

How to Start a Supper Swapping Group

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Do you have a difficult time getting supper on the table at the same time each night? Do you eat in front of the TV, but would like to eat with your family around the dining table? Do you eat the same foods for supper night after night and week after week? If you have answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then you should consider becoming involved in a supper

swapping group. A supper swap group is simply a group of individuals that trade meals during the week, allowing you to lighten the load of the dinner dilemma. Each participant takes one night a week to prepare a meal for themselves and for the other group members. Keep one meal, and deliver the rest. After your cooking night is over, you get to relax and have supper delivered to your home by the other group members. Sound fun? It is, and it's easy! It is time to reclaim the sacred dinnertime with your family around the kitchen table. It may seem overwhelming to consider, but with these easy steps, you can create a supper swapping group, and in turn, you will find more time and energy to devote to other areas of your life.

Takeaways

- Enjoy less stress by participating in a supper swapping group.
- Supper swapping allows you to have well balanced meals on your table with little effort.
- Save money and time by sharing meals with your friends.

How to Start

To begin, you will need to find other individuals who are interested in starting a swap. To do this, ask your close friends, post an announcement at your local library or church, or put an ad in the newspaper. Ideally, you will want to find people that live in close proximity to you so you won't have to spend a lot of time delivering the meals. It doesn't do you any good if you save time cooking and prepping, only to spend that time delivering the food to others in your group. If possible, begin your group with other families that are similar in dynamic to yours. If you have three children, find another family with three children. If this is not possible, then you will want to make enough food to meet the needs of the largest family in your group. That way, if there is a smaller family in the group, they will have leftovers for the next day or weekend.

Things to Consider

Try to match up with individuals that have similar tastes and needs that you do. If you like the same type of foods, then you won't have to worry about your food and efforts going to waste. It is also very important to consider special needs when beginning a group. Supper swapping may not work for someone that has severe food allergies, a required special diet, or serious health complications.

The Logistics

Once you have your group formed, it is time to start planning. As a group, you will want to exchange all pertinent information, such as phone numbers, email addresses, scheduling logistics, and any special needs. Assign the night each individual will be responsible for. If there are only two of you in the group, take turns cooking every other day, for four days of the week. If there are five families in your group, assign each person a night that makes it easier for them to participate. Be flexible. Assign delivery times, and discuss what will be done if you deliver meals and someone isn't home. A solution to this problem is to exchange keys, or to keep a cooler on the porch or other area of the house so the meal can be kept cool until the person returns.

When you meet as a group, prepare to plan for three months of meals at a time. Each member should come prepared with recipes and menu ideas. As you share ideas and meals, make a master plan using a dry erase board, a chalkboard, or large poster that each person can see. Assign the nights of the week you will be swapping, and once the plan is fine-tuned, transfer the information into a word processing program to share with each member. This way, you will know what is for dinner on any given night of the week, for three months at a time!

As a group, set up your guidelines and expectations. You might want to decide that recipes must be family favorites and traditional meals. If someone wants to introduce a new recipe, they must first try it in their own homes before delivering it to the group. It is important to discuss what you like and dislike. You need to be frank with the group members. You want this experience to be a good one, so let your voice be heard.

Decide what a meal constitutes. Do you want your meals to consist of a main dish, a side, and a desert? Or just a main dish and a side? You may even decide just to do the main course, and the families are responsible for the

side dishes. Since you will know what main course to expect, you will be able to plan what side to add to the dish.

Materials Needed

Each person in your swap group will need to invest in some inexpensive glass dishes with lids, and some disposable plastic ware such as ziploc containers and bags. These materials will be rotated within your group, so don't plan on having them returned to you. If you are making something unusual that requires special dishes, then you should provide those dishes for your meal. Plan to make most of your meals in 9 by 13 sized pans, and other casserole pans. The investment is minimal begin your supper swap.

Benefits Reaped

Learning how to supper swap might take a little time. It may even be frustrating in the beginning, but allow yourself enough time to get used to it. Once you work out the kinks, you will realize that you enjoy the group and you will start to wonder how you survived without it.

One benefit you will enjoy at the onset is that you will be receiving a wide variety of meals from your friends. You may even find a new recipe that will become a life long favorite for your family. Your meals will be well balanced, less processed, and will taste better because you didn't have to cook it. Be sure to include the recipes for the meals that you contribute. This way, you will be able to build up your recipe box.

You will save time and energy by sharing the dinner responsibilities. You will build your friendships with your neighbors and group members. Enjoy this opportunity to reclaim dinnertime with less stress and distractions.