

STRENGTHENING FAMILY BONDS AT THE DINNER TABLE



Food

One of our favorite young cooks, Chef Nate, connects with his family on busy school nights by making this fast and delicious pasta recipe!



Fun

Enjoy some quality family fun—and food learning!—with an Ingredient Race.



Conversation

Celebrate Family Day and connect with each other through these conversation starters we developed in partnership with CASA Columbia.



There are a number of excellent reasons to have regular family dinners, but when we ask people why they want to improve their dinner routine at home, the answer usually boils down to one simple idea:

We want to feel more connected to each other.

The dinner table presents a unique opportunity for bonding, since—let’s face it—food is always a successful lure to get people together. (Ever notice how colleges provide free snacks at events where they really need student turnout?) But on a Wednesday night after soccer practice, how in the world are you supposed to promote “family bonding” on top of everything else?

1. TELL A FAMILY STORY. Research shows that kids who know their family histories are more resilient and feel more connected to their families than kids who don’t. If you’re having trouble getting started, try playing the “Which One...?” game to get the stories flowing.

Which One...? thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/which-one/



2. BE SILLY. “Bonding” feels like serious business, but it doesn’t have to be! Just goofing around together and sharing some laughs will boost everyone’s mood and automatically help you feel closer to one another. These three totally silly dinner games are a good place to start.

Higglety Pigglety thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/higglety-pigglety/

Cat and Cow thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/dinner-games/cat-and-cow/

Would You Rather...? thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/would-you-rather/



3. ASK ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION. If you’re up to it, one good, deep question can tell you a lot about the people around the table. Here are three that we recommend for sparking connections:

Tell me something about yourself that you think I may not know.

What makes you feel loved?

Where in the world do you feel the most free to be yourself?



CELEBRATE FAMILY DAY WITH THE FAMILY DINNER PROJECT AND CASA

September 26, 2016 is CASA Family Day, a day devoted to celebrating the power of parental engagement in keeping kids substance-free. Building on the research that shows that regular family dinners lower the likelihood of teens engaging in risky behaviors like drug and alcohol use, The Family Dinner Project is partnering with CASA Columbia to build awareness and encourage families to come together for some quality time on this (and every other!) day.

Learn more about CASA Family Day at casafamilyday.org/familyday/

FAMILY OF THE MONTH

We've joined the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) in their annual "Dine In Day," which takes place on December 3, 2015. Part of our goal in promoting "dining in" is to encourage families to think about the benefits of shared meals -- not only the research-backed benefits, but the moments that make dinnertime unique and special in individual households. Use this Recipe for Conversation about shared meals to help your family focus on the meaning of the simple ritual of family dinner in the midst of the holiday hustle and bustle.

Real Family Dinner Projects: The Zhang Family
thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/real-family-dinner-projects-zhang-family/



CHEF NATE'S SAUSAGE FUSILLI



Ingredients

- 1 lb. of ground sausage meat
- 1 pound of fusilli pasta
- 2 TBSP butter
- 1 TBSP olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- A dash of fennel seeds
- 2 lemons
- 8 oz white wine
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Crushed red pepper, to taste
- Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

This recipe was provided to us by kid Chef Nate, who says it's a quick, easy and delicious pasta dish. Chef Nate nominated this Sausage Fusilli as one of the back-to-school dinners that makes him smile on a busy weeknight!

Instructions

1. Cook the fusilli in boiling water according to package directions.
2. Combine the olive oil and butter in a large cast iron skillet.
3. Melt butter over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until golden brown.
4. Add your sausage meat and fennel, and cook it until golden brown.
5. Add the juice and zest of the lemon, stir, and after about 5 minutes, pour in the wine.
6. Stir, reduce heat, cover, and let reduce by half.
7. Drain the fusilli and add it into the sausage mixture. Stir until the pasta is well coated.
8. Season with salt, pepper and crushed red pepper flakes.
9. Serve with parmesan cheese and a lemon wedge.



INGREDIENT RACE



Pick one of the ingredients from your meal and put it on the counter or in the center of the table. Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil and take 2 minutes to write down as many dinners that use that ingredient as possible. Whoever comes up with the most dinners wins!

thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/ingredient-race/

RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION

Talk About: Connecting with Others

- What does it mean to you to feel connected to another person?
- What are some things you can do in a conversation to show the other person that you're truly interested in listening to them?
- What are some things others do to help you feel comfortable sharing and opening up to them in conversation? What are some things that others do that make you feel less comfortable sharing with them?
- How are face to face conversations, phone calls, and text conversations different? Which do you prefer and why?
- Are there certain types of conversations you'd rather have by text, vs. phone, or in person? Explain.
- Who do you feel most comfortable talking to about difficult topics? Why?
- Besides talking, what are some other ways you can feel connected with someone?

