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A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Soup's On!

Renee Sweers, Human Sciences Specialist, Nutrition and Wellness

'Tis the season for comfort foods, with hot soup being at the top of the list for a cold winter day. Soup can be a low-calorie nutritional powerhouse OR calorie-laden with skyrocketing amounts of both sodium and fat. It all depends on the choices you make.

Make it Healthy. Homemade soup is not difficult to make and allows for healthy cooking strategies:

- I usually load soups with vegetables, often at least doubling the amount of vegetables the recipe calls for. Fresh vegetables can be chopped but frozen or canned* vegetables are even easier.
- Substitute whole grains such as brown rice or wild rice in place of white rice and whole grain pasta in place of regular white pasta.
- Broth-based soups tend to be lower in calories and fat than cream-based soups. One way to lower the fat in a milk or cream-based soup is to use evaporated skim milk as all or part of the liquid. This adds a rich creamy texture and flavor without the fat.
- Sodium in homemade soups can be lowered by using a lower sodium broth or stock. Check nutrition labels closely when buying reduced sodium broths. A product labeled 'sodium reduced' means the product contains 25 percent less than the original product, but another brand could be lower yet. Read nutrition labels to ensure you are getting the lowest sodium option. *Draining and rinsing cans of vegetables and canned beans/legumes before adding to soup also lowers sodium. Cooking soup with fresh vegetables, no salt-added canned vegetables, and/or cooking dried beans without salt are other sodium reducing strategies.

A vegetable-loaded soup, whole grain bread or roll, a dish of fruit and a glass of milk makes a meal that matches the daily nutritional recommendations of eating according to MyPlate.

[\(https://www.choosemyplate.gov/\)](https://www.choosemyplate.gov/)

Soup Savings. Soups are a great way to stretch a small amount of meat or can be made without meat. Soups help prevent food waste by using up any leftovers or small amounts of either meat or veggies you have on hand. Dried beans such as lentils, pinto or black beans in place of meat, or in combination with a small amount of meat, can also save money and still make a protein-rich soup.

Cook Once, Eat Twice. Soup can be made in a slow cooker, can be made in advance and refrigerated for later heating, or can be made and frozen. Be sure to cool hot soup by placing the hot pan in an ice water bath in the sink before refrigerating or freezing.

Calories Count. Soups are not always low in calories. Soups that are high in cheese, cream or whole milk, bacon or other high fat ingredients can really be loaded with calories.

One source for economical nutritious soup recipes is the ISU Extension and Outreach *Spend Smart. Eat Smart.* website: <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/>. All of the soups on the *Spend Smart. Eat Smart.* website are less than 300 calories per serving!

When you visit the *Spend Smart. Eat Smart.* website, follow the link to 'Recipes' and then 'Soups'. Some of the soup recipes are written specifically for the slow cooker, some can be made in minutes using canned vegetables/beans and broth, and all are cost-effective and meet the ISU Extension and Outreach recipe nutrition guidelines for being moderate in sodium, fat, sugar and calorie content.

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Optional Additional Table:

Soup	Serving Size	Calories/ Serving	Sodium(mg)/ Serving	Cost/ Serving	Number of Servings in Recipe
Slow Cooker Black-Eyed Pea Soup	1 ½ cup	200	450	\$.66	5
Our Favorite Chicken Noodle Soup	1 ⅓ cup	280	350	.60	6
Mexican Chicken Soup	1 cup	180	590	.82	8
Vegetarian Chili	1 ½ cup	200	390	.57	7
Cheesy Broccoli Soup	¾ cup	220	320	.40	4
Slow Cooker Pork Chili	1 ¼ cup	250	520	1.52	6
Vegetable Soup with Kale and Lentils	1 ½ cup	200	170	.89	6
Loaded Potato Soup	1 cup	230	270	.67	6
10-Minute Chili	1 cup	280	980	1.58	4
Minestrone Soup	1 cup	150	260	.68	8
Vegetable Pasta Soup	1 ½ cup	130	370	.76	8
Garbanzo Bean Soup	1 ¼ cup	120	290	.51	8
Quick Turkey Rice Soup	1 ½ cup	240	490	2.01	6
3-Can Chili	1 ½ cup	200	670	.81	4
Winter Black Bean Soup	1 ¼ cup	240	530	.90	4

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