

# Healthy Eating: Cooking for One<sup>1</sup>

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You may think that cooking for one is a difficult task because most recipes are intended to serve four or more people. However, there are things you can do to make cooking for one easy and enjoyable.

## Plan Your Meals

How many times have you started to prepare your favorite recipe when you discover you are missing one or more of the main ingredients? When you plan your meals in advance, you will always have the ingredients you need!

The day before you go shopping, plan your meals for the week. This way you can check to see what ingredients you have and which ones you need to buy. If planning a week's worth of meals seems overwhelming, start with two or three days.

Planning your meals in advance also allows you to focus on your nutritional needs. Many times when we are hungry and in a hurry to eat, we eat whatever is easiest or the first thing

we see, not what is a healthy choice. You can use MyPlate to assist you in planning your meals.

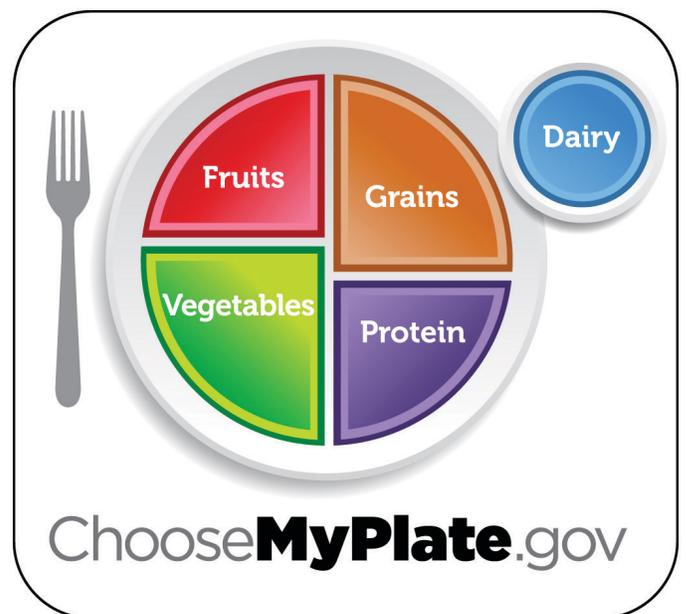


Figure 1. The website ChooseMyPlate.gov can help you to plan nutritional meals.

Credits: USDA

1. This document is FCS80008 (la versión en español de este documento es *Alimentación Saludable: Cocinando para uno solo* (FCS80008-Span)), one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date March 2012. Revised May 2015 and September 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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## Alter Recipes

Most recipes are designed for four or more people. When cooking for one, this amount of food can be overwhelming and may discourage you from cooking. The good news is that it is easy to reduce a recipe.

Dry or liquid ingredients measured in cups, tablespoons, or teaspoons are easy to adjust. Some ingredients are more difficult to alter. For example, if a recipe calls for one large egg, try using a small egg instead. When you halve a recipe for four, plan to save one of the two servings for another meal. Be sure to put the leftovers into the refrigerator or freezer within two hours after the food is prepared to keep it safe to eat. Use this chart for quick reference to halve the ingredients in a recipe.

Recipe Calls For	Instead Use
1/4 cup	2 tablespoons
1/3 cup	2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons
1/2 cup	1/4 cup
2/3 cup	1/3 cup
3/4 cup	6 tablespoons
1 cup	1/2 cup
1 tablespoon	1 1/2 teaspoons
1 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon
1/2 teaspoon	1/4 teaspoon
1/4 teaspoon	1/8 teaspoon
1/8 teaspoon	A pinch or dash



Figure 2. When cooking for one, you can alter recipes written for more people by using less of each ingredient. See the table in this publication to learn how to halve ingredients for recipes. Credits: Timothy Vollmer CC 2.0 <http://bit.ly/xtU70G>

## Resources

Mayo Clinic. *Healthy Cooking for Singles or Couples*. (2017). <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/healthy-cooking/art-20046468>

National Institute on Aging. *Sample Menus: Healthy Eating for Older Adults*. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sample-menus-healthy-eating-older-adults>

USDA. 2017. *Healthy Eating on a Budget*. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget> (September 2018)