

Sharing Meals Brings Joy to Holiday Season

Cooking and eating together during the holidays are among the simple things that can bring comfort and joy to our lives. Nourishment, health and connecting with others can be as close as our kitchen table. Here are five comforting ways to make food and nutrition as central ingredient of your holiday season.

***Preparing food is a soothing way to share time and bring generations together. Talking while you measure, mix, stir and chop can be a time to discuss important issues and concerns. Making a pot of homemade vegetable soup or kneading bread together can be a relaxing experience.**

***Strengthen your family by making sit-down meals a priority as often as possible. If you live alone, reach out to neighbors, friends and co-workers to have dinner together. Inviting others to join you for a meal creates a sense of community. This is one of the best ways to celebrate the meaning and comfort of the holidays.**

***Take a break from TV to enjoy and really experience your meal—use meal time for good conversation. Most of all, savor your food by focusing on tastes, smells and textures. Take comfort in the blessings of nourishing food.**

***Making family traditions part of everyday meals ties us to memories of the past. Families have many rituals for meals that bring comfort—prayers, moments of silence, joining hands, or festive touches like candles, favorite dishes or special placemats. Rituals contribute to the feeling of belonging.**

***Slow down and share food, fellowship, joys, concerns and the simple act of being with others. The gift of your time and attention builds self-esteem in children and makes all people feel valued. Also, teach your children to share with those less fortunate by giving canned goods to local food pantries.**