



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Focusing on family meals

Commissaries help customers save money as they shop for the products to cook more at home

*By Kathy Milley,  
DeCA Corporate Communications*

**Note:** To read this release online, go to the DeCA [website](#).

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Until 2020, the frequency of family meals prepared at home was on the decline. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing and sharing meals at home snapped back into focus, becoming the norm.

During September’s Family Meals Month, the Defense Commissary Agency hopes military families focus on the benefits of cooking and eating meals together and will, hopefully, keep home-cooking a tradition long after the threat of the pandemic recedes.



*A customer shops at the Naval Base Norfolk, Virginia, Commissary. (DeCA photo: Michael Cerny)*

“Engaging the family to prepare a home-cooked meal and share it around the dinner table

can have overwhelmingly positive benefits,” said Deborah Harris, DeCA’s dietitian and health and wellness program manager, MPH, RD, CDCES (Masters of Public Health, registered dietitian and certified diabetes care and education specialist). “One of the best potential benefits is improving the nutrition quality of the family diet.”

Even those who are living alone, including service members in the barracks, can adopt the healthy habit of cooking more meals at home. Choosing a combination of ready-to-eat, semi-prepared, and fresh items, can add momentum to your nutrition game and help make the most of your hard work during physical activity.

Simply cooking a baked potato in the microwave and topping it with frozen broccoli, cheese, and deli meats is a fraction of the cost of visiting a fast-food drive through. The commissary offers many choices of frozen pizza and other frozen entrees and are much less expensive than eating out. Stock your fridge so you always have something on hand when you don’t feel like cooking.

Preparing and eating meals at home is a better choice for many reasons:

- Meals can be more nutritious and may taste better since there is more control and awareness of all the ingredients going into the meal
- Portion sizes are much easier to manage
- Children learn from observation. Healthy habits, such as cooking more meals at home, will carry over into their adulthood. Taking part in preparing meals will teach children how to plan, prepare and serve
- Cooking meals together at home encourages quality family time and creates memories
- Meals prepared at home will generally save the family money
- The entire family can be involved in using resources to develop meal plans and manage shopping lists

“Designed with our families in mind, the Defense Commissary Agency offers a large assortment of easy-to-prepare, dietitian-approved recipes, many of which are customizable for picky eaters, always one click away on commissaries.com,” Harris said. “Visit the recipes link and filter by clicking “dietitian approved.”

DeCA is continually adding new healthy recipes to commissaries.com, ensuring military customers have the tools they need to improve the nutrition quality of their diet. There are even recipes from celebrity chef Robert Irvine, who develops delicious, nutritious recipes just for commissary customers.

Customers can also visit the “Healthy Living” tab on commissaries.com to learn nutrition

tips, set goals and download meal planning resources, menus and no-fuss meal plans, all designed to help meet their health and wellness goals.

Click on the “Thinking Outside the Box” link to open a list of meals that include recipes and nutrition education. Use these to set goals while teaching the family about the nutrition attributes of the recipes you choose to try. Customers are encouraged to contact DeCA via social media to give their feedback on recipes, share photos and pass on any adaptation they’ve made at home.

“During September’s Family Meals Month, I challenge our families to set a goal of cooking at least two additional weekly meals at home,” said Harris. “If time is an issue, purchase prepared meals from our deli or frozen foods section. In addition, getting kids involved with making their snacks is a great way to try new foods, build skills and enjoy time being with you in the kitchen. Snacks can be as simple as preparing a cheese and cracker plate with some fresh fruit.

“All these suggestions are a great way to save time and still get the family together around the table,” she added. “And don’t forget to give our commissary brands and Your Everyday Savings! items a try – helping you to save big at the register.”

**-DeCA-**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Commissaries provide a military benefit, saving authorized patrons thousands of dollars annually on their purchases compared to similar products at commercial retailers. The discounted prices include a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*

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