



# Healthy Kids Start at Home

*By Chef Dave Fouts and Vicki Bovee, MS, RD*

Make menu planning a fun learning experience. Plan themed dinners for once a week or once a month. Decide on your theme for the meal and sit the kids down for some help planning the meal. You may end up with some strange food combinations, but that is part of the fun. Here are some suggestions to get you started with a theme:

## **ABC Menu**

Plan a meal with all foods starting with a letter of the alphabet. Everyone gets to pick a food for the letter of the meal. If the letter of the meal is “r,” you could include radishes, ribs, rhubarb, red peppers, rye bread, raisins, ravioli, raspberries or rolls. Have the kids get out the dictionary to look up foods for some of the more difficult letters. The ABC theme can give you at least 23 meals since you may have to combine some of the letters like q, x and z into another meal.

## **Color Menu**

Plan the meal with all the foods the same color. It may not look exciting on the plate, but the planning is the fun part. Just keep in mind that there are no naturally occurring blue foods since blueberries are really purple.

## **Shape Menu**

Plan your meal with all the foods the same shape. The foods can be naturally the shape you have chosen or you can cut them into the shape. If you are having a square meal, you can make hamburger patties into squares, trim the buns and make fruit cubes.

## **Four Course Meal**

Design your menu around the following “courses:” salad, fruit or vegetable, entrée, side dish and dessert. Decide who gets to choose which course and then rotate courses for the next four course meal.

## Getting Your Ingredients

The theme has been decided, the menu has been planned and now it is time for a trip to the market. Have the kids help find the recipes, check for ingredients on hand, and make out the shopping list. Give the list a double check to prevent a meal preparation emergency.

Plan the trip to the market when the kids (and you) are fed and have enough time. Avoid shopping with the kids right after school and activities. They will probably be tired and hungry and that combination does not make for an enjoyable shopping trip. For whatever theme you have selected, look for other foods that fit the theme, but didn't make it to the menu. As you go through the store ask the kids to look for other foods that start with the letter, color, or shape of the meal.

## Preparing Your Themed Meal

Once you have been to the store, it's now time to prep and prepare your meals. Prep time should be fun, and inviting your children to help with the meal prep will reinforce great food choices. Different shapes and sizes of food is an easy way to keep your kids interested in healthy foods. Here are a few examples of easy food prep ideas:

- Using a sharp vegetable peeler, take a peeled carrot and run the peeler from the top of the carrot to the bottom. This makes a long thin strip which can be rolled to make carrot curls. This also works with cucumbers, zucchini, yellow squash, sweet potatoes and parsnips.
- Purchase a crinkle cutter (they are inexpensive) from your local kitchen gadget store. Take any washed vegetable and using your crinkle cutter cut your vegetable into thin strips. The crinkle cutter can also be used to cut cheeses as well.
- Cookie cutters are great for making premade sandwiches into fun shapes.
- Use food coloring to change the color of your food. Green oatmeal, yellow milk, red cream of wheat, blue mashed potatoes, etc.
- Using a sharp knife, cut vegetables into small cubes, triangles, rectangles and diamond shapes. This also works well with meat, chicken, fish and cheeses.
- Take peeled boiled eggs and using a cheese grater, shred your boiled eggs. These shredded boiled eggs can then be used on top of fresh salads, on top of a baked potato and even on top of cheese pizza.

*Cook Smart...*

Chef Dave Fouts

*Eat Smart...*

Vicki Bovee, MS, RD

**Keeping meal time fun is easy. Here is a perfect "circle" meal to get your started.**

### Main Entrée:

#### Stuffed Cannelloni

- 8 kid size servings
- 8 cannelloni pasta tubes, cooked
- 2 cups part skim ricotta cheese
- 1 cup part skim mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon granulated garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 2 cups jarred spaghetti sauce

### Directions:

1. Mix cheeses, egg and spices together into a small bowl.
2. Divide cheese mixture into 8 equal parts.
3. Using a teaspoon, fill each pasta tube with cheese mixture.
4. Pour 1 cup spaghetti sauce into bottom of a 9x13 baking pan.
5. Next, place stuffed cannelloni on top of sauce.
6. Pour remaining sauce over stuffed cannelloni.
7. Place in preheated 350F degree oven and bake for 30 minutes and serve.

*Per Serving: 230 calories, 15 grams protein, 9 grams fat (4 grams saturated), 40mg cholesterol, 21 grams carbohydrates, 2 grams fiber, 600mg sodium*

### Side Dish:

*Sliced carrot rounds with peas steamed until tender*

### Dessert:

*Bananas cut into thin rounds and blue berries mixed together, placed into a small bowl.*

### About the Authors:

*Chef Dave Fouts is known as the world's premier culinary expert for weight-loss surgical patients. Chef Dave can be found speaking around the country on the importance of culinary techniques and cooking methods to ensure the weight-loss patient's success. For more information please visit [www.chefdave.org](http://www.chefdave.org).*

*Vicki Bovee, MS, RD, has been working in the field of weight management for more than 20 years. She has worked with thousands of patients in clinical and research practices. She is the clinical dietitian for Western Bariatric Institute in Reno, Nevada, conducting counseling sessions and teaching classes for pre-operative and post-operative patients.*



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
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  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
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