



# Growing Together: Food, Family and Friends

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This month, we provide ideas for spring celebrations, sharing the gift of time and food safety resources.

## Eat

Spring often means celebrations as the weather warms. You might move meals outdoors. How can you enjoy the times while providing nutritious options without breaking your bank account?

- Aim for at least three food groups on the menu.
  - ◆ Choose colorful fruits and vegetables in season.
  - ◆ Include lean proteins, such as lean ground beef, chicken or beans.
  - ◆ Choose lower-fat dairy options in dips. One cup of nonfat yogurt is a healthier swap for one cup of mayonnaise. In baked goods such as muffins or brownies, substitute  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup oil plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup applesauce in place of  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup oil.
  - ◆ Make half of the grain food choices whole grain foods, such as whole wheat crackers or bread.

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## Chocolate Cupcakes with a Secret Ingredient

Zucchini is the secret ingredient that helps trim calories and add moisture.

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cup nonfat or low-fat milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- 1 cup zucchini, pureed
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- Frosting of your choice (or sprinkle with powdered sugar)



Preheat oven to 375 F. Place cupcake cups in muffin tin and set aside. In a large bowl, whisk sugar, oil, eggs, milk and vanilla. In a separate medium bowl, combine flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt. Fold this mixture into liquid mixture. Then fold in zucchini and chocolate chips. Pour batter evenly throughout cupcake cups, each about half full. Bake for about 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for 10 minutes on cooling rack and top with your favorite frosting and sprinkles if desired. Serve within one to two days for best quality.

Makes about 30 servings. Each cupcake has 110 calories, 4.5 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 18 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 105 milligrams sodium.

- Personalize menu items to taste preferences.
  - ◆ Try a buffet with all the fixings for tacos or baked potatoes.
  - ◆ Try a “make your own bowl” buffet with rice, veggies, protein and sauces.
  - ◆ For dessert, consider a “build your own parfait” with yogurt, seasonal fruit and toppings.
- Consider a themed potluck such as “all appetizers.”
- Label the foods with potential allergens, such as wheat, milk or soy.

See the “Pinchin’ Pennie\$ in the Kitchen” series from NDSU Extension with ideas for making your own bowls, personalized pizzas, charcuterie boards and more!

## Connect

## Savor the Safety

Spring often means indoor and outdoor celebrations for graduations, weddings and perhaps some birthdays. How long can food be on a buffet table? What temperature should you maintain hot food and cold food? Are children more at risk for foodborne illness?

- For answers to these questions and many others, visit [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food), click on “Food Safety” then click “Home.”

## Teach Kids the Joy of Giving

Remember the fun of sneaking a May Day basket onto a doorstep and running away before getting caught? While that tradition may have faded, the spirit of giving is timeless and incredibly beneficial for kids.

Research shows acts of kindness boost mental health and happiness. By encouraging kids to give, we help them build empathy, confidence and lifelong habits of generosity.

Here are some age-friendly ideas to get started:

### Preschoolers

- Help around the house by raking leaves, watering plants, feeding pets or carrying groceries
- Make art or cards to bring to neighbors or senior homes
- Pick up litter (with gloves and supervision)

### Grade Schoolers

- Walk a neighbor’s dog or water their plants
- Donate toys or clothes
- Sell unused items and give the proceeds to a worthy cause

### Teens

- Volunteer based on their passions, such as music, art or sports
- Perform at senior centers or teach a skill at camp
- Help coach younger athletes or lead a fundraiser

Small actions make a big impact, and they’re a great way to raise kind, thoughtful humans.

Find more parenting resources here: [www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education](http://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/parent-education).



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