SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED AND GOOD FOR YOU!

Something Old

We all have index cards that are stained and bent because they are the tried and true recipes. They are ones that have been passed down from generation to generation and are usually in someone else's handwriting, mom, grandma or maybe even older. These recipes define our traditions – ham for Easter, THOSE potatoes for Thanksgiving, the only acceptable Birthday cake is usually written on those. My grandma always made us a round chocolate cake, 2 layers, with whipped cream frosting and chocolate sprinkles. This recipe is one of those for our family. It's called Grandma's cake and everyone knows it. Don't replace these recipes. Keep these, somewhere you can always grab them in a pinch and remember them for those dinners. Keep them around and keep collecting them from everyone you can.

Something New

How often do you go to plan your menu or go to make dinner and the thought, “I'm so bored with our meals!” goes through your head? If it has EVER gone through your mind then listen up! DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY NEW THINGS!!! For many of us, we grew up eating the same 10 meals over and over again. That is not a bad thing. It is fun to try new recipes though. Use your same ingredients and make something else. It's amazing what recipes you can find when you put your ingredients into Google. Try it, you might be pleasantly surprised.

For the first 2 years of our married life, my husband and I made a goal not to repeat a meal. Of course we did repeat some, but I can honestly probably count on my fingers how many got repeated. It was so much fun. We both love to cook and he loves to make recipes up so we were able to try loads of different things, like catfish, that we may never have eaten before. I know you are thinking that I'm exaggerating so let me explain a little. Did we have more than one grilled burger? Absolutely! BUT...we switched the toppings or made them garlic ranch burgers or sun-dried tomato or barbecue. Making new things doesn't have to be rocket-science. If one of your ten meals includes tacos, switch it up, put the filling on tortilla chips with lettuce, sour cream, cheese and guacamole or on fry bread and have Navajo Tacos – the possibilities are endless.

On that note, while you make the chili that you always make, shake a little cinnamon in or chipotle chili pepper, or smoked paprika. Buy a new spice or cheese at the store next time you are there and add it to your sauces or marinades. Keep things fresh and new. It is scary at first, you won't know what to expect but the more you experiment, the more comfortable you will get. One day, you will be making some sauce and the thought, “this needs some ____ (fill in the blank)” will pop into your head and it will amaze you that you knew what flavor would enhance your meal. Trust yourself, even if you have a few meals that will NEVER again be made, try new things. You will love it, your family will love it and it'll take the chore out of making dinner.
Something Borrowed

In today's world we have endless amounts of information at our fingertips at almost any time. Utilize these resources and borrow ideas from other people. Pinterest, blogs, friends, ward cookbooks, freezer meal days....there are so many places to get ideas. USE THEM.

Some blogs I love:
http://www.thesisterscafe.com/
http://www.ourbestbites.com/
http://thepioneerwoman.com/
http://nummiesforyou.blogspot.com/
http://www.skinnytaste.com/
http://www.food.com/
and finally my collection is http://apinchofgarlic.blogspot.com/.

There are hundreds of thousands of blogs containing recipes to use as a resource. Use them, borrow from them and allow your collection of recipes for you and your family to grow.

Good for you

As you research, don’t forget to keep in mind what your health goals are. Have included another handout for you that lists healthy substitutions. This way you can eat realistically for your own family and life but make small changes that help your body stay healthy and fit. We all know that we need to eat well in order to stay energized and happy about ourselves. Help those you cook for as well as yourself to meet those goals and keep healthy food on hand.

There are a few things that help more than anything else when that dreaded question “what's for dinner” is asked. The goal of healthy and pretty goes out the door when the kids are fighting, the baby is screaming, the toddler is breaking things and the husband is almost home (not that this scenario EVER happens, but let's just pretend we have all been here.)

Melanie from sisterscafe.com wrote an amazing article on the importance of family dinner. PLEASE go read it. It is inspired, it is great advice and it can help even the most organized mother/father or whoever does the shopping and cooking in your home. Take the time to read her insights. You will not regret it.


Here is my favorite advice from her article that I will be implementing immediately in our home:

**Set the table**

Warm, welcoming family meals begin with the table. Put your best foot forward for your family. Don’t save the table linens, and good dishes for company. When a table is set for your family both adults and children will approach it with eagerness. This gives reverence to the meal and the family. Your family will feel loved and special when they see that you have taken the time to
set a nice table for them.

Also—my Mom taught me to set the table first—then when your husband and children come home tired and hungry they see the table and think—”yes” dinner is almost ready—even if it is not!”

Isn't that brilliant?! Thank you Melanie!

So, now that you have read Melanie's advice here is a little from me – some may overlap, seems we work in the same way.

Get Organized!

1. One secret to success with providing healthy and delicious family meals is having resources. Personally, I keep all of my recipes in a large 3-ring binder. I print, type out, or just punch the original and stick it in. My binder is broken up into 7 categories; Appetizers/Beverages, Breads, Breakfast, Dessert, Main Course, Soup/Salad, Veggies/Sides. You can do yours in the way that works best for you. Divide it into as many as you want, get as many binders as you want. Having recipes you love, having them accessible and knowing how to find them quickly can be the best thing you do for dinner!

Attached are tabs and a cover for your very own binder. Print them out and get started today!

2. Plan your meals ahead of time. I personally refuse to cook something that doesn't sound appetizing, if I can avoid it at all. Because of that I plan 2 weeks at a time but I don't plan specific meals for specific days, I just plan 13 or 14 meals at a time and shop for all of those. Instead of trying to dream something up I look at my list and choose from those. Since I started planning my meals in advance, we go out less, I hardly ever make a fast-food run, I spend less on groceries because I don't ever need that one ingredient and I don't dread 5:00 every day.

There is also a menu attached. Utilize that if it will help!

3. Join the family in enjoying the meal. So many times I collapse at the table, ornery from trying to do too many things and I don't enjoy the food because my mind is going a million miles a minute listing everything we still need to get done that day. This is a time where everything can be set aside and we can just catch up. Enjoy it! Taking the time to make and eat dinner as a family is one of the greatest things we can do in our day. Make it a priority and keep the process fun!

Some inspiration:

"The number of those who report that their “whole family usually eats dinner together” has declined 33 percent. This is most concerning because the time a family spends together “eating meals at home [is] the strongest predictor of children’s academic achievement and psychological adjustment.” Family mealtimes have also been shown to be a strong bulwark against children’s smoking, drinking, or using drugs...There is inspired wisdom in this advice to parents: what your children really want for dinner, is you."

Dallin H. Oaks, Ensign November 2007
Deiter F. Uchtdorf counseled:

“My dear brothers and sisters, we would do well to slow down a little, proceed at the optimum speed for our circumstances, focus on the significant, lift up our eyes, and truly see the things that matter most.”