

MAKING FAMILY LIFE MORE FUN

Tips For Turning Dinnertime Into Quality Time

by Kathy Peel

(NAPSA)—According to a recent survey, 93 percent of moms think dinnertime activities—parents and kids working as a team to prepare food and enjoy it together—are a very effective way to forge family bonds. Here are some ways to help make them happen at your house:

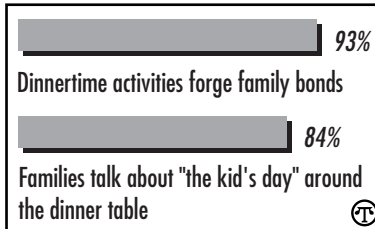
- **Reclaim the family dinner hour.** Decide to eat together certain nights each week—and do it.

- **Cook smart.** Develop a repertoire of easy meals, and keep the ingredients on hand. Don't let complicated recipes and menus limit the time you have with your family; it's more important to eat together than eat elaborate meals. A great solution is one of the meal-in-the-box products, such as Lipton Sizzle & Stir, that offer a complete balanced dinner cooked and ready to eat in 30 minutes or less.

- **Assign everyone a job.** Cooking and working cooperatively with other family members teach kids responsibility and important skills they'll use the rest of their lives. Even young children can take part—setting the table, tearing lettuce, etc. It's important that they feel included.

- **Maximize teachable moments.** Think of your kitchen as a classroom where you can enhance your child's intellectual development. For example, measuring ingredients for recipes requires math skills. Dinner prep time is also a great opportunity to teach children about safe use of appliances and equipment.

- **Think (and talk) positive.** Ban critical words and arguing at the table. Avoid disciplinary discussions that could be handled at another time. Praise team members for their efforts in getting the



What's cooking? Family meals that are prepared and enjoyed together.

meal together and cleaning up afterward.

- **Focus on family.** According to the survey, conducted by *Lipton Sizzle and Stir*, 84 percent of families talk about "the kid's day" around the dinner table. Showing interest in a child's world is a great way for parents to express their love and promote bonding. Cut off the outside world and let the answering machine take charge of phone calls.

- **Create a pleasant dining atmosphere.** Don't reserve ambience for guests or celebrations; serve it with every meal.

- **Predetermine and post menus.** Decide beforehand and let family members have a say. Post the weekly menu so the first person home can get that night's meal started.

- **Be prepared.** Keep an ongoing grocery list so everyone can record needs. When preparing dinner, have one family member check on staples and add them to the list.

- **Clean up as you go.**

- **Start and finish together.** Make sure everyone who is at home is seated at the beginning of the meal.

Kathy Peel is the founder and president of Family Manager, Inc., a company committed to providing resources to help families make their home a good place to be.