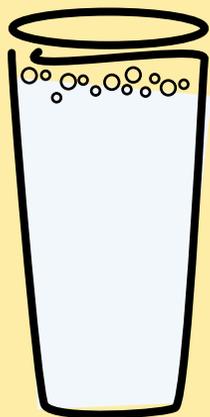


United States
Department of
Agriculture

Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion



Recipes and Tips for Healthy, Thrifty Meals

FOREWORD

The essence of nutrition guidance is to provide the public with the best information available to assist them in making wise and nutritious food choices to sustain life and good health. As public officials in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we are deeply concerned that Americans not only have enough food but also that the public has enough information to know what food to purchase and how to prepare it.

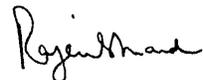
While a healthy diet is the cornerstone to good health, meeting that goal can be a challenge. That is why we are delighted to offer this publication to the public. *Recipes and Tips for Healthy, Thrifty Meals* is more than a cookbook. The book provides basic cooking and food safety guidance. The menus presented here conform to the recommendations

contained in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. The 40 recipes are quick, easy, tasty and economical.

We hope that you will find the recipes and other information provided in this book useful. At the back of the book is information on how to get more nutrition information. If you have comments or suggestions, let us hear from you.



Shirley R. Watkins
Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition and
Consumer Services



Rajen S. Anand, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 4

Tips for healthy, thrifty meals 5

Some best buys for cost and nutrition 8

Tips for healthy cooking 10

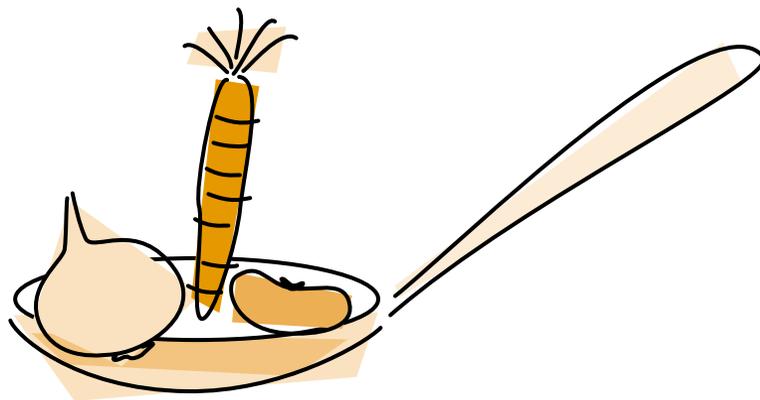
Keep your family's food safe 11

Menus for 2 weeks of meals 13

Recipes 18

Food lists for 2 weeks of meals 69

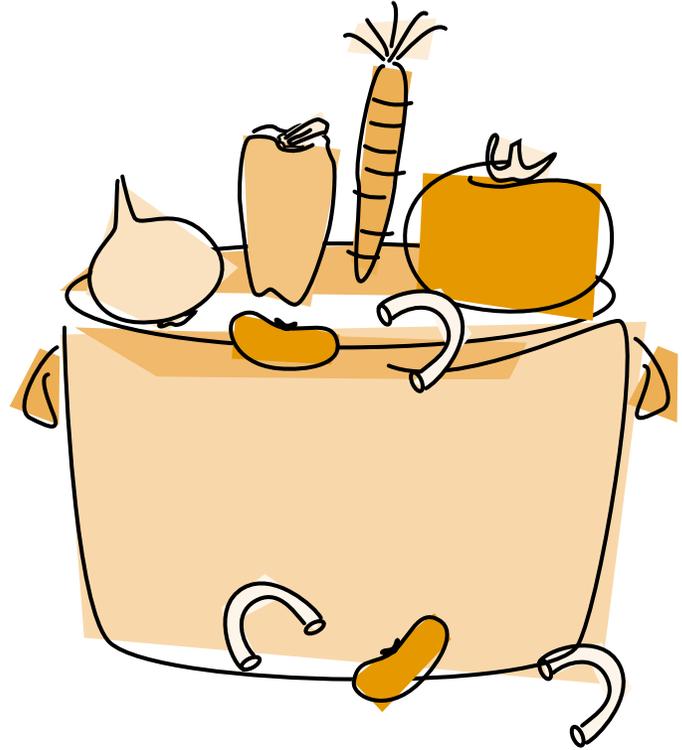
Recipe list 74



INTRODUCTION

How can you serve healthy meals on a limited budget? It takes some time and planning, but you and your family can eat better for less. This booklet can help you save money as you prepare healthy meals. It contains

- Tips for planning, shopping, and cooking healthy meals on a tight budget
- Sample menus for 2 weeks for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks
- Recipes for healthy, thrifty meals
- Lists of the foods needed for each weekly menu



TIPS FOR HEALTHY, THRIFTY MEALS

WHY PLAN MEALS?

