



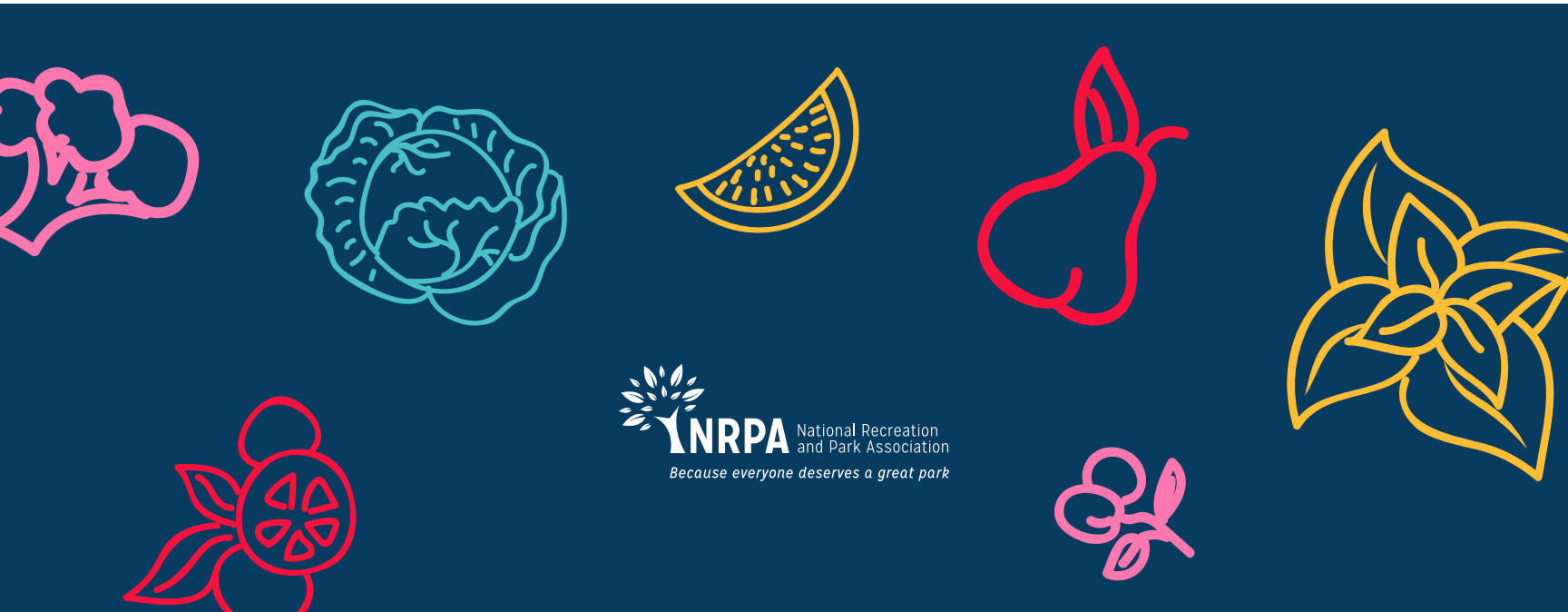
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**FUN**

# Food-based Activities for the Whole Family:

A Year of Learning & Fun With Food!

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*Grow Appalachia in Berea, Kentucky hosts a Junior Farmers Market for local youth to sell food and crafts. Photo courtesy of NRPA/Maureen Neumann*

Family time that centers around food is a fun time — a time for learning about new and interesting foods, a time to share family recipes, a time to prep and cook foods together and a time for lots of family conversation! We put together this workbook to provide some nutritious monthly food fun – full of suggestions for thinking about the foods you plan to eat, the foods you have eaten, and how to turn these foods into the most nutritious meals possible. Take the food-based challenges to engage the whole family and engage in some of these fun ideas for family togetherness around food.

With the goal of helping your family enjoy seasonal foods as you complete the fun activities, the pages that follow are presented by month and integrate the Commit to Health Foods of the Month calendar. You can do the activities in any order you'd like — they don't have to be done during the month highlighted on the page.

If your family is inspired by what you see each month, check out the Commit to Health Foods of the Month webpage at [nrpa.org/CommitToHealth](http://nrpa.org/CommitToHealth) to find other food-based activities you may be able to do as a family. Also, check out the toolkit called "Fun (and Nutritious!) Family Meals: Preparing and Consuming Meals as a Family is Healthy and Fun!" on ideas on how to prepare food as a family, found at [nrpa.org/CommitToHealth](http://nrpa.org/CommitToHealth).

