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January is Soup month! Making your own soup saves money and you are in charge of the sodium. Canned and bag soup mixes are usually high in sodium. Soups are easy to make, and they are wonderful especially on a cold winter's day!

A consideration when thinking about soup in your meal plan is sodium. Even the "low sodium" versions that you find on the store shelf are adding a lot of salt to your diet. Try experimenting with herbs and spices in place of salt. You can begin with low sodium broth, or even make your own broth. Here is a resource from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/chicken-broth/> You will notice that the flavoring does not include salt. One rule of thumb is that if you choose to use minced or powdered garlic or onion for a recipe that calls for garlic salt and onion salt, you will want to use half as much as you would with the added salt version.

Soups can be a wonderful way to increase your vegetable intake as well. Carrots, celery, onions, peas, and green beans are just a few varieties of vegetables you can include in your soup. You may even be able to get the picky eaters in your home to eat soup and sneak in vegetables while you are at it.

The great thing about soups, they make a large quantity. If you are a small household, you can easily freeze soups. To save storage space, you can freeze them flat in gallon size freezer self-sealing bags. They can be thawed out by placing them in your refrigerator the night before you want to use them, or you can thaw them in cold water, be sure to keep the temperature at 40 degrees or colder for food safety.

Another food safety tip is when you finish eating your large pot of soup, put a lid on the large pot and put the pot in a sink of cold water to quickly bring the temperature of the soup to 40 degrees. It is important to cool the soup down within two hours to prevent bacteria growth. You can also store the soup in small containers in your refrigerator.

Here is a favorite soup for a cold winter's day:

White Chicken Chili

Tablespoons olive, canola, or vegetable oil

1 onion, scrubbed with clean vegetable brush under running water, chopped

1 (4 ounce) can chopped green chilies, drained

2 (15.8 ounce) cans great northern beans (do **not** drain)

1 (14.5 ounce) can chicken broth

2 teaspoons garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon pepper

2 teaspoons ground cumin

1 1/2 cups cooked chicken, cubed

4 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

1. Wash hands with soap and water.

2. In a large saucepan, heat oil. Add onion and cook until tender.

3. Add green chilies, beans (do not drain), chicken broth, garlic powder, pepper, ground cumin, and

chicken. Bring to a boil.

4. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes or until desired thickness.

5. Serve hot, topped with cheese.

Nutrition Information per Serving:(1/6 of recipe) Calories 300, Total Fat 14gDV, Saturated Fat 5g,

Cholesterol 45g, Sodium 670mg, Total Carbohydrates 19g, Dietary

Resource: https://food.unl.edu/fnh/healthybites_archives