To help you and your family be healthier. When you plan meals, you can make sure you include enough foods from each food group. Pay special attention to serving enough vegetables and fruits in family meals.

To help you balance meals. When you are serving a food with a lot of fat or salt, you can plan lowfat or low-salt foods to go with it. For example, ham is high in salt. If you have ham for dinner, you also can serve a salad or a vegetable that doesn't need salt.

To save money. If you plan before you go food shopping, you will know what you have on hand and what you need. Also, shopping from a list helps you avoid expensive "impulse" purchases.

To save time and effort. When you plan meals, you have foods on hand and make fewer trips to the grocery store. Planning also helps you make

good use of leftovers. This can cut your cooking time and food costs.

TIPS FOR PLANNING

Build the main part of your meal around rice, noodles, or other grains. Use small amounts of meat, poultry, fish, or eggs.

- For example, make a casserole by mixing rice, vegetables, and chicken. Or try Beef-Noodle Casserole (p. 22) or Stir-Fried Pork and Vegetables with Rice (p. 26).

Add variety to family meals. In addition to cooking family favorites, try new, low-cost recipes or food combinations.

- For example, if you usually serve mashed potatoes, try Baked Crispy Potatoes (p. 49) or Potato Salad (p. 58) for a change.

continued 

Make meals easier to prepare by trying new ways to cook foods.

- For example, try using a slow cooker or crock-pot to cook stews or soups. They cook foods without constant watching.

Use planned leftovers to save both time and money.

- For example, prepare a Beef Pot Roast (p. 21), serve half of it, and freeze the remaining half to use later. You also can freeze extra cooked meats and vegetables for soups or stews.

Do “batch cooking” when your food budget and time allow.

- For example, cook a large batch of Baked Meatballs (p. 20) or Turkey Chili (p. 39), divide it into family-size portions, and freeze some for meals later in the month.

Plan snacks that give your family the nutrients they need.

- For example, buy fresh fruits in season like apples or peaches. Dried fruits like raisins or prunes, raw vegetables, crackers, and whole wheat bread are also good ideas for snacks.

TIPS FOR SHOPPING

Before you go shopping

- Make a list of all the foods you need. Do this in your kitchen so you can check what you have on hand.
- Look for specials in the newspaper ads for the stores where you shop.
- Look for coupons for foods you plan to buy. But remember, coupons save money only if you need the product. Also, check if other brands are on sale, too. They may cost even less than the one with a coupon.

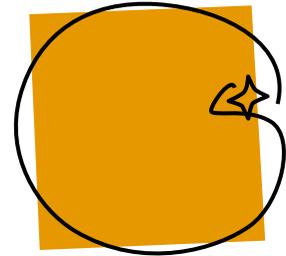
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While you shop

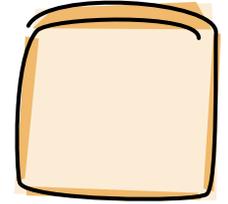
- When your food budget allows, buy extra low-cost, nutritious foods like potatoes and frozen orange juice concentrate. These foods keep well.
- Compare the cost of convenience foods with the same foods made from scratch. “Convenience foods” are products like fancy baked goods, frozen meals, and vegetables with seasonings and sauces. Most of these cost more than similar foods prepared at home. Also, you can use less fat, sugar, and salt in food you make at home.
- Try store brands. They usually cost less than name brands, but they taste as good and generally have the same nutritional value.
- Take time to compare fresh, frozen, and canned foods to see which is cheapest. Buy what’s on special and what’s in season.
- Prevent food waste. Buy only the amount that your family will eat before the food spoils.

