

# WARMING WINTER FOODS – JANUARY '01

## Shake Up Your Snacks –

### PICK A BETTER SNACK

January featured produce items for the Pick a Better Snack Campaign include:

- Grapefruit
- Mango
- Orange
- Peppers
- Cucumber



You can receive information about the produce items by contacting the Iowa State University Extension Office nearest you or get it from the web at:

[www.extension.iastate.edu/food/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food/)

## SLOW COOKER SUGGESTIONS

*With high fuel bills facing all of us this winter it will pay to economize in our meal preparation. A slow cooker is a good way to prepare less expensive cuts of meat using a minimal amount of electric energy. Following are several recipes to try that require a minimum of preparation time, but are rich in flavor.*

### MILLENNIUM CHICKEN (6 SERVINGS)

*This could also be prepared as a casserole, but saves fuel by cooking in the slow cooker. Also note that it uses the sauce mix which is lower in sodium than commercial soup.*

1/3-cup casserole sauce mix **and** 1 ¼ cup water

**OR** use 1 can condensed cream soup (mushroom or chicken) undiluted

¼ teaspoon pepper

Dash cayenne pepper

1-pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into cubes

1 package (16 oz.) Seasoning Blend (VIP® Brand)

frozen vegetables **OR** 1 small onion, chopped; 2 ribs celery, sliced; ½ green pepper, chopped;

1 can (4 oz) mushrooms

1 jar (2 oz.) pimento, diced and drained

1 can (4 oz) sliced black olives, drained (optional)

In a slow cooker, combine sauce mix, water (or soup), and peppers until smooth. Stir in chicken, Seasoning Blend and mushrooms. Cover and cook on low for 7-8 hours or until meat juices are clear or to a temperature of 170°F. Stir in pimento and olives (if desired) just before serving. Serve over rice or noodles with green peas as a vegetable side dish.

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### CASSEROLE SAUCE MIX (Makes 9 'cans' of soup)

*Modify the herbs to suit your personal preference.*

2 cups instant nonfat dry milk crystals

¾ cup cornstarch

¼ cup reduced sodium chicken bouillon

2 tablespoons dried onion flakes

½ teaspoon dried thyme, crushed

½ teaspoon basil, crushed

¼ teaspoon pepper



Combine all ingredients and store in airtight container.

To use as a substitute for one can condensed soup, mix 1/3-cup dry mix and 1 ¼ cups water in saucepan. Cook and stir until thickened.

### SPICY BEEF VEGETABLE STEW (12 SERVINGS)

1 pound lean ground beef

1 cup chopped onion (ok to substitute frozen or dried)

1 jar (30 oz) meatless spaghetti sauce (seek low sodium)

3 ½ cups water

1 package (16 ounces) frozen mixed vegetables

1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies

1 cup sliced celery

1 teaspoon beef bouillon granules (low sodium)

½ teaspoon pepper

In a skillet over medium heat, cook beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Transfer to a slow cooker. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the vegetables are tender.

*Adapted from 2000 Quick Cooking Annual Recipes by Taste of Home Books, Reiman Publications.*

### SLOW COOKER TIPS

- Fresh vegetables take longer to cook than meats in a slow cooker. Cut vegetables in quarters or small pieces and place near sides or bottom.
- If you lift the lid, add 20 to 25 minutes of cooking time to the recipe.
- Always start with fresh or thawed meat – not frozen.
- Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. However, cooked food can be brought to steaming on the stove-top or in a microwave and then put into a preheated slow cooker to keep hot for serving.



## IT'S NATIONAL OATMEAL MONTH!

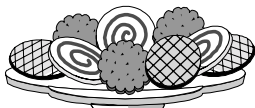
Here are a few fun facts and tips about oatmeal:

- People buy more oatmeal during January than any other month.
- Oatmeal is the first product given FDA approval to carry a food-specific health claim.
- Oatmeal is a whole grain cereal made from oat groats. It contains the bran, germ and endosperm.
- Quick oats are basically the same as old-fashioned oats except they are cut into smaller pieces so they cook faster.
- Be sure to read the label for instant flavored oatmeal varieties – many contain added sugar and salt.

### GRANOLA BARS Makes 24 bars

*This bar requires no baking and is quick to mix. Although it has 7 grams fat per bar, it provides Vitamin A and iron.*

- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 3 ½ cups rolled oats
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup carrots, grated
- ½ cup coconut



Heat honey and peanut butter in large saucepan, stirring until melted. Remove from heat and add oatmeal, raisins, carrots and coconut. Mix well. Spread evening in an ungreased 15 1/2 X 10 1/2 jellyroll pan and press firmly. Cut into 24 bars-four rows across width and six rows lengthwise. Bars will be chewy. If you prefer crunchy bars, bake for 25 minutes at 350°F.

*From "Lunches To Go – Brown Bagging It" by Jeannette L. Miller and Elisabeth Schafer, Pearl Publications, ISBN-1-879776-00-6.*

## INSTANT OATMEAL PACKETS

*Oatmeal is a great snack and breakfast food. Cut back on your grocery bill by making your own instant packets.*

For each packet you will need:

- A plastic sandwich bag
- ½ cup quick oats
- Dash salt, optional



Put oatmeal into bag adding salt if desired.

**To Use:** Empty packet into a microwave safe bowl. Stir in 1 cup water or milk. Microwave on HIGH 2 ½ to 3 minutes; stir before serving.

### VARIATIONS:

#### Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal

To each packet add 1 teaspoon or more sugar, ¼ teaspoon cinnamon and 2 tablespoons chopped, dried apples.

#### Sweetened Oatmeal

To each packet add 1 teaspoon or more sugar.

#### Cinnamon-Spice Oatmeal

To each packet add 1 teaspoon or more sugar, ¼ teaspoon cinnamon, and a scant 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg.

#### Oatmeal with Brown Sugar and Raisins

To each packet add 1 Tablespoon packed brown sugar and 1 tablespoon raisins.

## SPLENDA, THE SPLENDID NEW SUGAR , IS NOW AVAILABLE

Want something sweet, but without the calories? Sucralose, a calorie-free sweetener is the newest non-nutritive sweetener in the United States. It became readily available in grocery stores under the brand name "Splenda" in October.

According to Elisabeth Schafer, extension nutritionist at Iowa State University, sucralose is a sugar molecule that has been changed in size and shape so that human enzymes cannot use it; thus it has no calories. This chemical change also increases the sweetness 600-fold. The taste is very much like sugar, but without the unpleasant aftertaste that accompanies several other non-nutritive sweeteners.

Because Splenda is so intensely sweet, sucralose is blended with maltodextrin, a bulking agent, to provide volume, and this bulking agent provides miniscule amounts of energy -- about 1 calorie per 2 teaspoons.

Sucralose is very stable making it usable as a tabletop sugar, as well as in cooked and baked products with no loss of sweetening power. Sucralose can be used as a spoon-for-spoon replacement for sugar. Schafer cautions that this can get rather costly.

Sucralose has been extensively tested for safety and is now approved as a general, all-purpose sweetener. It has been approved for use around the world, and 110 studies that have demonstrated the safety of sucralose. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved its use in 1998. Two remaining areas of concern are consumption amounts by children and safety at high doses that some individuals may consume if sucralose is a substitute for all the sweeteners they typically consume.

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