

Jr. Chef Club - Level II

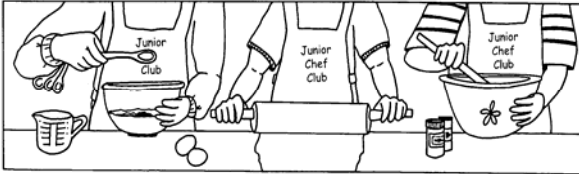
NEWS PARENTS CAN USE

Lesson 8

Make the Most of Convenience Foods

Mac, Cheese &

Trees



Convenience Foods—Jr. Chef Style!

At some time or another, everyone is in a hurry and grabs a box, bag or package to make a quick meal. Today Jr. Chefs learned how to read food labels to choose healthier convenience foods. In addition, they learned how to enhance convenience foods to make them more nutritious and turn them into a balanced meal.

Macaroni and cheese is often a family favorite. So today Jr. Chefs evaluated different brands of this standby, and added vegetables like broccoli “trees” when they made it. Adding broccoli increases vegetable intake and the many healthful nutrients that vegetables have to offer.



Information provided by Washington State University Extension's *Food Sense*. This material funded in part by USDA-Food Stamp Program, state and local government agencies. *Basic Food* assistance helps people with low incomes. To find out more, contact your local DSHS-Community Service office. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be

reported through your local Extension Office.

Turn Convenience Foods into a Meal

What makes a balanced meal? It is a meal that includes at least one food from each food group. Jr. Chefs talked about what they could serve with macaroni, cheese and trees to make a balanced meal. What would you serve? Here's a plan....

Always add some vegetables—how about a side salad or vegetable sticks? Chop up some leftover meat and add to the



macaroni, or serve meat on the side. Pour a glass of milk then serve baked fruit for dessert. Suddenly you've turned a box into a balanced meal!

Making an instant noodle soup? Do the same—add vegetables and meat to it and a salad along side. Don't forget the milk and fruit!

Macaroni, Cheese and Trees

Makes 4–5 servings

- 1 box macaroni and cheese
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup vegetable of your choice, fresh or frozen, such as broccoli
- Milk and margarine according to package directions

1. Fill large saucepan 3/4 full of water.
2. Add vegetable oil to water to keep macaroni from sticking to itself. Place over medium heat, cover and bring to boil.
3. When water boils, reduce heat, add macaroni and return to slow boil. Do not cover.
4. When macaroni is nearly done, add fresh or frozen vegetables.
5. Continue cooking until fresh veggies are crisp tender; or frozen veggies are heated through.
6. Drain over sink into colander.
7. Return to saucepan and make according to package directions. (Try reducing the amount of butter or margarine called for to lower the fat.)



Give Your Plate the Rainbow Test

Whether making a meal from scratch or using convenience foods, give your plate the rainbow test. Make sure it has a variety of colors—if it doesn't, you will probably need to add some colorful vegetables and fruits. A “rainbow plate” usually means you're eating a good variety of foods.

Sample Label for Macaroni and Cheese

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 1.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

Start Here

Limit these Nutrients

Get Enough of these Nutrients

Quick Guide to % DV

5% or less is low
20% or more is high

Be a Label Looker

Ask your Jr. Chef to be a label looker at the grocery store. Choose items that are low in saturated fat, trans-fat and sugars (fruit and milk products have some natural sugars, so check the ingredient list for added sugars). Choose foods high in fiber and those that have the highest percent of vitamins A and C and the minerals calcium and iron. Tip: 20 percent or more is considered “high” and 5 percent or less is considered “low.”