



AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION OF INDIANA, INC.
DAIRY & NUTRITION COUNCIL, INC.

Dining In is the New Dining Out

In a world flooded with technology – social media, PDAs, cell phones and more – it's easy to lose touch with the people you see every day. Eating at home is a great way to spend time with family, yet 33 percent of respondents (the highest percentage) to a November 2009 Vanity Fair/60 Minutes poll said “dining out” was the hardest to cut back on during the recession. Dining in can help families save money and is the perfect opportunity to try out new recipes that everyone, even the kids, can help prepare. Studies have found several benefits to eating as a family, including:

- Better overall nutrition, especially when it comes to key vitamins and minerals like calcium, fiber, iron, and vitamins B6, B12, C and E. This means families who eat together have a lower risk of many diseases and of being overweight or obese.
- Curbed harmful or risky behaviors in teens. A recent study found that teens who eat dinner with their families twice a week or less are three times as likely to try marijuana, 2.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes, and 1.5 times as likely to try alcohol compared to teens who eat five or more family dinners a week. Additionally, teens who participate in family meals five or more times a week are almost twice as likely to earn A's in school as those who have family meals two or fewer times per week.

Additionally, the dinner table is a place to establish healthy eating habits, which stick with children throughout their lives. People who eat family meals on a regular basis while growing up will consume more fruits and vegetables, have a lower intake of fried foods and soft drinks, and have a higher intake of key nutrients including calcium, fiber, iron, folate, and vitamins B and C throughout their lives.

Parents can act as role models for good eating habits by choosing healthy foods and drinking milk. For example, studies show that kids whose parents drink milk drink more milk themselves, providing them with a unique package of nine essential vitamins and minerals. Parents and kids also might try creating a small garden together – the more familiar children are with fruits and vegetables that they help to grow, the more likely they are to eat those foods. If families lack the time or space, they can visit a community garden together instead.

Busy schedules can make it difficult to find time for family meals, but it's important to:

- Make it a priority – set a night and make sure everyone plans their schedules accordingly.

- Plan ahead – consider using a slow cooker that can be set in the morning so that dinner is ready to eat when everyone gets home. This new trend, called “slow food,” encourages consumers to cook at home and stretch food budgets by using inexpensive cuts of meat for stews and other recipes in their slow cooker.
- Remember the division of responsibility – let children choose how much to eat, what foods to eat and whether or not to eat. Parents decide what and when food is served, and it’s up to them to make mealtime a priority.

For more information on Dining In is the New Dining Out, visit www.winnersdrinkmilk.com or call 1-800-225-MILK.