Using label and shelf information

- Read the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods. Compare the amount of fat, sodium, calories, and other nutrients in similar products. This can help you choose foods that have less fat, sodium or calories, and more vitamins, minerals, and fiber.
- Use date information on packages—“sell by” and “best if used by” dates—to help you choose the freshest foods.
- Look for the unit price to compare similar foods. It tells you the cost per ounce, pound, or pint, so you’ll know which brand or size is the best buy. Most stores show the unit price on a shelf sticker just below the product.



SOME BEST BUYS FOR COST AND NUTRITION



BREADS AND GRAINS

Look for bargains on day-old bread and bakery products.

Buy regular rice, oatmeal, and grits instead of the instant and flavored types.

Try whole-grain bread and brown rice to add nutrients and variety to family meals.

VEGETABLES AND SALADS

Look for large bags of frozen vegetables. They may be bargains and you can cook just the amount you need, close the bag tightly, and put the rest back in the freezer.

Foods at salad bars can be costly. Some food items—lettuce, cabbage, onions, and carrots—usually cost less in the produce section of the store than at the salad bar. But if you need only a small amount of a vegetable, buying at the salad bar can save money if it reduces the amount you waste.

FRUITS

Buy fresh fruits in season, when they generally cost less.

continued 

MILK

Nonfat dry milk is the least expensive way to buy milk. When using it as a beverage, mix it several hours ahead and refrigerate so it can get cold before drinking.

Buy fresh milk in large containers (gallon or 1/2 gallon). These generally cost less than quarts.

Buy fat-free or lowfat milk to cut the amount of fat in your family's meals. Note that children under 2 years of age should be given only whole milk.

MEAT AND POULTRY

Look for specials at the meat counter. Buying cuts of meat on sale can mean big savings for you.

Buy chuck or bottom round roast instead of sirloin. These cuts have less fat and cost less. They need to be covered during cooking and cooked longer to make the meat tender.

Buy whole chickens and cut them into serving size pieces yourself.

DRY BEANS AND PEAS

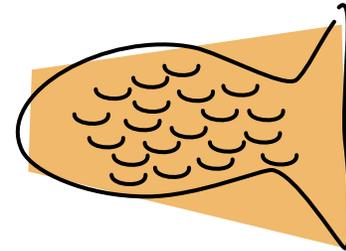
Use these sometimes instead of meat, poultry, or fish. They cost less and provide many of the same nutrients. They are also lower in fat.

BULK FOODS

Buy bulk foods when they are available. They can be lower in price than similar foods sold in packages. Also, you can buy just the amount you need.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY COOKING

- Go easy on fat, sugar, and salt in preparing foods. For example, make Oven Crispy Chicken (p. 37) instead of fried chicken or make Baked Cod with Cheese (p. 28) instead of fried fish. You don't have to leave out all the fat, sugar, or salt—just limit the amount you use.
 - Flavor foods with herbs, spices, and other lowfat seasonings instead of using rich sauces and gravy. Look for ideas about what seasonings to use in some of the recipes in this booklet, like Baked Meatballs (p. 20), Baked Spicy Fish (p. 29), and Turkey Chili (p. 39).
 - Make homemade desserts sometimes to save money and serve additional healthy foods to the family. For example, try a fruit crisp, like Peach-Apple Crisp (p. 65), or a pudding like Rice Pudding (p. 67).
- Remove skin from poultry before cooking to lower the fat content. For example, try Baked Chicken Nuggets (p. 34), Chicken and Vegetables (p. 36), or Oven Crispy Chicken (p. 37).
 - Always follow food safety rules in the kitchen to make sure that the food you prepare for your family is safe. See the next page.



KEEP YOUR FAMILY'S FOOD SAFE

Clean—wash hands and surfaces often:

- Always wash hands with soap and warm running water before handling food.
- Always wash cutting boards, knives, utensils, dishes, and countertops used to cut meat with soapy, hot water right away—before you use them for other foods.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, dishcloths, or sponges, wash them often, and every time they have touched raw meat, poultry, or seafood juices. Use hot soapy water or the hot water cycle of the washing machine.

Separate—don't cross contaminate:

- Store raw meat, chicken, turkey, and seafood in a sealed, wrapped container in the refrigerator.
- Keep raw meat, chicken, turkey, and seafood away from foods that will not be cooked and foods that are already cooked.

