



NUTRITION bites

Brought to you by the UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program ISSUE 23

Nutrition Bites is a newsletter that highlights helpful information on staying safe, an easy and healthy recipe to try with your family, physical activity ideas, and food resources in your area. We know you are taking extra steps to keep you and your family safe during this pandemic. Our goal is to work together to provide information to help our community maintain the safety of us all.

STAYING SAFE



Follow food safety guidelines when storing batch-cooked meals.

Doubling your recipes and preparing meals ahead for busy weekday nights can save time and money. Cook dishes, like soups and casseroles in batches, then place in the freezer for future ready-to-go meals. Here are some important food safety tips when batch cooking.

1. Divide up the cooked meal in shallow freezer-proof containers. Cool down the portions you plan to freeze for future meals in the refrigerator.
2. When cool, label and date containers or freezer bags and place in the freezer. Make sure freezer bags are lying down flat.
3. When you are ready to use the meal, thaw in the refrigerator overnight. Cook as directed in the recipe. It may take longer if it is still a little frozen.
4. Use a food thermometer to make sure a casserole or meat dish reaches an internal temperature of 165° F.
5. Use frozen pre-cooked and cut squash or other vegetables within 6 months to a year.

RECIPES AND NUTRITION TIPS



Warm up with a delicious Butternut Squash Soup.

When making this [Butternut Squash Soup](#) recipe, use low-sodium broth, extra vegetables, and experiment with your favorite spices to boost the flavor without adding salt. Your heart will thank you for it! If you do not have a fresh butternut squash, substitute winter squash, canned pumpkin, or frozen butternut squash.

Watch this video and learn how to make butternut squash bisque. If you do not have an immersion blender, a potato masher will work just as well.

<https://video.link/w/LyOyb>

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS



Prevent weight gain this holiday season.

Here are some tips and tricks to avoid holiday weight gain:

- Create new ways to spend time with your family that does not revolve around food. Try working on craft projects, going on a family hike, or taking a stroll through your neighborhood.
- Get moving! During your workday, stand up, go for a short walk, or stretch once every hour.
- Avoid stress eating. Manage your stress by trying yoga, meditation, simple breathing, or stepping away from a situation by taking a walk.
- Practice mindful eating. Enjoy and savor every bite of the special holiday foods. Pay attention to what and how much you are eating to help limit consuming large portion sizes.
- Serve plenty of raw vegetables and low-fat yogurt based dips before big holiday meals to reduce the urge to over indulge.

For more information check out <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/yes-you-can-avoid-weight-gain-over-the-holidays-2019112518309>

FOOD ACCESS RESOURCES IN MASSACHUSETTS



Massachusetts Healthy Foods in a SNAP provides new recipes and money-saving ideas.

You will find recipes and nutrition education materials designed just for you. Also find information on food planning during the COVID-19 pandemic and advice from the United States Department of Agriculture.

Visit: <https://www.mahealthyfoodsinasnap.org/>.

Looking for food assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Apply for or check the status of your SNAP benefits from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). Visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dta-covid-19-resources-and-support>.

The Massachusetts Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program is committed to providing families with support during the pandemic.

Keeping with social distancing requirements, WIC programs and services are accessible by phone. If you have provided your local program with your email address and/or cell phone number, you will receive notifications about important updates. You can check your eligibility, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/check-eligibility-for-wic> and apply for WIC online, <https://www.mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online>.