



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/food-connects-us>

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Food Connects Us: K-State nutrition expert touts value of eating with others

March is National Nutrition Month

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Nutrition, says Priscilla Brenes, is not just the food we eat.

Brenes, a K-State Research and Extension specialist in the Department of Food, Nutrition, Dietetics and Health, adds that eating healthfully also includes *who* you're eating it with.

"When we eat with somebody else, that's a connection," Brenes said. "We might prepare food for somebody else. There's a connection there, too."

March is National Nutrition Month, sponsored annually by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This year's theme is 'Food Connects Us.'

"Think about this: If you're eating in front of the television, what type of connection are you making there?" Brenes said. "By contrast, if I'm eating with family or friends, you may be talking about what you did during the day, or talking about your goals. Maybe you're talking about things that you want to accomplish."

"Connecting with other people can help you be more mindful about the foods that you're eating and how much you're eating."

Brenes said that even preparing meals, particularly when children are involved, builds connections around food that become family memories.

"Family meals are a great way to share with your children, or to teach them how to set the table, or the ingredients in the food that they are putting on the table," she said. "There's a family connection that starts forming there and those memories can bring good emotions when we are grown up."

She adds: "I remember eating with my parents every Sunday after going to church or going to an event and having a conversation about what we learned. And you know, after that, the kids

were in charge of cleaning the table. We learned to wash the dishes and how to share the work with our siblings.”

This month, Brenes encourages families to plan activities that capitalize on the ways that food connects people.

“Try to eat more meals together with your family,” she said. “If you like to cook...maybe one person in your family can pick one recipe per week, and you can all try that recipe. Or if you’re at school – maybe as the teacher – you can ask students to bring their favorite fruit or vegetable to class and talk about it.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Information publishes guidelines to help Americans eat a variety of foods in proper proportions. [The campaign is called MyPlate](#), which focuses on having one-half of the dinner plate being fruits and vegetables; one-fourth grains (preferably whole grains); and one-fourth protein.

More information about healthy eating also is available online from the [K-State Department of Food, Nutrition, Dietetics and Health](#).

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
MyPlate, <https://www.myplate.gov>

K-State Department of Food, Nutrition, Dietetics and Health, <https://www.hhs.k-state.edu/fndh>

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