- Never place cooked food on a plate or cutting board that previously held raw meat, chicken, turkey, or seafood.

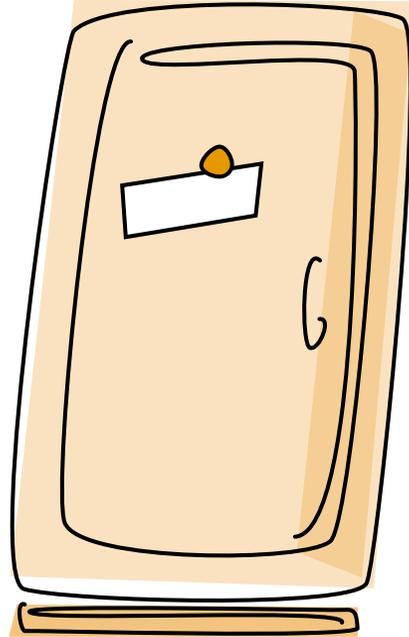
Cook—cook to proper temperatures:

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meats, chicken, turkey, fish, and casseroles are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
 - Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145° F.
 - Cook ground meat to at least 160° F.
 - Cook whole chicken or turkey to 180° F.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.
- Cook fish until it flakes easily with a fork.

continued 

Chill—refrigerate promptly:

- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter. You can also thaw foods under cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Or, use a microwave oven.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftover foods right away. Meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, and egg dishes should not sit out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below. Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air needs to circulate to keep food safe.



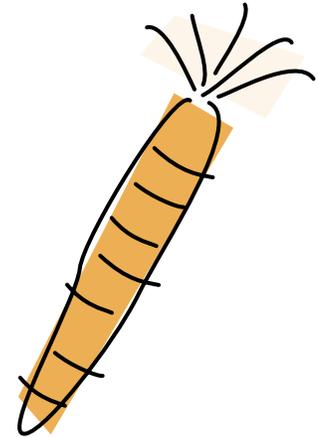
MENUS

These menus are not rigid guides and can be used in any order. They give suggestions for thrifty food choices and healthy ways to prepare foods. The foods used in the menus are a variety of commonly eaten meats, milk products, vegetables, fruits, grain products, and mixed dishes.

The daily menus show how you can combine a larger amount of less expensive foods, such as dry beans and grain products, with a smaller amount of

meats, poultry, and fish. Some convenience or ready-to-eat food items are included in the menus. However, many of the foods are prepared from “scratch” to keep cost as low as possible.

These menus and recipes are designed for a healthy four-person family. The amount listed after each food item is the **total amount** for a family with two adults and two children 6 to 11 years old.



WEEK 1. MENUS FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST						
Orange juice (3 c) Ready-to-eat cereal (3 c flakes) Toasted English muffin (4) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Banana (4) Bagel (4) Margarine (4 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Cooked rice cereal Bagel (4) Margarine (4 tsp)	Orange juice (3 c) Scrambled eggs (4) Hash brown potatoes (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Ready-to-eat cereal (3 c flakes) English muffin (4) Margarine (4 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Baked French toast Cinnamon sugar topping (4 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Baked potato cakes White toast (4 slices) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)
LUNCH						
Turkey patties Hamburger bun (4) Orange juice (3 c) Coleslaw (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Crispy chicken Potato salad Orange gelatin salad Peaches, canned (1 c) Rice pudding	Turkey chili Macaroni (2 c) Peach-apple crisp 1% lowfat milk (2 c) Orange juice (3 c)	Turkey ham (11 oz, 2 tbsp salad dressing) sandwiches (4) Baked beans Banana slices (2 c) Oatmeal cookies Orange juice (3 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Potato soup Snack crackers, low salt (5 each) Tuna pasta salad Orange slices (2 c) Oatmeal cookies 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Potato soup Snack crackers, low salt (5 each) Apple orange slices (2 apples, 2 oranges) (2 c) Rice pudding 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked fish (12 oz, 4 tbsp salad dressing) sandwiches (4) Crispy potatoes Macaroni salad Melon (1-1/3 c) Orange juice (3 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)