# January

January is a fun month to check out nutritious **legumes** [pronounced: **leg**-yooms, li-**gyooms**], which include lentils, black beans, kidney beans, lima beans, pinto, chickpea and peas. This January Commit to Health Food of the Month can be made into savory, warm winter soups. Look up some recipes and make some nutritious soups this month.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **legumes**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google "MyPlate" or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your legumes:

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### The MyPlate Week-long Challenge

Kicking off the New Year, let's do a MyPlate challenge! Make a copy of the challenge sheet for everyone playing the challenge (Sheet A is found later in this workbook). Have them fill it out, then compare notes at the end of the week. Younger children can draw instead of writing about the foods that they consumed.

### Recipe Inventor Time

So, who in your family is creative? Who likes to invent things? As a family, appoint someone to be this month's "Recipe Inventor," and assign that person to come up with a nutritious meal using the Food of the Month (and other foods) and the MyPlate template. Write down your menu below, and the date you plan to prepare the meal as a family.



Date to have this healthy meal:

Write the type of food you will use in your recipe (apple, brown rice, etc.)	Describe what you will make, the recipe (sliced apples with peanut butter; brown rice with sliced almonds; etc.)
Fruits:	
Grains:	
Proteins:	
Vegetables:	

# February

February is *Heart Health Month*. Think about ways you can keep your heart healthy by eating nutritious **leafy greens and colorful vegetables, lean meat proteins, plant-based milks and proteins, nuts and seeds** and, of course, by getting lots of heart-healthy exercise.

One of the Commit to Health Foods of the Month for February is **water** — yes, we think of water as a “food” since it is a vital, essential nutrient for our bodies. It tastes great when infused with fruit, like strawberries or oranges (without the rind).

Take a look at the chart below to see how much added sugar is found in beverages your family drinks, and how many minutes you need to walk to work off those calories. Are you surprised by any of these?

Drink	Container Size	Sugar Type	Calories per Container	Teaspoons (tsp) of Sugar per Container	Walking Time to Burn Off the Drink <sup>1</sup>
Water	20 fl. oz. bottle	Sugar-Free	0 calories	0 tsp.	0 minutes
1% Milk	16 fl. oz. bottle	Natural Sugar	260 calories	8 tsp.	56 minutes
100% Orange Juice	16 fl. oz. bottle	Natural Sugar	244 calories	11 tsp.	53 minutes
Soda	12 fl. oz. can	Added Sugar	136 calories	8 tsp.	30 minutes
Soda	20 fl. oz. bottle	Added Sugar	227 calories	14 tsp.	49 minutes
Sports Drink	20 fl. oz. bottle	Added Sugar	125 calories	9 tsp.	27 minutes
Energy Drink	16 fl. oz. can	Added Sugar	240 calories	15 tsp.	52 minutes
Sweetened Tea	20 fl. oz. bottle	Added Sugar	213 calories	14 tsp.	46 minutes
Fruit-flavored Soda	12.5 fl. oz. bottle	Added Sugar	165 calories	11 tsp.	36 minutes
Juice Drink	20 fl. oz. bottle	Added & Natural Sugar	305 calories	17 tsp.	66 minutes
Fruit Nectar	11.5 fl. oz. can	Added & Natural Sugar	196 calories	11 tsp.	42 minutes
Vitamin-added Water	20 fl. oz. bottle	Added & Natural Sugar	125 calories	8 tsp.	27 minutes

Notes: Walking times are based on the average calorie expenditure for a 154-pound individual walking at 3.5 mph (280 calories/hour). Calories burned per hour will be higher for persons who weigh more than 154 pounds and lower for persons who weigh less. Teaspoon of sugar are rounded to the nearest whole number. All walking times are rounded up to next whole number.

1. United States Department of Health and Human Services, U. S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005* Table 4. Calories/Hour Expended in Common Physical Activities. <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter3.htm> Accessed May 15, 2012.



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Adapted from the California WIC Program.

What is your favorite fruit you like to use to infuse your **water**? At lunch or supper, ask everyone around the table what they think.



## Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **water**, then write down 3 facts about this *essential nutrient*.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

## The Daily Water Challenge

Challenge your family members to record the number of glasses of water each of you drink each day for a week. Use the chart below or make your own so it is unique to your family. Write tick marks for each glass as you drink one or remember to record the total for each day for a week under your name.

### DAILY WATER CHART FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

# March

The March Commit to Health Food of the Month kicks off with a focus on a fun type of vegetable you may not have thought much about — **stems**. What vegetables are stem vegetables, you may ask? How about yummy celery and asparagus that are popping up in some early spring gardens. Look up some recipes for how to prepare these nutritious veggies this month and spend time as a family preparing and cooking together.

## Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **stem veggies**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your stem veggies:

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## The Healthy Food Swap Game

March is *National Nutrition Month*. Help us celebrate by joining other families around the United States who will be playing the Healthy Food Swap Game this month. See Sheet B for how to play.

# April

April kicks off the cool growing season for the Commit to Health Food of the Month — **salad greens**. What types of salad greens does your family enjoy?

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **salad greens**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your salad greens:

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### Family Drawing Fun

Since the focus food for April includes salad greens, let's spend some time as a family talking about them.

List the types of salad greens your family enjoys or would be interested in trying. All salad greens are not green in color, many are beautiful reds and purples. Thinking about the many colors of salad greens that are in the produce section of your grocery store or farmers market, write down the names and colors of different types of salad greens (use your phone or computer to help you learn about the different varieties of salad greens if you need some help).

Name of Salad Green:	Color of Salad Green:	Name of Salad Green:	Color of Salad Green:

Below (or on a separate piece of paper if you want to make it big) draw a salad, and think about all the nutritious toppings you can put on your salad (carrots, celery, nuts, etc.!). Hang your salad masterpiece on the fridge or another place in your home so you remember to eat lots of salads in April, and all year long.

# May

Who doesn't love **fresh beans** — the Commit to Health Food of the Month for May? Green beans are a staple in many U.S. households that can be eaten warmed from cans, roasted in the oven, or cooked from frozen — all are super good for you. But did you know that protein-packed edamame and yummy lima beans also are considered “fresh beans?” Look up some recipes and make some nutritious beans this month as lovely side dishes.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **fresh beans**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your fresh beans (hint: while green beans go in the vegetable section, some fresh beans go in the protein section. Which fresh beans go in the protein section?):

\_\_\_\_\_



### The Fresh Bean Adventure

Pick a few days this month when you, as a family, will prepare some type of **fresh bean**. Write the date and the recipe name in the box below. Then write a creative story about an adventure that your fresh beans went on today as they made it from the farm or garden where they were grown, to your plate.




Type of fresh bean:

Name of the **recipe** you prepared (or will prepare) using fresh beans:







My fresh bean went on a grand **ADVENTURE** today. Let me tell you about it. (Write your adventure story below, using the back of this paper if you need more space.)

# June

Nearly all the colors of the rainbow are found in **peppers**. Have you seen purple peppers, light yellow (almost white) peppers? We all know about green, red, orange and yellow peppers — but did you know they are one of the nutrition powerhouses? The Commit to Health Food of the Month for June is the pepper, so look up some recipes for cooking them, or grab some to eat raw (after washing them) this month and all year long (they are available in most places year round).

<p><b>Monthly Nutrition Research:</b> Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about <b>peppers</b>, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.</p> <p>Fact 1:</p> <p>Fact 2:</p> <p>Fact 3:</p>	<p>Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to <a href="http://choosemyplate.gov">choosemyplate.gov</a>. Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put peppers:</p> <p>_____</p>	
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Write the color of the pepper and type of pepper in the first column, then fill in the other columns

What color is this pepper?	Have you tried it? What did you think of it?	List another <i>healthy</i> food that is the same color.	Have you tried it? What did you think of it?
 Light green, hot pepper	Yes, VERY spicy, but good a little at a time!	Kiwi fruit <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 5px;">Example</div>	Yes, and I love kiwis; they are so good and sweet, and smooth in texture!
			
			
			
			
			



# July

Water and vitamins are abundant in this summertime favorite – **melons**. Help celebrate the Commit to Health Food of the Month for July: **melons**. When you enjoy watermelon, cantaloupe or honeydew, share information about how healthy these fruits are with all of your family members and friends.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **melons**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your melons:

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### Family Fun Game: Bingo

Since it is summertime, and most of us are not in school, it may be a good time to get together as a family and play *MyPlate Grocery Store Bingo*. Do you see a melon on the card?



