

Consuming Thoughts

by

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Christmas is a day when families traditionally get together to eat and renew connections and continue many family traditions. During this holiday season families may want to make a commitment and/or make a New Year's resolution to support the idea of eating meals together the rest of the year.

A recent survey conducted by the National Pork Producers Council revealed that while nearly

three fourths of those surveyed think eating dinner together is important, only 59% eat dinner as a family five or more times a week. Those with young children under the age of 6 were most likely to eat together.

Dinner time together can be a time for family members to learn about each others activities that day. This is important, especially for young children. The things you discuss at the dinner table help young children get ready to function in the outside world.

Practice things like giving each child and adult a chance to tell a small story based on what happened to them that day. This teaches language skills and the idea of listening to other people. Teach them to share the spotlight but also to be confident in themselves. As a family, you can establish basic rules on manners to use at the table. Manners are a lifetime skill that is an important tool for use in later relationships.

Teach children to listen to others by asking them to repeat the story told by someone else at the table. Gently correct any major omissions. A good listener can be a good story teller too. Good manners and listening skills help children work with others in teams, a valuable skill for jobs they will hold later in life.

Another way to help children appreciate meals together is to let them have a role in preparing the meal. Even small children can help. They can get cans from shelves, place napkins on the table

and help someone count the silverware. Teach them the importance to touching silverware only on the handles - never on the surface that makes contact with the food or mouth. All of these small tasks help teach children simple counting and reading skills, as well as food safety skills.

As the parent you may want to include fruits and vegetables in the meal to help everyone meet their 5 a Day goal - 2 fruits and 3 vegetables a day.

What's a serving of fruits and vegetables? A serving is:

- 1 medium fruit or ½ cup small or cut-up fruit
- ¼ cup 100% fruit juice
- ¼ cup dried fruit (such as raisins, dates, apricots)
- ½ cup raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables (such as lettuce, spinach, kale)
- ½ cup cooked beans or peas (kidney beans, lentils)

Here is a recipe that children can help prepare. It's a tasty salad that helps your family meet the 5 a Day goal.

Golden Fruit Salad (an official 5 a Day recipe)

- 1 golden delicious apple, cored and sliced
- 1 red delicious apple, cored and sliced
- 1 banana, peeled and sliced
- ½ cup red grapes, halves and seeded
- Orange yogurt dressing
- Lettuce
- Combine all fruits; mix well.
- Serve on lettuce lined salad plate

with orange yogurt dressing. Makes 3 servings. This is an official 5 a Day recipe.

Orange yogurt dressing: Combine 6½ cups plain low fat yogurt, 2-3 teaspoons, orange juice and

dash nutmeg; mix well.

Nutritional analysis per serving; calories 138; fiber 4 g; cholesterol 2 mg. Percent calories from: protein 8%; carbohydrate 84%; fat 8%.

Choo Choo Barn Kicks Off 35th Anniversary

STRASBURG (Lancaster Co.) — On Thanksgiving Day 1961, the Groff family moved their growing model train layout - which father George Groff began in 1945 - from the basement of their home to the Choo Choo Barn in Strasburg.

Thirty-five years later, the Choo Choo Barn has grown from a 500-square-foot layout with six trains and six animated scenes to become one of America's largest and best-known model train layouts. It's 1,700 square feet of fantasy, in miniature!

The Choo Choo Barn is renowned throughout America for its animated model train displays. Across its 1,700 square feet, a

Lancaster County in miniature unfolds. The continually-operating displays feature seventeen model trains, 650 feet of O-gauge tracks, thousands of figures and vehicles, and 130 animated scenes such as baseball games, an Amish barn-raising, a fire company to dowse a smoking building, and a Memorial Day parade.

The 35th anniversary year begins with the seventh annual "Canned Food Fridays," held on December 6, 13 and 20. Visitors who present a non-perishable food item on those dates are granted free admission and can visit with Santa. The 35th anniversary celebration will continue through December 31, 1997.



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