



## Family Mealtime

There are many realities in our fast paced modern world that tend to pull family members away from the home and each other. Nevertheless, whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, mealtime may be the only time some families spend together. Spending time together helps build strong families.

From the time we begin our lives, playing and learning starts at home. Home and family are where it starts, and play and fun can strengthen family relationships. Foods we have for breakfast, the things we do on the weekends, and the activities we are involved in during the week are the threads of life that bind us as a family, as well as the special things we look forward to together.

When 1,500 school-age children were asked, "What do you think makes a happy family?" the children didn't list money, cars, big homes, or televisions. The answer they gave most, according to Nick Stinnett and John DeFrain, authors of *Secrets of Strong Families*, was **doing things together**. Spending time together is an important characteristic of strong families. Healthy families frequently work, play, eat, vacation, and attend religious services together. In strong families, spending time together is not an obligation to endure, but a pleasure to enjoy and anticipate.

### References:

Rupured, Michael and Sam Quick. Family Vitality Time Together. University of Kentucky.

Hill, Melinda. Family Traditions. Ohio State University, Family and Consumer Sciences, Family Life Month Packet 2000, FLMFS 1200.

Family Time In The Kitchen. University of Hawaii, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, Cooperative Extension Service, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

So what do you do when everyday life seems to be too full of things to do? When ever possible, make mealtime a special occasion. Involve family members from the start with tasks such as planning and shopping for the meal, setting the table, or making salads. Create a pleasant atmosphere: turn off the television, and put newspapers, work from the office and other cares a side. Invite family members to share interesting experiences, plans, upcoming events, and news. Instead of everyone rushing off when the meal is finished, encourage lingering around the table for relaxed and pleasant conversation. Let family members know that mealtime is a family occasion.

When dining out, let everyone take a turn in deciding where or what to eat. Pack up some leftovers, make something fast, or grab some takeout, and head to a park (or your backyard) for an impromptu picnic. Enjoy the outdoors and each other's company.

Mealtime offers many opportunities for family togetherness, fun, recreation, and learning. Everyone can be a part of it.

Visit our Nutrition Education for Wellness (NEW) website at [www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW)