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Easy Eats Tips

Clever lil' tips to help make your mommy-life a wee bit easier.
From your friends at Mommies in Connection.

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### Make mealtime F-U-N

Create dinner games (or use the one you received tonight) to get dinner conversations going regardless of how old your kiddos are.

Write down character traits and place in a jar. Draw them out at dinner and discuss what that trait "looks like".

Have a thought or word or idea and give it to family at breakfast to think about all day; then discuss thoughts at dinner.

Funny names make everything easier: "wackadoodle Wednesdays" or instead of broccoli call them "teensy trees".

EVERYTHING is better dipped in something – ketchup, ranch, peanut butter, etc.

Do your kids have to read each night for homework? Have them read to you while you work in the kitchen.

Shock your family! Have a night of all side dishes OR change dinner order and have dessert first.

### Time savers

When you make your grocery list, write it in categories that reflect the grocery store aisles (produce, meat, canned food, etc.)

Plan your meals for the week on Sunday. Have a calendar out so you know what each night will look like. Write out grocery list as you plan.

Go to [www.freeprintablegrocerylist.com](http://www.freeprintablegrocerylist.com) to create a list that works for you.

Always keep these things on hand in the freezer: browned ground beef, chopped onions/veggies, and baked chicken breasts. Meals can magically appear if you already have food prepped!!

BREAKFAST DINNER is always quick, easy...and a big hit with kids.

Go to [www.flylady.com](http://www.flylady.com) for great tips on keeping an orderly, peaceful home.

Check out THE DINNER STATION or any places with pre-made meals to have "home-cooked" meals ready in minutes.

Check out the freezer steamer veggies bags...just put in the microwave and eat! Also, try potatoes or sweet potatoes for quick mashed potatoes, too.

When you make a favorite dinner, double it and freeze ½ of it for later.

Ready-to-eat rotisserie chicken is great for a main course OR a short cut to any recipes calling for cooked chicken.

Buy frozen pre-cut veggies or fruit to save time (and it's usually fresher because it's frozen when fresh).

## Hey good lookin', what's cookin'?

Write notes on recipes you cook or stickers by those you've already made ("GREAT! Kids loved it", "use ½ the sugar", "add can of diced tomatoes")

Marinade like CRAZY. Thaw out meat and have it marinating during the day. All you have to do is throw it in the oven or on the grill.

EMBRACE THE CROCKPOT!!! When you know you have a night ahead of activities or heavy homework, plan ahead and throw some goodies in the crockpot. Great recipes online.

Bring your kids' toy kitchen in and let them "cook" while you cook.

Recipe websites make it easy – they usually even include a grocery list option.

Cooking with TODDLERS? Move all your Tupperware and plastic to-go containers to a lower cabinet. When you start cooking, open the cabinet and let the toddler-madness ensue. Even pots and spoons works to keep them occupied long enough to get some grub on the table.

## Cheap labor

Let kids set the table – let them choose where everyone sits, what cups to use, what placemats, etc. to get them involved.

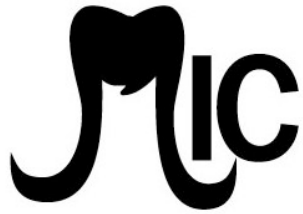
Just need to keep them busy? Have them MAKE placemats or name cards while you get dinner ready.

Teach them PROPER placesetting – go to [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com) and search "place setting practice" for a fun way to practice.

Give kids some ownership in meal planning. Pick a night and let a kid decide what the meal will be.

Even smallest kids can help out. Remember, you are preparing them for their futures. Let them help by: setting table, getting out ingredients, loading/unloading dishwasher, putting things away, cleaning countertops.

Move your plates, cups, etc. to lower cabinets to make it easy for kids to set the table or do the dishes.



## Maple Apricot Ginger Granola

By Ruth Brock

### **Stir together:**

6 cups old-fashioned oats  
½ cup sliced almonds

### **Mix together:**

1/3 cup maple syrup  
2T brown sugar  
¼ cup pineapple juice (or increase maple syrup and omit juice)  
¼ cup honey (optional)  
½ tsp. almond extract  
¼ tsp kosher salt

Toss the dry and liquid mixtures together, mixing well. Spread mixture evenly onto a jelly-roll pan coated with cooking spray. Bake at 300 degrees for 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes.

### **Add to the mixture on the jellyroll pan:**

1/3 cup crystallized ginger  
1/2 cup dried apricots, chopped [can substitute dates, raisins or cherries]

Put the mixture back in the oven for 5-10 minutes. Allow mixture to cool after removing from the oven. Store in an airtight container.

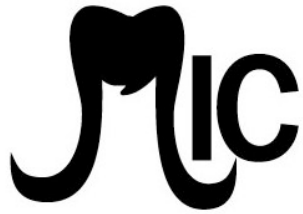


## Balsamic Tomato Skewers

### **Ingredients needed:**

Grape tomatoes  
Fresh mozzarella  
Fresh basil  
Balsamic glaze  
Small skewers or toothpicks

Rinse and cut the tomatoes in ½ and set aside. Cut mozzarella into 1" pieces and set aside. Rinse and dry basil. Skewer tomato, mozzarella, basil leaf, and other end of tomato and set on a serving platter. Repeat until all tomatoes are used. Drizzle the entire platter with balsamic glaze and serve!!



## *Yummy Apple Sandwiches*

### **Ingredients needed:**

Apples  
Cheese slices  
Peanut butter  
Grapes  
Cherries  
Blueberry  
Toothpicks

Rinse and thinly slice the apples. Place cheese slice in between two apple slices. Use toothpick to secure and add a grape, cherry, or blueberry to the top of toothpick. Repeat process and replace cheese with peanut butter. Make as many as you want! Great to get kids to help.