



Growing Together: Food, Family and Friends

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This month we explore family traditions with recipes and keepsakes that could lend themselves to new ways to connect with each other.

EAT

We are approaching the season when families gather to share traditions and meals. Think about your family traditions. Do you share recipes from your grandparents? Do you have a family recipe box from a relative?

It's never too late to begin your own family traditions. Communities are melting pots of traditions from both current and past generations. Learn about some of North Dakota's cuisine from around the world by exploring these North Dakota State University Extension publications.

- **North Dakota Food and Culture: A Taste of World Cuisine** is a recipe collection from around the world, and it is also a sampling of recipes shared in North Dakota.
- **Exploring North Dakota's Foodways: Germans from Russia** features recipes from the rich heritage of the Germans from Russia culture. The recipes have been modified to create healthier options for salads, rolls, soups, main dishes and desserts.
- **Exploring North Dakota Foodways: Scandinavian Cuisine (Past and Present)**. You might be familiar with foods such as lutefisk, lefse, Swedish meatballs, rømmegrøt, pickled herring, pickled beets, rye bread and a variety of baked goods. Learn more about the New Nordic Diet, too.

Knoephla Soup

¼ cup butter, unsalted
6 cups baking potatoes (about 3 large), peeled and cubed
½ cup onion (about 1 small onion), diced
¾ cup celery, diced
¾ cup carrot, diced
½ teaspoon pepper (or to taste)
3 cups whole milk
6 cups chicken broth

Knoephla (dumpling)

¾ cup whole-wheat flour*
¾ cup white flour
7 tablespoons whole milk, or more as needed
1 egg
2 teaspoons dill weed
2 teaspoons parsley
½ teaspoon ground black pepper (or to taste)
½ teaspoon salt

*Note that using whole-wheat flour will make the dumplings appear darker in color, but the flavor is the same. Whole grain adds fiber and other nutrients.

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt butter. Sauté potatoes, carrot, celery, onion and pepper until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Stir 3 cups of milk into potato mixture and heat until almost boiling, about 5 minutes. Remove skillet from heat. In separate pot, bring chicken broth to a boil.

Dumplings: Mix ingredients, form a rope and cut into ¼-inch pieces. Add to boiling broth and cook for 10 minutes (until dumplings float). Stir potato mixture into the broth and knoepla. Simmer until potatoes are tender.

Each serving has 160 calories, 8 grams (g) fat, 9 g protein, 39 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 480 milligrams sodium.

Connect

Family Traditions = Healthy Families

The year is full of holidays, celebrations and special moments — each one is an opportunity to build family traditions. These traditions don't just create memories; they also strengthen your child's social and emotional health.

Family traditions can be simple, like bedtime routines, mealtime rituals or a Saturday morning donut run. They can also be bigger events, such as family reunions, holiday dinners or annual trips. No matter the size, traditions help children feel connected, loved and secure.

Research shows that family rituals play a protective role in promoting belonging and social connectedness. They give children positive core memories that boost self-esteem and help them understand family history, culture and values. Traditions can even help reduce feelings of anxiety or depression by strengthening social bonds.

When kids join in preparing for traditions — whether by setting the table, helping cook or planning activities — they gain life skills in teamwork, hospitality and inclusion. Best of all, traditions give families something to look forward to and memories to cherish for years to come.

As we approach the end of the year, it's the perfect time to reflect on your family's traditions — or even start a new one! Here are a few fun ideas:

- **Cook Grandma's favorite dish.** Research a family recipe (or ask a relative) and make it together on the same day each year.
- **Tablecloth traditions.** Replace the holiday tablecloth with a large sheet of paper. Hand out markers and have everyone doodle, write things they're grateful for or share their goals for the year ahead.

- **Handmade keepsakes.** Encourage kids to make a yearly gift using their handprints or fingerprints — watching them grow is a memory in itself!
- **Plan a family staycation.** Dedicate a weekend to all your family favorites — whether it's board games, sports, hiking or crafts.
- **Create a memory journal.** At each gathering, have family members jot down a favorite moment or activity from the year. Over time, this will become a treasured record of the little things that mattered most.

Family traditions don't have to be elaborate — they just have to be meaningful. The most important part is spending time together and building memories that strengthen your family's story.

Savor (the Conversations)

Fun conversations can be had over a family meal. These are a few sample questions from our conversation starter cards. Have a child or teen ask a relative some of these:

- What did your family do to celebrate birthdays when you were a child?
- What was the first movie you saw in a theater?
- What were the most popular toys when you were a young child?
- What type of music did you like when you were in school? Did you play a musical instrument?
- What was your favorite school lunch?

Visit **The Family Table website** for more "Conversation Starters for Reminiscing."

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