

## Once a Month Cooking

If you are like most moms around the world, there never seems to be enough time or energy at the end of most days to prepare the nice home cooked meal you would love to have ready made for your family. Unfortunately, cooking a good family meal requires both time and energy. A few wise moms have discovered a concept that has become known as once a month or freezer cooking to assist in those nights when time, energy, or both are in short supply.

The thought behind once a month cooking is that for one or two days (if you prefer to spread the process out over a couple of shorter days rather than one long day of cooking) of intense culinary effort your family can dine well for an entire month. Many women who have tried this have also discovered that not only does it help by always having something nice and home cooked for dinner, but also helps families stay within budget.

Far too many mother's will guiltily raise their hands when asked whether or not they've ever resorted to fast food or junk food meals simply because they were too tired to cook or were missing one ingredient for a meal and did not feel up to running to the grocery store in order to pick up the missing ingredient. This practice can get expensive over time and rob your family of some well-earned fun money.

There are some important things you must keep in mind if you are considering once a month cooking as a way of life for your family. The first thing you need to keep in mind is that planning is the key. You will need to set aside a day (or two) for the cooking when nothing else is on the calendar. It is simply too difficult to see to all the details if you are planning your cooking event around car pools, soccer games, or dance practices. You need a full day that will be relatively uninterrupted. If you have a spouse, partner, or family member that can take the children for the day this will be the ideal situation. Otherwise be sure to have plenty of distractions on hand for the little ones or find a way to enlist their help with any cutting, chopping, slicing, dicing, or peeling that may need to be done.

You should also create a thorough menu followed by a list of each and every ingredient you will need. Shopping needs to be done on a day other than when you are planning to cook. This means that you aren't likely to rush through the shopping trip and forget something as a result. Bring your menu and your list and get everything you need in one trip whenever possible. You can also save money by planning your meals for the month according to the sales circulars and coupons you have for the week in order to stretch your budget a little further.

Finally, you need to make sure that you have all the supplies, dishes, and

containers you need in order to prepare and store the meals you've prepared properly. You should also make sure that the recipes you are using for your once a month cooking marathon are recipes that freeze well. It is even better if you have recipes that double well so that you can get twice the results from the same effort.

You should also make sure you are mentally prepared for your marathon cooking session. Beginning with a nice and tidy kitchen is a great start. Folding card tables make an excellent flat surface for storing things out of the way and freeing up valuable counter space for preparing and assembling the foods that will be prepared. You should also utilize as many appliances in your kitchen as possible for maximum efficiency. Don't limit all cooking to the oven. Find dishes that freeze well and can be prepared in the crock pot or on the range top. Once a month cooking is a challenge but many women will agree it is well worth the effort on those nights when the thought of cooking seems unbearable and the wallet has been stretched to its limit.

PPPPP