

Bonus Chapter

Ten Ways to Enjoy a Meal

In This Chapter

- ▶ Making sure you're ready for cooking up a storm
 - ▶ Enjoying a meal with gusto
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Enjoying a healthy meal if you have diabetes is pretty much the same as enjoying a healthy meal if you don't have diabetes, with one significant exception: It often requires extra effort. As we discuss in detail in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, living with diabetes means you need to pay extra attention to your nutrition to ensure you eat the right proportion of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats; have appropriate portion sizes; limit your salt intake; and so forth.

In this chapter, we present ten tips to help you in your healthy eating journey. Actually, let us share an eleventh tip before we even get going: Eating is one of life's true pleasures, and having diabetes shouldn't compromise that one tiny bit. Bon appétit.

Plan Ahead

Planning what you (and your family) are going to eat will save you time, energy, work, stress, and possibly money, and it will lessen any aggravation.

Keep a list

Keep a list handy in the kitchen of what meals you are planning to prepare for the next few days or even for the entire week. This will help you avoid last-minute scrambling to figure out what you're going to eat and to then figure out whether you have the needed ingredients on hand. It will also help

avoid the understandable tendency to resort to the ultimate backup: ordering in from 1-800-iminapickle (though, having said that, nothing's wrong with making this call from time to time).

Planning your meals will also allow you to purchase your week's groceries in one fell swoop, which, in turn, will help you avoid repeat visits to the grocery store. As well, if you're typically the main food preparer but you aren't at home as dinner hour approaches, when you have the week's groceries at the ready, other family members can do some — or even all — of the food preparation work.

Another advantage to advance planning is that you can take something out of the freezer ahead of time and it will be ready to go when you are.

Read the entire recipe before you start

Before starting to create a recipe (whether in this book or, perish the thought, some other cookbook), be sure to first read through the *entire* recipe. That way you won't get halfway through the recipe only to then discover

- ✔ You don't understand the required steps. (See Chapter 5 for a listing of common cooking terms.)
- ✔ You're not familiar with a term used in the recipe.
- ✔ You don't have a required cooking apparatus or appliance.
- ✔ You're missing a key ingredient.

Lest you think we are stating the obvious or, heavens, even sounding patronizing, we can tell you we've run into one or more of the preceding problems many times ourselves. Trust us, until we figured it out, our neighbours knew that a knock on their door at 6 p.m. meant that we were in urgent need of . . . sugar, flour, a pot, or, sometimes, their expertise.

Have the right tools

Making sure you have the right cooking tools will be a huge help. See Chapter 5 for a helpful list of essential tools.

Measurements in a recipe are critical, so if a recipe calls for a tablespoon, for example, make sure you have a measuring tablespoon available; don't plan on using the soup spoon in your drawer. The same goes for a measuring cup; its size is not necessarily the same as a coffee cup.



Not only do you need to have the right tools, but you also need to use them correctly. One common error is to overfill measuring containers. When measuring out contents in a tablespoon, measuring cup, and so on, use the flat edge of a knife to level off the top of the contents. This will ensure the amounts are right.

Prepare your ingredients

As you plan your pièce de résistance, make sure you have the required ingredients measured, ready, and chopped before you start with the steps of the recipe. This makes following the recipe steps much easier.

Check your watch

When considering whether you want to prepare a dish, consider both the preparation time and the cooking time. Perhaps a delectable but complicated dish will simply be too time-consuming for another crazy school/work night and should be deferred until the weekend. Some recipes are fast and others take longer. Pick and choose those that match your timelines. (Speaking of planning your time, each recipe in this book has the preparation time and cooking time listed at the top of the recipe. Naturally.)

Get close and personal with your oven and cooktop. Ovens (and cooktops) often heat differently from one another despite having the temperature dial set similarly; you'll therefore need to check regularly on your food's progress until you get to know the idiosyncrasies of your particular cooking appliances.



After you have cooked a recipe, write down any changes you made to the cooking time beside the recipe. Also, after you have eaten the dish, note beside the recipe whether you would alter the spices next time you're preparing it. That way you'll be reminded what changes to make the next time you go about preparing the recipe. Cynthia also writes at the top of a recipe whether her family liked it. (As if they wouldn't!)

Cook with Family and Friends

Cooking your own meals rather than eating out at restaurants has many health advantages. Eating at home, you have more control over ingredients, including salt, fat, and calories, portion sizes (so long as you resist the urge to go for seconds or thirds!), and so forth. One additional advantage of cooking at home is that you can include your family and friends in the process.