continued 

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
DINNER						
Beef-noodle casserole Lima beans (2 c) Banana orange salad (2 bananas, 2 oranges) (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Turkey stir fry Steamed rice (3 c) White bread (4 slices) Peach-apple crisp 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked cod w/cheese Scalloped potatoes Spinach (1-1/3 c) Margarine (4 tsp) Chocolate pudding (2 c)	Beef pot roast Noodles (4 c) Peas and carrots (1 c) Orange slices (2 c) Biscuits (8) Margarine (4 tsp) Rice pudding 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Beef pot roast (12 oz) Noodles (4 c) Green beans (1-1/3 c) Leaf lettuce (1-1/3 c) Salad dressing (4 tbsp) Rice pudding 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Saucy beef pasta White bread (4) Canned pears (2 c) Orange juice (3 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Turkey-cabbage casserole (8 c) Orange slices (2 c) White bread (2 slices) Chickpea dip 1% lowfat milk (2 c)
SNACK						
White bread (4 slices) Chickpea dip Lemonade (4 c)	Orange juice (3 c)	Crispy potatoes	Lemonade (4 c)	Biscuits (8) Margarine (4 tsp) Lemonade (4 c)	Lemonade (4 c)	

Recipes are provided for foods in **bold typeface**.

WEEK 11. MENUS FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST						
Orange juice (3 c) Hash brown potatoes (2 c) Biscuits (8) Margarine (4 tsp) Jelly (8 tbsp)	Orange juice (3 c) Ready-to-eat cereal (3 c toasted oats) White toast (4 slices) Margarine (8tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2c)	Orange juice (3 c) Bananas (1/2 c) Ready-to-eat cereal (3 c toasted oats) White toast (4 slices) Jelly (8 tbsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Cooked rice cereal White toast (4 slices) Margarine (8 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Ready-to-eat cereal (3 c toasted oats) White toast (4 slices) Margarine (4 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Scrambled eggs (2 c) Turkey ham (11 oz) Bagels (4) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Orange juice (3 c) Melon (1-1/3 c) Pancakes (12) Pancake syrup (8 tbsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)
LUNCH						
Chicken and vegetables Scalloped potatoes Grapes (12 oz) Whole wheat bread (4 slices) Margarine (4 tsp) Peach cake 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Pizza meat loaf Noodles (4 c) Margarine (8 tsp) Orange slices (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Tuna macaroni salad White bread (4 slices) Margarine (4 tsp) Apple slices (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c) Cocoa drink mix (2 oz)	Hamburger (12 oz) sandwiches (4) Ranch beans Orange gelatin salad Banana slices (1/2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked chicken nuggets Shoestring potatoes Macaroni (5 c) Margarine (4 tsp) Orange gelatin salad 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Chicken noodle soup Biscuits (8) Canned peaches (2 c) Orange juice (3 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c) Cocoa drink mix (2 oz)	Meatball (12) sandwiches (4) Grapes (12 oz) Sugar cookies 1% lowfat milk (2 c) Orange juice (3 c)

continued 

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
DINNER						
Southwestern salad Steamed rice (6 c) Apple orange salad (2 apples, 2 oranges) (2 c) Margarine (4 tsp) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Spanish baked fish Steamed rice (6 c) Peas (1-1/3 c) Whole wheat bread (4 slices) Margarine (8 tsp) Peach cake 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Stir-fried pork and vegetables with rice Dinner rolls (4) Margarine (4 tsp) Mandarin oranges (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked chicken (10 oz) Mash potatoes (6 c) Green beans (1-1/2 c) White bread (4 slices) Margarine (5-1/3 tbsp) Orange slices (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked spicy fish Noodles (4 c) Peas and carrots (10 oz) White bread (4 slices) Margarine (8 tsp) Chocolate rice pudding 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Baked meatballs Spaghetti and sauce (5 c) Leaf lettuce (2 c) Salad dressing (4 tbsp) French bread (4 slices) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)	Cheese-stuffed potatoes Macaroni (5 c) Peas (1-1/3 c) Margarine (8 tsp) Orange slices (2 c) 1% lowfat milk (2 c)
SNACK						
Popcorn (6 c)	Shoestring potatoes Fruit drink (4 c)	Popcorn (6 c) Orange juice (3 c)	Chocolate rice pudding	Baked French fries (11 oz) Fruit drink (4 c)	Ice milk fudgesicle (4)	Popcorn (6 c) Fruit drink (4 c)

Recipes are provided for foods in **bold typeface**.

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