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Stretching your food and gift dollars

Struggling with what to give people on your gift list this year? Food is an appreciated gift – especially if someone else prepares it. ***Healthy Meals in a Hurry*** – an Iowa State University Extension publication – has dry mixes you could prepare and give. Or try one or two of the 14 entrees to prepare, freeze and give as gifts. (While you're preparing, make some for your own freezer for quick, healthy meals!)

The recipes in *Healthy Meals in a Hurry* are lower in sodium and fat. They may be packaged in individual portions – one casserole, for instance, or enough dry soup mix for one casserole. Giving gifts of food may even save you money.

Purchase a copy of *Healthy Meals in a Hurry* for \$2.50 a copy at your local office of Iowa State University Extension or through the Online Store at www.extension.iastate.edu/store.

One of the great recipes in the publication is for “Dry Cream Soup Mix.” Use it as a low fat, low sodium alternative to canned cream soups. To give this as a gift from your kitchen, just combine the ingredients and put the mix in a plastic zip-close bag or a jar along with directions for using the mix.

Dry Cream Soup Mix

Equal to 7 cans cream soup

Ingredients:

2 cups instant nonfat dry milk
¼ cup cornstarch
¼ cup sodium free dry chicken bouillon
2 tablespoons dried minced onion flakes
1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
1 teaspoon dried basil leaves
½ teaspoon ground pepper

Directions:

Combine all ingredients and store in air tight container.

To use as a substitute for one can condensed soup:

Mix 1/3 cup dry mix and 1 ¼ cups water.

Stovetop: cook and stir with whisk until thickened.

Microwave: Using a large microwave safe bowl, cook on high for 2-3 minutes, stirring with whisk every 30 seconds until thick.

Nutrients per can-equivalent: 149 calories, 7g protein; 0g fat, 0g saturated fat; 111mg sodium, 4 mg cholesterol; 28g carbohydrates, 0.5g fiber

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