## MYPLATE GROCERY STORE BINGO

Circle foods you see in the grocery store. If you find 5 in a row, yell MyPlate Bingo!

Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Protein	Dairy
Apple 	Avocado 	Bread 	Beans 	Milk 
Blueberries 	Broccoli 	Cereal 	Chicken 	Cottage Cheese 
Cantaloupe 	Corn 	Free Space 	Eggs 	Soy Milk 
Grapes 	Sweet Potato 	Popcorn 	Peanut Butter 	Cheese 
Orange 	Tomatoes 	Rice 	Tuna Fish 	Yogurt 

ChooseMyPlate.gov/Families

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- Print off the bingo cards for kids accompanying you on a grocery shopping trip.
- Give them a pen or pencil and let them circle foods they see in the store while you shop.
- Explain that we need foods from all five food groups.
- Explain that fresh, frozen, and canned varieties all count.

## AGES: 5 & UP

While most appropriate for elementary school-aged children, this activity can be modified for other ages.

- For older children, consider giving them their own shopping list so they can help you shop.
- For younger children, ask them to find foods of various colors and shapes.

## TIPS:

- You can use this bingo card multiple times. In addition to the traditional style of bingo where you try to get five across, five vertical, or five diagonal, kids can also play picture frame where they try to find all of the foods on the perimeter of the card or blackout where they try to find every food on the card.



- If you have more than one child with you, kids can either compete against one another— whoever finds five in a row first wins—or work together as a team. This can be especially helpful if you have an older child that can help a younger child.
- Consider offering a prize for completing the bingo sheet. For example, take a family trip to the park or go for a bike ride together.



# August

Have you ever heard of a **stone fruit**? Most likely your family eats them often, but may not know them by this name. How about peaches, plums, cherries and apricots? All of these have a hard pit in the middle, the “stone,” thus their name. They also are full of fiber and vitamins, so make sure you enjoy some of these Commit to Health Foods of the Month for August.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **stone fruits**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your stone fruits:

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### Family Menu Making Fun

This month, create a menu as a family and make sure to include all the components of MyPlate so your menu will be as healthy as can be. Use the chart below to list the items in your menu, then head to the store and get cooking.



### LIST YOUR MENU ITEMS USING THE TIPS BELOW:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### TIPS FOR YOUR MENU:

- Try to include all five of the MyPlate food groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Include low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Limit sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.

# September

This month, let's think about nutritious **whole grains**. These Commit to Health Foods of the Month for September are yummy and eaten in whole form, like brown rice, farro, quinoa, and oats, but also are often slightly processed into items like whole grain spaghetti and whole wheat bread. Which have your family tried? Make sure to include them in each meal every day because they are an important part of MyPlate.

## Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **whole grains**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google "MyPlate" or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your whole grains:

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## The Healthy Food Swap Game

Whole grains are a great food to focus on when thinking about swapping less-nutritious foods for those that have more nutritional bang for the buck. So this month, think about some of the foods you typically eat that contain some type of grain (for example, white refined flour such as white sliced bread or white spaghetti pasta), and then think of a healthy substitute food containing a whole grain that you could try instead (such as whole wheat sliced bread and/or whole wheat spaghetti pasta). Using Sheet B at the end, challenge your family members to play the Healthy Food Swap Game this month. (*Reminder:* the game includes a lot more than whole grains, so encourage your family to include all parts of MyPlate.)

# October

**Winter squash**, do you know what they are? I bet you know one for sure, one that is very popular this month — the pumpkin! If you carve a pumpkin for Halloween, think about how nutritious the pumpkin flesh (the insides) and seeds are. Both are full of important vitamins, minerals and fiber. What other October Commit to Health Foods of the Month might you try this month, how about a spaghetti squash? Just like its name implies, after it is cooked, you can use a fork to pull out the squash flesh in strings that look like spaghetti noodles — and these “noodles” are super healthy and are great tossed with your favorite tomato sauce.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **winter squash**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google “MyPlate” or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your winter squash:



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### Be a Food Critic

As a family, choose a nutritious food that you have not tried before, maybe a winter squash like spaghetti squash or — anything healthy! Look up a recipe on your phone or computer, prepare the food as a family, then give each person in your family a food critic sheet, found below. Enjoy!



