Dear Parents:

This month, we are coming to your child’s classroom to teach a lesson on the protein food group. This food group includes meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, and eggs as well as nuts and seeds. In this letter, we are sharing information on the health benefits of protein foods and give ideas on selection and preparation.

Have a good month.
Sincerely,

Beth Brinson
Extension Program Assistant
Family Nutrition Program

Diann Douglas
Extension Agent IV
Family and Consumer Sciences

**Protein Food Group**

This food group was known as the meat group, but the name was changed a couple of years ago because it includes more than meat. All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the protein food group.

Foods in this group supply many nutrients to help the body grow and maintain health. The main nutrients in protein foods include:

- **Protein**—An essential nutrient, it functions as building blocks for all of the body’s cells.
- **B Vitamins**—They help the body release energy and aid in red blood cell formation.
- **Iron**—Carries oxygen in your blood to all parts of your body.
- **Magnesium**—Used in building bones and releasing energy from muscles.
- **Zinc**—Help the immune system function properly.

Source: MyPlate

**Saving Money at the Grocery Store**

Protein foods can be the most expensive part of your grocery bill. Meat, poultry and fish are known as complete protein foods, and are costly. To cut spending try the following tips:

- Serve casseroles using small amounts of meat with rice or pasta and vegetables.
- Read weekly food ads and plan meals around the sale items for the week.
- Purchase large cuts of meat on sale, cut into several pieces for different meals. Cook one piece then wrap the rest and store in the freezer.
- Try the planned over method of food preparation. Cook one meat, like a chicken or roast and then use leftovers several more times changing the way you serve it. For example, roast a whole chicken; serve chicken one night, second meal make a chicken casserole and a third meal shred the rest, and make a chicken pot pie.
- The combinations are endless. You can do this with beef, pork or chicken.

**What’s a Serving of Protein**

Children ages 4 to 8 years of age, need to eat 3-4oz of protein foods each day, older children and adults need 5-6oz. A child size serving at a meal is about 2oz of meat or other protein. Add foods from the other groups from MyPlate to provide a balanced meal for a young child. This allows you to offer a protein source a couple of times a day. Two ounces of a protein serving is equal to:

- ½ cup of dried beans
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- A piece of meat the size of two match boxes (Not very big)

Source: MyPlate
**COMBINE PLANT PROTEINS FOR INEXPENSIVE MEALS**

Plant sources of protein, (usually less expensive) are incomplete, but if you combine dried beans with a grain or a dairy product, it makes a complete protein and is just as nutritious as a serving of meat.

Serving meatless meals several times a week will help keep your grocery bill down and still provide your family with high quality meals. Here are a few combinations:

**GRAINS OR DAIRY + DRIED BEANS = MEAT SUBSTITUTE**

- Red Beans + Rice
- Black-Eyed Peas + Corn Bread
- Lentil or Pea Soup + Bread
- Bean Tacos or Burritos (the shell is the grain)
- Bean and Cheese Casserole
- Lima Beans + Milk served in the same meal
- Bean or Peas + Macaroni and Cheese

To complete the meal, add a salad or vegetable, a fruit and milk.

Source: EFNEP

---

**RECIPE OF THE MONTH**

**Baked Lemon Chicken**

Yield: 5 servings

**Ingredients:**

- 3½ pounds chicken (skinned and cut into 10 pieces)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1½ cloves of garlic (thinly sliced, or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 4 thyme sprigs (fresh, or 1 tsp dried thyme)
- 3 cups onion (thinly sliced)
- 1½ cups chicken stock (or water)
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 lemon (sliced into 10 slices, seeds removed)

**Instructions:**

1. Combine salt, pepper, garlic, and thyme.
2. Lay chicken pieces into a 11x13 baking pan. Sprinkle seasonings over chicken.
3. Combine onions, stock, and lemon juice in a sauce pan. Heat to a boil.
4. Pour hot lemon mixture around chicken. Top each chicken piece with a lemon slice.
5. Bake for 30 minutes at 400 degrees until golden brown and juices are clear colored.

**Nutrition Facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>1/5 recipe (521g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount Per Serving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Daily Value*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>11g  17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>3g  15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>225mg  75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>470mg  20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>15g  5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>3g  12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>71g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>Less Than</td>
<td>65g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>Less Than</td>
<td>20g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>Less Than</td>
<td>300mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>2400mg</td>
<td>2400mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>300g</td>
<td>375g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>25g</td>
<td>30g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost:

- Per Recipe: $5.78
- Per Serving: $1.16

Source: USDA What’s Cooking Recipe Finder
http://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes
USDA, Team Nutrition, Food Family Fun

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-866-762-2237. TTY/TTD/FRS dial 711. This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The USDA and the University of Florida IFAS Extension are equal opportunity providers and employers.