Cooking with family and friends can turn the experience into nice, quality time spent with the ones you care about. Share the preparation; it's a great way to teach your kids the basics of cooking. This has certainly worked masterfully in Cynthia's house. Just like being on a sports team, cooking together teaches kids teamwork and organizational skills. Laugh, have fun, spray your kids with water from the faucet . . . or not. (Ian's had to stop doing this now that his kids are stronger than he is.)

Cook with the Season

Cooking foods that are in season in your neck of the woods has advantages. In addition to saving money on your food purchases (it costs grocers a lot less to stock local foods than to truck or fly in foods from thousands of miles away), you'll be getting the freshest — and tastiest — foods possible.

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (www.cpma.ca/en_serv_available.asp) has a listing of seasonally available produce and when different varieties can be found.

Invite Guests



Reconnect with friends and family by inviting them over for a meal. They will appreciate what you prepare (they are friends and family after all) and you'll all be able to catch up on what is new in your lives.

When inviting people over, avoid using the word “party.” It's amazing how omitting that one word instantly reduces expectations and pressure.

Choose some recipes in this book that can be made ahead so you aren't as rushed. Keep it simple if you're new to hosting.

Have fun. Set a theme, such as a Chinese night or an Italian night. Plan your dishes around the theme and, time permitting, decorate your dining area with some culturally appropriate paraphernalia.

Set the Mood

It's no wonder that restaurants can spend millions of dollars on building the interior of their establishments. They know how important esthetics and ambience are in “setting the mood” and how much this, in turn, influences their patrons' eating experience.

In your own home you don't, of course, need to spend any money at all to set the right mood. Having a romantic dinner for two? Eat in the kitchen or the dining room, not in front of the television. Dim the lights. Light some candles. Spread some flower petals on the table. Ask a violinist to come over and serenade you . . . Okay, we got carried away with that one, but playing some romantic music on your stereo will act as a suitable substitute.

Having a group of youngsters over for dinner? Try buying some fun, inexpensive, placemats or napkins. Jazz up the table with little dinner gifts. Use Frisbees (clean ones, of course) as plates, wash them up after you're done eating, go outside and have a game, and then let the kids take them home as a gift.

Have a picnic outside or, for a different take, *inside*. Throw down a blanket on the floor and put up a tent. The memories will last a lifetime.

Savour the Flavour

Setting the mood is certainly important when it comes to enjoying a meal, as we mention in the preceding section, but when it comes to the bottom line, cooking is ultimately about the food. Food, in turn, has so many different aspects to it: smell, texture, colour, and the list goes on. Above all else, though, is flavour. And having diabetes never has to compromise your selection of flavourful foods.

Speaking of flavour, why not try one of the many geographically and ethnically diverse dishes in this book? You may not be able to travel to some of the countries where these recipes originate, and you may not necessarily have a certain type of local ethnic restaurant to frequent, but that doesn't have to stop you from enjoying recipes that have their origins in other countries. You may find that meals prepared with unaccustomed spices or herbs is a truly exciting taste experience.



When Cynthia taste-tested her zesty Indian Akoori Scrambled Eggs (Chapter 7) on the very food-traditional 85-year-old mother of a good friend, she did so with hesitation. Expecting a thumbs down from the conservative eater, Cynthia was surprised to find the recipe met with a resounding two thumbs up!

Go Vegetarian for a Night

If your food choices exclude the consumption of meat, fish, and poultry, many healthy and tasty recipes are still available to you. And if you're not vegetarian, you can, of course, still enjoy a purely vegetarian meal.

Canada is a multicultural country that offers great sources for vegetarian dishes. (Have a look at Chapter 16 to find a broad selection of vegetarian recipes.)



In a hurry? Vegetarian dishes are often less time-consuming to prepare than are many non-vegetarian dishes.

Communicate Effectively

Communication within a family is so very important, yet sometimes in this fast-paced, hectic world it's hard to find time to just sit down and chat. Dinnertime is a great time to catch up on things. Dinner tends to be the one meal of the day that the whole family shares, and it's typically at a time of the day when everyone has at least some free time.



We don't profess to be psychologists, but between our love for food and our many years as parents, one thing we've learned is that — at least in our experience — when it comes to meal-time conversation with kids, it's best to reserve this time for common, non-threatening topics. This is not the time to bring up school marks or homework; save those conversations until after the meal. (Or, as Ian and his wife did when their kids were younger, save the difficult conversations for when the kids are trapped in the car with you. That way they can't escape!)