## KIDS FOOD CRITIC ACTIVITY

Let kids select a new fruit, vegetable, or recipe to sample. Have them taste the food and rate it based on visual appeal, smell, taste, and texture using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the best.



DRAW FOOD HERE!

Visual Appeal	1	2	3	4	5	_____
	○	○	○	○	○	
Smell	1	2	3	4	5	_____
	○	○	○	○	○	
Taste	1	2	3	4	5	_____
	○	○	○	○	○	
Texture	1	2	3	4	5	_____
	○	○	○	○	○	

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL SCORE

\_\_\_\_\_

○ 😞

○ 😊

○ 😄

Serve it again?

YES NO

**FOR EXTRA FUN:**

- Have kids choose and prepare foods and have friends, siblings, or parents sample and rate them.
- Present 3 new recipes to sample and compare them.

# November

This month let's celebrate **root vegetables**. Root vegetables grow under the surface of the ground and are super nutritious. You likely enjoy them often — think potato — and now think of others you may not eat that often. How about the yummy and sweet, sweet potato. This November, Commit to Health Food of the Month, root vegetables, also can include carrots, radishes, onions, garlic, and beets. Try some new root vegetables this month — maybe chop a few and roast them together in the oven.

### Monthly Nutrition Research:

Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **root vegetables**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google "MyPlate" or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your root vegetables:

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### Calling All Artists

This month, get your artistic juices flowing. Draw your favorite healthy meal onto the MyPlate placemat below. Make copies for everyone in your family.

## DRAW YOUR MENU!



# December

Let's go nuts this month! Well, kids, not really, but let's talk about the portable, packable, yummy and nutritious December Commit to Health Food of the Month — **nuts!** Maybe you enjoy walnuts or pecans, but what other types of nuts do you enjoy? Brazil nuts? Macadamia nuts? Do some research this month on nuts and try some new ones this holiday season.

**Monthly Nutrition Research:**  
Use your computer or phone to look up nutrition information about **nuts**, then write down 3 nutrition facts about them in this box.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Read about MyPlate using your phone or computer, google "MyPlate" or go to [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov). Then write the name of the part of the MyPlate where you would put your nuts:

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## Recipe Inventor Time

So, who in your family is creative? Who likes to invent things? As a family, appoint someone to be this month's "Recipe Inventor," and assign that person to come up with a nutritious meal *using foods you already have in your house*. Write down your menu below, and the date you plan to prepare the meal as a family, then answer the questions below the box.



Date to have this healthy meal:

Write the type of food you will use in your recipe (apple, brown rice, etc.)	Describe what you will make, the recipe (sliced apples with peanut butter, brown rice with sliced almonds, etc.)
Fruits:	
Grains:	
Proteins:	
Vegetables:	

Did you like the meal?

What part of the meal did you like the most?

Is there a food you would make/prepare differently next time? If so, which one and how would you prepare it?

Make a copy of this sheet for everyone playing in this challenge.  
**Instructions:** For one week, in the boxes below, write down the names of each type of nutritious food found in the MyPlate that you eat each day. Challenge your whole family, and your friends, and see who has the most at the end of the week.



Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Participants in this Challenge (list their names below):

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Fruits							
Vegetables							
Grains							
Protein							
Dairy							

# Healthy Food Swaps:

A fun family-based game to get everyone thinking differently (*more healthfully*) about the foods they eat most often

Think about the foods you eat most often – rice, pasta, cheese, snacks, sports drinks, cookies, etc...

Now, think about some swaps you can make for those foods that would result in more healthy, nutritious choices. (Hints: Side dish: brown rice swapped for white rice; Snack: popcorn swapped for potato chips)

We've come up with a game to get you and your family thinking about (and trying) some healthy examples. Get a pencil or pen or crayon, make copies of this sheet for all players, and then see how many healthy swaps each of you can come up with. The winner gets to choose which of the healthy swaps will be tried by your family this week. The second place winner gets to choose some for the next week.

Good Luck!

Type of food to find healthy swap for:	Name of the food to be swapped:	Name of the more healthy food:	When you plan to try it:
Side dish (Example)	White rice	Brown rice	Sunday supper
Main dish			
Side dish			
Supper/Dinner Beverage			
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Afternoon snack			
Main dish			
Side dish			
Supper/Dinner Beverage			
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Afternoon snack			



