



# The Benefits of Eating With Others:

## Connecting Nutrition and Socialization for Better Health

### THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF EATING TOGETHER

Studies show that people who dine with others regularly eat healthier and report a better quality of life. It provides a sense of structure and belonging while offering greater opportunities for improved nutrition. Coming together over a meal can also provide meaningful ways to connect with others over shared beliefs and cultural interests. Benefits may include:

#### Physical Health

- Improved nutrition
- Reduced risk of chronic conditions
- Better mobility



#### Mental Health

- Increased self-care
- Sense of well-being
- Reduced anxiety and depression



#### Social Health

- Opportunities to connect
- Stronger relationships
- Reduced loneliness



### REDUCED HUNGER IS MORE COMMON AS WE AGE

As a result, some older adults skip meals or eat in an unbalanced manner when eating alone. When we eat with others, our nutrition intake improves. Examples may include:

**Eating better overall**  
or certain food groups like protein and vegetables.



**Consuming more calories**  
to provide needed energy.



**Taking in more nutrients**  
like iron, calcium, and folate.



#### Sources cited

- Gender differences in longevity in free-living older adults who eat-with-others: A prospective study in Taiwan. 2017.
- A systematic review and meta-analysis of the social facilitation of eating. 2019.
- Social influences and eating behavior in later life: a review. 2011.
- "You've got to be old to go there:" psychosocial barriers and facilitators to social eating in older adults. 2020.
- Living alone but eating together: exploring lunch clubs as a dining out experience. 2017.
- Eating alone or together among community-living older people - a scoping review. 2021.





## 6 Great Reasons to Spend More Time With Others

Socialization is vital for physical, mental and emotional health.

Connecting with friends, family and acquaintances ...



### Protects the brain.

Loneliness is a dangerous state of being. It raises the risk of Alzheimer's disease, stroke and falls.



### Boosts the immune system.

People with strong social connections are better able to fight off infections that cause disease.



### Provides mental stimulation.

Puzzles and education are all good brain exercises—but interacting with other people is even better.



### Encourages healthy behaviors.

Close connections make it more likely we'll exercise, eat well and manage our health conditions.



### Nurtures a support network.

Friends can help us when we need help ... and helping our friends promotes self-esteem and a sense of purpose.



### Decreases pain.

Brain chemicals released when we're socializing can lessen the impact of pain. We might even need less medication!



Start simple  
with MyPlate



## Focus on Whole Fruits

Healthy eating is important at every age. Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding what fruits to eat, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Start with these tips:



### Include fruit at breakfast

Top cereal with your favorite seasonal or frozen fruit, add bananas or chopped apples to pancakes, or mix raisins into hot oatmeal.



### Take fruit on the go

Fruits like oranges, bananas, and apples are great portable snacks. You can also bring along a can of mandarin oranges or pineapple chunks packed in water.



### Make your own trail mix

Combine one or two favorite breakfast cereals with dried cranberries and raisins. Bring for a snack in a small sealable bag or container.



### Enjoy fruit as a snack

Make fruit kabobs using melon chunks, bananas, and grapes. Top with a light yogurt sauce for a fruity snack or side dish.



### Add fruit at dinner

Chop up a combination of tropical or seasonal fruits to make a fruit salsa to top fish or chicken, or add fruit like grapefruit sections, apple wedges, or grapes to a tossed salad.



### Keep fruit on hand

Cut up fruit and place in a bowl in the refrigerator. Put the bowl at the front of the shelf so that it's the first thing you see when you open the door.

## Lemon Herb Roasted Chicken

Recipe courtesy: <https://www.eatingwell.com/lemon-herb-roasted-chicken-8598690>

**Servings:** 4

**Nutrition Info per Serving:** 298 Calories; 13g Total Fat; 3g Saturated Fat, 23g Total Carbohydrates, 6g Dietary Fiber, 8g Total Sugars, 28g Protein, 385mg Sodium, 65mg Calcium, 724mg Potassium

### Ingredients:

2 (8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts	1 1/2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary
1/2 teaspoon salt plus 1/8 teaspoon, divided	2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 medium lemon, sliced into 1/8 inch rounds	2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves	1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon

### Directions:

**Step 1:** Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Pat chicken dry with paper towels; sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt.

**Step 2:** Heat oil in a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken; cook, undisturbed, until golden brown on the bottom, 4 to 5 minutes. Flip the chicken and arrange lemon slices around the chicken in the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle with thyme and rosemary.

**Step 3:** Transfer to the oven; roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 165 degrees F, about 8 minutes. Transfer the chicken and lemon slices to a cutting board; let rest for 5 minutes. Do not wipe the pan clean.

**Step 4:** Heat lemon juice, pepper, and the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt in the pan over low heat. Whisk in butter, 1 piece at a time, until melted and a sauce forms, about 45 seconds to 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in tarragon. Slice the chicken breasts in half; serve drizzled with the sauce.

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