



Growing Together: Food, Family and Friends

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August is Family Fun Month



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As the summer begins to wind down, make time for some family fun and memory-making. Here are some ideas:

- Cook together. Save your favorite new recipes to become part of your family meal rotation.
- Get moving. Go on a hike at a state park, ride bikes, try mini-golf (or regular golf), go to a water slide or visit the zoo. Do some research ahead of time and decide on a scavenger hunt.
- Visit a farmers market and buy fresh vegetables for a stir-fry or grilled vegetables. For inspiration, see all the recipes at NDSU Extension's Field to Fork website (www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork) and check out "[Try Adding Some Fruits and Vegetables to Your Grilling Menu](#)."
- Preserve the harvest. Visit a u-pick farm and gather berries or other produce to freeze or make into jams and jellies. Be sure to follow research-based food preservation recommendations from NDSU Extension.
- Get creative outdoors. Have you played hopscotch lately? Get some sidewalk chalk and create a family mural on the sidewalk.
- Host a neighborhood picnic. Invite everyone to share their favorite dish. Bring out the lawn chairs and outdoor games.
- Remember these food safety tips for outdoor cooking and dining:
 - ◆ Keep perishable foods cool by transporting them in an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Perishable foods include meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products, pasta, rice, cooked vegetables, and fresh, peeled, and cut fruits and vegetables.
 - ◆ Avoid frequently opening coolers containing perishable food. It's a good idea to store beverages and perishable foods in separate coolers.
 - ◆ Use a food thermometer to check the doneness of meat. Burgers should reach an internal temperature of 160 F, and chicken breasts, 165 F.

Add fruit to your grilled fruit menu. Be creative!

Sweet Grilled Fruit Skewers

1 small pkg. of strawberries
1 medium pineapple (cut into 1-inch cubes)
1 tsp. canola oil or olive oil
Pinch of sugar
Bamboo skewers

Soak four bamboo skewers in water for 25 to 30 minutes before use. Preheat grill to medium heat. Wash the strawberries and the exterior of the pineapple. Cut the tops off the strawberries to remove the green leaves. Cut the top and bottom off the pineapple. Then carefully slice the skin off, remembering to core the pineapple. Finally, cube the pineapple slices. Push the fruit onto the skewers, alternating strawberry and pineapple. Lightly brush the fruit with canola oil and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes. Grill for 6 to 8 minutes, carefully turning the skewers to grill all sides of the fruit. Remove when the fruit is soft and has caramelized grill marks. Top with a pinch of sugar.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 70 calories, 1.5 gram (g) fat, 1 g protein, 15 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 0 milligrams sodium.

Connect

With August being Family Fun Month, it's a great time to connect with each other over food and to add some fun, interactive elements as well. Here are three simple opportunities you might try to connect through food and fun:

- **Make a Farmer's Market Meal** – Summer typically includes options for finding local foods such as farmers markets, community gardens or even neighbors sharing from their gardens. Take a little time to plan a farmers market visit if one is near you. Go with multiple family members or friends, and assign each one to find at least two items that could be part of a fun family meal. Make your selections and see if you can put together a family meal composed of foods that were selected at the farmer's market (or from other such sources).
- **Combine a Meal with Family Game Night** – Another strategy for family connection might involve putting down the phones, turning off the TV and turning to each other with some family games. Pick one night each week for this month, and schedule it as a "food and game night." Following a family meal, either play a familiar family game everyone enjoys (card game, charades, etc.) or select a new game to learn and connect over. Make sure your family time includes some meaningful connection time.
- **Family Food Favorites Night** – Almost everybody has a favorite food — that one that they just love to eat or share. Maybe it's lasagna, sushi or something else. For this connection activity, make a four-week schedule that includes a "family food favorites" night once each week. Have each family member sign up for a night to focus on their favorite food, and then work with them to plan the meal preparation and any related activities (food tasting, fun photos, etc.). Enjoy a month of favorite foods and family connections.

Savor (the Savings)

Prepackaged, prewashed salads and precut vegetables are a time saver, but can cost more. Rinse and chop vegetables at home to save some money. If time is more important, then buy the prechopped ingredients.

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