

# Back To School



## Finding Time For A Family Dinner During This Hectic Time Of Year

(NAPSA)—Time management can be a challenge during the hectic back-to-school months. Between shopping, gearing up for extracurricular activities and helping kids adjust to new schedules, it's hard to fit family time into the new school year. However, this time is key to family togetherness and is becoming increasingly important for Americans. In fact, a recent ABC News poll found that for more than three-quarters of Americans, it has become "essential" to spend more time with family.

When time is scarce, eating dinner together is a great way to catch up and spend time as a family. However, cooking a tasty and nutritious meal for your family is another matter. Cooking takes time and many parents are finding it increasingly difficult to prepare a home cooked dinner for the family. Here are some tips to getting a great dinner on the table without adding hours to your already full schedule:

**Plan ahead now to save time later.** To ensure that you are prepared during particularly busy periods, make several main dishes in advance and freeze the meals. You'll cut down on preparation time and still enjoy a home-cooked meal. Make it special by declaring a "cooking night" each Sunday that involves the whole family.

**Give meals variety with a new side dish.** Keep meals interesting by varying side dishes. Go ahead and stick with that favorite chicken recipe, but pair it with a quick and easy side dish that can



be customized to suit your meal. Rice is a great choice because it is versatile and can be mixed with herbs, vegetables, nuts, cheese and even fruit to give a new twist on a family favorite. Brands such as Uncle Ben's offer a wide variety of rice choices to start with, such as long grain & wild rice, brown rice and Natural Select, a rice that has natural flavor in each grain so you don't need to use seasoning packets.

**Take stock of your pantry and fridge.** Do you have canned goods collecting dust in your cabinet? Use them or lose them. Eliminating clutter in your kitchen will make it easier to store and prepare the foods you eat regularly. Make the most of your refrigerator space by adjusting the shelves to maximize vertical storage. Group like-sized items together and store most frequently used foods in front for easy access.

**Stock up on back-to-school basics.** Cut down on trips to the grocery store by stocking up on staples. Make sure your freezer, refrigerator and cabinets contain core ingredients for a variety of meals. Key ingredients for many family dinners include oil, vinegar, spices, rice, onions and garlic.