

Cooking for One or Two

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Cooking for one or two people can sometimes feel like a burden. While it can be tempting to skip meals, opt for convenience foods, or go out to eat instead of cooking for one or two people, preparing meals at home can be good for your health and for your wallet.



Here are some tips to consider when cooking for two or just for you:

- **Start with MyPlate to create balanced meals.** Before you plan a meal, imagine what your plate will look like. The MyPlate recommendations encourage us to make half of our plate fruits and vegetables, focus on whole fruits, vary our veggies, make half of our grains whole grains, vary our protein routine, and move to low-fat or fat-free dairy options. To learn more, visit [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov).
- **Create “planned-overs” to repurpose leftovers.** One of the burdens to cooking for one or two people is the amount of time required to prepare, cook, and clean up from meals. To reduce this burden, think about how you can plan meals that will use the same ingredients so that you can cook once and eat twice. (Make sure you use the item within the next 3-4 days.) For example, if you are cooking ground beef to make chili, consider cooking additional meat that can be used on baked potatoes for another meal.
- **Use leftovers safely.** The USDA reports that leftovers can be safely kept in the refrigerator for 3-4 days. If you have leftovers, they should be placed in the refrigerator or freezer within two hours (or within one hour if the temperature is over 90 degrees Fahrenheit). When reheating leftovers, they should be reheated to 165 degrees Fahrenheit as measured by a food thermometer.
- **Become friends with your freezer.** Tape a piece of paper to the outside of your freezer to keep an inventory of what you stored in the freezer. List the item and the date to remind yourself to consume it within 3-4 months. It can also be helpful to freeze leftovers in smaller portion sizes.

For more information, please contact me at clarawicoff@ksu.edu or 620-365-2242. To learn even more about this topic, consider attending the “Cooking for One or Two” program I will be hosting at the Chanute Library on March 13th at 5:30 PM. This program is free, but an RSVP is required by calling 620-365-2242.