

Daily Union Article

Saturday, November 14, 2015

Over 14 percent of American households experienced food insecurity during 2014. This means that 14% of American households do not have full access to enough food to have an active healthy life. The status of food insecurity for these homes range from low food security to very low food security. The United States Department of Agriculture defines low food security as groups/areas that report reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. The USDA defines very low food security as households or communities in which multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake are evidenced.

There is no doubt that the need for accessing healthy food exists in the United States. It likewise exists in our area, as well. That leads me to Part II of the Providing Help article I began with last week. In that article, I shared some ideas about what kind of foods many food pantries request during the season of giving and throughout the year. This week I want to emphasize the health and safety aspects to consider as individuals and groups collect food to donate.

Thanksgiving serves as the gateway to the season of giving. Many agencies, organizations, and churches organize a variety of events that embrace this season. One way these groups work to provide for the needs of those who may not have access to food is by organizing food drives and donating to local food pantries.

Food drives provide an important source of food for families with limited resources. They also allow an opportunity for communities to help their neighbors. Food pantries and the families they serve appreciate the effort of their community partners to meet their needs, but insuring that they have access to healthy food is important.

In the United State today, many diet-linked health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity are common. Unfortunately, these conditions have been found to be more prevalent in people who use food pantries.

	Kansans Receiving Charitable Food Assistance	Kansas State Average
Diabetes	27% (of 215,000 participants)	8.2%
High Blood Pressure	48% (of 215,000 participants)	31.3%

So what can be done to help food pantries make a positive health impact on the clients they serve? People who donate food can be more conscientious of the types of food

they contribute to food drives. Many health conditions can be controlled in part by the food eaten. Eating more fruits and vegetables, whole grain, beans, lean proteins, and foods that are lower in sugar and salt can make a significant impact on the health of person.

The following list provides some ideas of common food drive foods with a healthy twist:

- Oatmeal (instant is less desirable than regular)
- Whole grains (whole grain pasta, rice, crackers, barley, quinoa, popcorn)
- Low-sodium canned soup
- Spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce, low- or no salt-added
- Unsweetened cereal
- Spices (garlic, onion powder, chili powder, sage, poultry seasoning, etc.)
- 100% Fruit Juice
- Vegetable Oil and Vegetable Oil spray
- Canned tuna or chicken in water
- Canned or dried beans
- Canned vegetables without salt
- Canned fruit in juice or light syrup
- Peanut butter
- Nuts, seeds, almonds, pumpkin seeds, pecans, etc.)

By providing these basic ingredients with a healthy twist, it makes it easier for food pantry clients to make healthy meals for their families.

Here's a healthy recipe that can use a variety of canned vegetables and other ingredients commonly distributed through a food pantry:

Skillet Lasagna

(Source: Iowa State Cooperative Extension: www.extension.iastate.edu/files/Skillet_Lasagna.pdf)

INGREDIENTS

1/2 pound ground beef
1/2 onion, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
2 cloves garlic, minced, or 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
3 cups spaghetti or pasta sauce (24 ounces)
1 cup water
8 ounces egg noodles
1 package (10 ounces) chopped spinach, thawed
Sliced mushrooms, fresh, or canned, drained (optional)
1 container (12 ounces) low fat cottage cheese
1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook ground beef and onion in a large skillet or electric fry pan. Stir to prevent sticking. When ground beef has turned brown, transfer mixture to a colander set over a bowl and rinse with hot water to remove grease.* Return hamburger mixture to skillet.
2. Add garlic, spaghetti sauce, and water to skillet. Bring to a boil.
3. Add uncooked noodles. Stir and cover with lid. Turn down the heat and cook 5 minutes.
4. Add thawed spinach to the skillet. Add mushrooms if you like. Cover and simmer 5 minutes.
5. Spoon cottage cheese over the top. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Put the lid on and let it heat another 5–10 minutes until heated through and noodles are tender. For a pretty appearance do not stir the dish once cheese is melted.

TIP

*Do not pour grease down the drain. Let grease harden, then put it in the trash.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup	
Servings Per Recipe 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 260	Calories from Fat 90
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	13%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 60mg	20%
Sodium 680mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 8g	
Protein 19g	
Vitamin A 80%	• Vitamin C 6%
Calcium 15%	• Iron 15%

For more information on healthy foods and meal preparation, contact me at the Geary County Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!