

RELAXING AT FAMILY DINNER



Food

Spice up your summer picnics with Turkey Taco Burgers!



Fun

Summer is a great time for visiting farms and farmers' markets. When you get home, try playing "How Many Hands?" to show off how much you've learned!



Conversation

Enjoy some laughs together with these conversation starters about finding joy and humor in simple things.





For many families, summertime means less structured time. Without the schedules and routines that often govern family life during the school year, these next few months can bring a sort of relief and a lot more “white space” on the calendar.

The shift from school-year schedules to summertime can be both an advantage and a challenge for the family dinner -- while there might be more time to slow down and enjoy one another’s company,

it also might be difficult for those who thrive on structure and routine to figure out how to fit in family dinner among the various camps, outings, vacations and spontaneous adventures of summer. Our advice: Relax and let your family dinners, like your calendar, become less regimented. Summer can be the sweetest time for family meals if you “go with the flow!”

Enjoy some laid-back food, fun and conversation this summer with our help:

GO BACKWARDS.

The backwards dinner is a great way to keep things fun, and summer -- with its many opportunities for a spontaneous sweet treat -- is a perfect time to try it out. In fact, team member Bri and her family make sure to prioritize an “Ice Cream for Dinner” night at

least once every summer. It’s okay to (sometimes) let the food rules go and focus on the fun!

Upside Down and Backwards
thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/upside-backwards

GO OUTSIDE.

What is it about eating outdoors that makes the food taste better? A bonus to the outdoor dinner is that it presents an opportunity to relax about manners. It's okay to run around the picnic blanket, take a break between courses for a Frisbee toss or eat with your fingers and get a little messy. If you can't manage a full picnic dinner, try a Walking Dessert and see how the conversation opens up when you're not focused on mealtime behavior.

Read *The Where of Family Dinner*:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/food-for-thought/the-where-of-family-dinners/

Play outside and Use Your Senses:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/use-your-senses-outdoors/

Try a Walking Dessert:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/the-walking-dessert/

GO EARLY (OR LATE).

Although adult work schedules may still make family dinner challenging for some of us, without the usual pressures of school-year sleep schedules, it can be easier to find a creative time for a shared meal. The summer sunrise may make breakfast together a pleasant alternative, while later bedtimes and warmer nights

could mean that a star-gazing snack becomes your new bonding time. Remember, it doesn't have to be dinner to be meaningful.

Check out one family's experience with their own Family Breakfast Project:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/justines-family-break-fast-project/

GO SIMPLE.

Cooking on a hot day isn't usually at the top of anyone's list of favorite tasks, and the pressure to "get home to start dinner" can sometimes mean cutting short a perfectly good outing. At least once a week, give yourself permission to serve a "good-enough" dinner: Cold sandwiches and fruit, cheese and crackers with cut-up vegetables or a big salad with leftover cold chicken are

all perfectly great dinners to enjoy while the family hangs out in the backyard after a busy day. Or if you're up to tossing something on the grill, take some tips from a young chef we know!

Checkout Kid Chef Nate's favorite simple summer dinner: thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/kids-who-cook-chef-nate-on-grilling-and-marinating/

GO ACTIVE.

We usually recommend games that can be played at the table, but why not take advantage of the summer weather to have more active family dinner fun? Take a break between courses to throw a ball around or play a game of tag. Play "drip, drip, drop" (a water-play version of "Duck, Duck, Goose") around the outdoor table

or picnic blanket. Try Pictionary with sidewalk chalk. Or take advantage of the opportunity to do some messy-but-fun Food Coloring Painting outdoors!

Food Coloring Painting:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/food-coloring-paintings/

FAMILY OF THE MONTH

This month, we're featuring the Isaac family from West Virginia: Tom, Amy, and their boys Will, Ben and Drew. Like many busy families, they sometimes find themselves crunched for time and seeking strategies to help them gather for dinner. Amy says, "The best tip I got from The Family Dinner Project is that dinner doesn't have to be fancy. It doesn't always have to be a gourmet

meal. As long as we are all sitting down together and making a meal together, it counts."

Read more about the Isaacs and how they're meeting their family dinner goals:

thefamilydinnerproject.org/family-blog/real-family-dinner-projects-isaac-family/



TURKEY TACO BURGERS



This fun twist on burger night can be customized to suit every eater. Use a mild cheese, such as American, if pepper jack is too spicy; add hot sauce or salsa if it's not spicy enough! Pile on the avocado or leave it off, add tomatoes and lettuce (or don't), or try mixing things up with toppings like black olives, pickled jalapenos, or sour cream.



Instructions:

1. Preheat a grill on medium heat.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together the chili powder, garlic powder, salt, and cumin. Add the turkey and mix well, until thoroughly combined.
3. Shape the turkey mixture into 4 patties. Grill the patties for 5-7 minutes per side, until cooked completely through.
4. Add a slice of cheese to each patty 2 minutes before removing from the grill, and allow the cheese to melt while the burgers finish cooking.
5. Mash the avocado in a small bowl. Add a sprinkle of salt and lemon juice and stir well.
6. Spread the avocado mixture on the buns. Add a burger patty to each and top with lettuce and tomato.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground turkey
- 3/4 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt, plus a pinch more for the avocado
- 1/4 tsp. cumin
- 4 slices pepper jack cheese
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1/2 tsp. lemon juice
- Sliced tomato
- Lettuce leaves
- Kaiser or bulkie rolls



HOW MANY HANDS?

Choose a food on your plate and count how many steps were involved in getting it to your table. For example, “rewinding” your glass of milk’s journey might look like this: table, kitchen, grocery store, truck, distribution site, really big truck, farm, cow. If someone gets stuck, go around and see if anyone can think of more steps. How far back can you go?

thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/how-many-hands/



WOOKIEE OF THE YEAR

People are calling it the video that broke the internet. Candace Payne was so delighted by the roaring Chewbacca mask she bought at a Kohl’s store that she filmed herself wearing the mask and enjoying its iconic noises. A record number of internet users decided to laugh along with her, and Candace’s “Happy Chewbacca” video has been viewed over 136 million times on Facebook.

If you haven’t already, belly laugh along with Candace here, facebook.com/candaceSpayne/videos/10209653193067040/, then talk about the video with your family:

- Sometimes simple things – in this case, a Star Wars mask – can inspire great joy for people. What’s a simple thing that makes you feel joyful?
- What makes you laugh?
- In an interview, Candace said that she thought people enjoyed her video because “the world needs a good belly laugh.” What do you think she means? Do you agree with her?
- Part of what makes this video funny may be that it’s a mom in her 30s who isn’t “acting her age.” What do you think it means to “act your age?” Do you think it’s always a good idea?
- Think of someone you know who could use a good laugh. What could you do to make them giggle?
- What is your favorite summer food to eat?

thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/conversation-of-the-week/wookiee-of-the-year/

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