

Title:

Simple Scratch Cooking For Healthier Families. Homemade meals and desserts can be easier to make than you think, and good for your family.

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Summary:

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

There's a quick and easy way to help your kids become happier and healthier--try planning and preparing a meal together.

Cooking as a family activity is fun and can be surprisingly quick. In fact, preparing a satisfying meal or dessert from scratch can take less time than dining out. The time it takes to decide where to eat, get everyone ready, drive there and be seated, order and finally eat, takes much longer than you think. The time could be better spent with your loved ones with everyone helping to get the food on the table.

Another benefit of scratch cooking is that it allows you to better control the types of ingredients you consume. As people look for ways to avoid trans fats and food allergens, reduce sugar and salt consumption, and increase whole grains, fruits and vegetables in their diets, making dishes from scratch has been "rediscovered." And the delicious results will please the entire family, especially when you prepare it together.

Start with the proper planning and make sure to stock your pantry and freezer with fresh ingredients for simple and healthful dishes. For example, before baking muffins, breads or cookies, make sure you have checked your baking powerhouses--baking soda and baking powder, as well as spices, cornstarch and flour. Replace any that are a year old. If in doubt, start new and date each item to make sure you'll be reminded next year.

Here's an easy whole grain oatmeal cookie to try:

Spicy Oatmeal Cookies

1 cup butter, softened

3/4 cup granulated sugar

3/4 cup brown sugar

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 1/2 teaspoons Clabber Girl or Rumford baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups quick-cooking (not instant) oats

8 oz. raisins

1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon allspice

Preheat oven to 375° F. In large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Scrape down sides. Beat in vanilla. In medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add to butter mixture and stir until blended. Stir in oats, raisins, cinnamon and allspice. Drop by rounded tablespoonsful (about 1/4 cup) onto greased baking sheets. Bake until firm to a light touch, about 15 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

Makes about 3 dozen cookies.