Nothing's wrong with watching some TV with the family. But keep this time separate from mealtimes. Just like oil and vinegar, television watching and family dinner conversation don't mix well.

Store Leftovers

Leftovers are great for the next day's lunch or dinner, but you need to handle leftovers with the same care that you put into creating the dishes in the first place. Here are some safety tips for looking after your leftovers:

- ✓ Refrigerate leftovers as soon as possible and no more than one to two hours after your meal (the shorter time if the kitchen is very warm) and at a temperature no more than 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius). Alternatively, freeze your leftovers at a temperature of -18 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius) or colder.
- ✓ Store your leftovers in covered, shallow containers. Shallow containers will help ensure rapid cooling.



- ✔ Avoid keeping foods in the danger zone, which is 4 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit (40 to 140 degrees Celsius). Foods kept in this temperature range are more likely to become contaminated with bacteria.
- ✔ Don't overpack your refrigerator; cool air must circulate to reach the food and keep the food cool and safe.
- ✔ With stuffed poultry or meats, remove the stuffing before refrigerating. Place the stuffing in its own container.
- ✔ Don't remove large pots of food from the stove or oven and place them directly in the refrigerator. Because large pots of hot food can take hours to chill properly, putting them directly in the fridge will end up unduly raising the temperature in your fridge. Instead, let your large pots of hot food cool on the counter, then place the pots in the refrigerator. Remember, though, that you shouldn't ever let your food sit outside of the fridge for more than two hours.
- ✔ Eat leftovers kept in the fridge within two to three days of preparation to ensure food safety. Alternatively, label and date the container and freeze the leftovers. Frozen leftovers will stay good far longer than refrigerated leftovers.

Table BC-1 provides estimated lengths of time that different types of cooked, leftover food stay good when refrigerated or frozen.

Table BC-1	Leftover Lifespans	
<i>Leftover</i>	<i>Refrigerator Lifespan</i>	<i>Freezer Lifespan</i>
Ground poultry, meats, fresh seafood	1 day	2 to 3 months
Organ meats (heart, liver, kidney)	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Whole turkey/chicken or parts	2 to 3 days	Whole — 12 months Parts — 6 months
Stew meat, kabobs, ribs	2 days	3 to 6 months
Steaks, chops, roasts	3 days	8 to 12 months
Cooked poultry/meats, opened cold cuts	3 days	2 to 3 months



You can't tell that a food product is safe by looking at it or by smelling it. If in doubt, throw it out!

Clean Up

Cleaning up is typically most people's least favourite part of a meal. Here are a couple of tips to help make cleaning up less of a hassle:

- ✔ **Line baking pans with parchment paper before you use them for baking.** This way, baking pans will get far less soiled and as a result will be much easier to clean. When you're ready to clean the pan, throw out the parchment paper and quickly wipe the baking pan clean.
- ✔ **Scrape, rinse, and soak dirty pots and pans in warm soapy water as soon as they are cool.** After they've soaked for a while, it will be easier to remove the food remnants.

Cleaning up also involves sanitation. It doesn't take much to create an environment that fosters the development of disease-causing bacteria. Indeed, perhaps you've read or heard about the study that showed the kitchen sink to have many more bacteria than a toilet seat! Here are ways to help avoid bacteria growing in your kitchen:

- ✔ Wash dishes, utensils, and kitchen surfaces with hot soapy water then rinse them. There is less chance for contamination if you let the dishes and utensils air dry than if you dry them with a tea towel. Better still, if you have a dishwasher, use your dishwasher to clean your dishwasher-safe dishes and utensils. The hot temperature helps sanitize them.
- ✔ After preparing raw meat, fish, poultry, or eggs, sanitize the countertops, cutting boards, and utensils with a bleach and water solution of 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bleach to 3 cups (750 ml) water in a spray bottle. Spray the surface, let it sit for a minute, wipe it, and then rinse with clear water. Don't forget to clean the sink too. (Watch that your clothes don't come in contact with the bleach solution as this will damage the material.) Alternatively, use disposable kitchen-disinfecting wipes.
- ✔ For tough stains on the counters or in pots, gently rub the stained area with a paste mixture of baking soda and water, then rinse well.
- ✔ Throw your dish cloths in the wash every one to two days. If using a kitchen sponge, replace it often because kitchen sponges are a breeding ground for bacteria. Another option is to place sponges and scrubbers in the dishwasher for sanitization.
- ✔ Regularly sanitize kitchen cabinet knobs; the refrigerator door handle; the cooktop, knobs and handle; and the inside of the microwave.