

# FAMILY DINNER RESOLUTIONS



## Food

Cozy up with some comfort food as winter sets in! This one-pot chicken recipe would be perfect for a Sunday Supper.



## Fun

Make this game a New Year's celebration by choosing people you actually would like to eat with in 2016!

# WHO?



## Conversation

Look back at 2015 with our recent Conversation of the Week about "looking for the helpers."



The New Year's resolution is a tradition that tends to elicit one of two reactions from people: Either you're the type of person who enjoys making resolutions, or you're the type of person who groans at the very thought. Those who like resolutions say it motivates them to make positive changes and helps them to view the turning of the calendar page as a fresh start. People on the other side of the debate might argue that most

resolutions are overly ambitious and end up discarded before January has even come to a close.

Whatever your preference, we're offering these ideas for family dinner resolutions you and your family can actually act on -- and stick to -- in 2016. From one-time efforts to long-term changes, there's a New Year's resolution here for everyone.

## 1 THE ONE-TIME RESOLUTION: HAVE A SUNDAY SUPPER.

As we did last year, The Family Dinner Project is partnering with Points of Light for the 2016 America's Sunday Supper event and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. You can bring important conversations about equality, service to others and civil rights to your family dinner table by dedicating your Sunday dinner on January 17 to this worthwhile initiative. Learn more about the event, get resources and sign up to hold an America's Sunday Supper on the Points of Light website. Also, keep watching The Family Dinner Project website, Facebook and Twitter feeds for dedicated conversation starters and resources for families to help bring this important dialogue to dinner guests of all ages.

## 2 THE OCCASIONAL RESOLUTION: LINGER AT THE TABLE.

Even those of us who have regular family dinners often feel the pressure of packed schedules. As one busy parent told us, "By the time I manage to get everyone to the table to eat the meal I've cooked, all I can think about is eating and cleaning up so we can move on to the next thing!" Quality matters, so if you can relate to the struggle of squeezing in a positive and enjoyable family meal amidst the other daily tasks, try resolving to linger at the table as a family. It doesn't have to happen every night or even every week; maybe you can start just by trying to notice when you've got a less stressful evening ahead of you, and making the decision to encourage everyone to slow down in that moment.

To encourage lingering, you might pull out a favorite board game at the end of the meal, serve a special dessert after the dishes are cleared or bring out a family joke jar. For more ideas to keep everyone at the table for some quality time, check out our Between Dinner and Dessert section.

## 3 THE MONTH-LONG RESOLUTION: SPEND 4 WEEKS IMPROVING YOUR DINNERS.

If you love the idea of family dinners, but find that having regular, meaningful interactions around the table is a challenge, you might need some tips to help you shake up your mealtime routine. Our free program, "Food, Fun and Conversation: 4 Weeks to Better Family Dinners" has helped numerous families improve their dinner table experiences. Throughout the course of the 4 weeks, you'll find the basics of setting a rewarding and fun family dinner routine broken down into manageable goals and steps, with tips and resources offered at every step of the way.

## 4 THE HELPING RESOLUTION: BRING A FAMILY DINNER EVENT TO YOUR COMMUNITY.

Family dinners are fun, but community dinners come with a whole new level of engaging conversation and interaction. Gathering with others in your area to share a meal is a great way to break down barriers and get everyone talking about things that matter. We've been proud to be a part of hundreds of community dinner events across the country, but we're especially excited to unveil a new resource for 2016: "Bytes and Bites: A Community Dinner Guide About Digital Life."

We developed the guide with our partners at Common Sense Education, to help families and communities work together to discuss important issues related to digital citizenship, social media use and online presence in an increasingly technological world.



## SMOTHERED CHICKEN WITH APPLE CIDER GRAVY



This chicken dish takes a little time to cook, but most of it is inactive time – meaning that while dinner’s doing its thing in the oven, you can spend time with your family. While the chicken cooks, it makes its own gravy, so all you have to do is ladle it over some rice or mashed potatoes and serve a vegetable on the side for a cozy and comforting meal.



### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and season the chicken pieces with the salt and pepper.
2. Melt the butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces, skin-side-down, and cook until golden brown. You may need to work in batches to keep from overcrowding the pan. Flip the browned chicken pieces over and cook for 2-3 minutes on the other side.
3. Remove the browned chicken pieces and set aside.
4. Reduce the heat to medium-low and add the onions and celery to the pan. Cook, stirring often, until the vegetables start to soften.
5. Sprinkle the vegetables with the flour, stir well, and cook for 2 minutes.
6. Add the thyme and apple cider, stirring well to make sure nothing is stuck to the bottom.
7. Return the chicken to the Dutch oven and cover.
8. Put the covered Dutch oven into the preheated 375 degree oven and cook for 45 minutes, until the chicken is very tender and the gravy has thickened. If you used fresh thyme, remove the stems before serving.

### Ingredients

- 3-4 lbs. bone-in chicken pieces (approximately two each of breasts, thighs, legs, and wings)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 ribs celery, sliced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme OR 2 tsp. dried thyme
- 2 cups apple cider



## WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?



Everyone at the table gets to pick a person they would invite to dinner and explain why. The dinner guest can be anyone from any period in time, famous or not. What would you make for this person? What games might you play? A variation: jot down all of the choices and imagine these folks all at your table at the same time. What would they have in common? How would they get along? Finally, if you're feeling up to it, actually invite someone to dinner (like Sarah Smiley and her family did in Dinner with the Smileys!)

See more fun ideas at [thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun](http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun)

## CONVERSATION

Often, looking back at a year as it comes to a close means that we take stock of everything that has happened in the world. It can be an exciting exercise (This was the year the USA Women's Soccer Team won the World Cup!), but also painful and saddening as we remember tragedies that may have occurred.

Fortunately, Mr. Rogers gave us all a hopeful, comfort-

ing way to view tragedies: Look for the helpers. We were excited to find this roundup from Upworthy of 8 times "helpers" brought positivity to difficult events in 2015. Use it to spark dialogue at your family dinner table as you prepare to ring in a new – and hopefully bright – year.

- Can you think of other examples of "helpers" who have made challenging situations better, whether from the news or from your own life?
- Have you ever been a "helper?" Talk about that moment and what it was like.
- Some people say that it takes a special kind of person to be a "helper." Do you think that's true? Can anyone be a "helper?"
- What qualities do you think a person would need to be of assistance in a difficult or dangerous situation?
- Do you think news stories and the internet make it easier to look for the helpers, or more difficult? Why?
- What's the event you would most like to read about in the New Year?

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