

TENSION TAMERS FOR THE FAMILY DINNER TABLE



Food

Enjoy the flavors of fall with an easy fruit and vegetable side dish.



Fun

Nothing breaks the tension quite like a good playlist. Make music part of your family dinners!



Conversation

Minimize tension and maximize connection with questions from our "Interview" section -- they're sure to keep family members talking!



Family dinner should be a fun, rewarding experience most of the time. After all, dinnertime is supposed to be the take-a-breath moment in our busy days, when we can sit down together and enjoy the company of the people we love most.

But family dinner also involves family, and families -- even the most close-knit and loving of them -- sometimes have conflicts and tension to work out. Right now, many families we know are feeling more negativity than usual. With a big election on the horizon, conversations at the national level haven't been exactly civil, and that tone might be finding its way to our dinner tables

TACKLE TENSION HEAD-ON.

Dr. Anne Fishel has six valuable pieces of wisdom for families who are regularly struggling to keep the mood at the table fun and positive. Learn why manners aren't as important as you think, why some topics aren't table topics, and more.

How to Beat Tension and Conflict from your Family Dinner:
thefamilydinnerproject.org/food-for-thought/how-to-beat-tension-and-conflict-from-your-family-dinner/

GET "VIRTUOUS."

Benjamin Franklin used to participate in a "self-improvement club" with his friends, where they'd talk about a set of "virtues" they believed were important to happiness and civility. TFDP Executive Director Lynn Barendsen tried out some of Franklin's ideas at her own family dinner table. You might find that a dose of old-fashioned civility is just what your family needs, too!

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/teaching-humility-over-family-dinner/>

as well. Add to that the fact that the holidays will be here before we know it, with their simultaneous joy and stress (not to mention the possibility of extended family dramas). You might well be feeling like the table's set more for conflict than for relaxation.

Take a deep breath. It's going to be okay! Research shows that families who have regular dinners together experience lower levels of stress and anxiety than those who don't, so you're already taking the first step towards keeping things relaxed. Of course, those benefits are more likely to happen if you keep the tension away from the table, so try these tips to kick conflict to the curb:

LAUGH TOGETHER.

Nothing relieves stress like a good laugh! Try tongue twisters, silly faces, or liven things up with a joke jar.

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/joke-jar/>

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE.

If the mood at the table's got you down, try an uplifting activity that helps shift the focus to the good things in life.

ABCs of Gratitude
thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/abcs-gratitude/

20 Things I Love About...
thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/20-things-love/

Gratefulness Grab Bag
thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/gratefulness-grab-bag/

FAMILY OF THE MONTH

This month, we're featuring the Hawkins family from West Virginia, who are overcoming common family dinner challenges using creative ideas to help them stay connected!

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



ROASTED SQUASH AND APPLE MASH



This homey side dish roasts in the oven while you prepare the rest of the meal, and only needs a quick mash before taking its place on the dinner table. Roasting brings out the natural sweetness of the squash and apples, making it an ideal way to encourage reluctant vegetable-eaters to fill their plates with more of the good stuff.

If you're not comfortable with peeling and cubing your own butternut squash, many grocery stores sell the squash already cut for you. Look for it in the produce aisle.



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Peel, core, and quarter the apples.
3. Peel and quarter the onion.
4. Combine the squash, apples, and onion on a large baking sheet. Drizzle with the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat evenly, then spread out in a single layer.
5. Roast the squash mixture at 400 degrees for 30-40 minutes, until the squash is fork-tender.
6. Transfer the squash mixture to a large serving bowl, add the butter and nutmeg, and mash with a potato masher or immersion blender.

Ingredients

- 8 cups peeled, cubed butternut squash (about 1 large squash)
- 2 medium apples, any variety
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg



MUSIC PLEASE



*This idea is adapted from Anne Fishel's forthcoming book, **Home for Dinner: Mixing Food, Fun, and Conversation for Healthier Families and Happier Kids.***

What's more motivating than good music while you're prepping a meal? Create a compilation of songs and invite the whole family to contribute by sharing their favorite tunes. You can make the activity a bit more challenging by picking only songs that are food themed, such as Van Morrison's "Tupelo Honey" and "Peaches" by The Presidents of the United States. How many more can you think of?

thefamilydinnerproject.org/fun/music-please-2



INTERVIEW



"Interview" Questions:

- What is your favorite silly face to make? Silly sound?
- What is your most unusual talent? Demonstrate it!
- Who is/was your favorite teacher? Why?

For More : thefamilydinnerproject.org/tag/interview

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